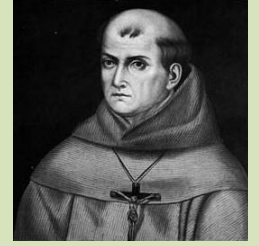




# SERRA CLUB OF ORANGE COUNTY



March 2023

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 2 - Club Meeting, Speaker: Rev. Gastón Mendiola.

**March 11 - Lenten Morning of Reflection**

April 6 - HOLY THURSDAY - NO MEETING

May 4 - Club Meeting, Speaker: TBD

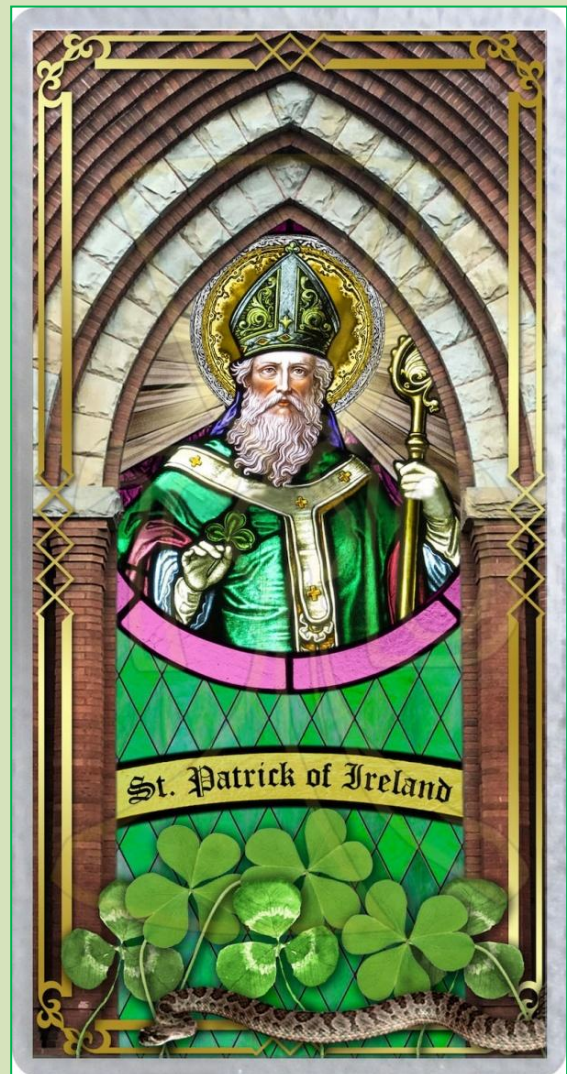
## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



We will not be having our April meeting since the first Thursday in April is Holy Thursday. I hate to miss a meeting because our bonds are growing stronger.

I was reminded of the bond among us while at the funeral of our dear member Sue Silvestri. Serra meant a lot to Sue and Sue meant a lot to Serra. Her family was very appreciative of our support. As they said, it was wonderful for them to know how much Sue loved and was loved.

Though she couldn't be at our meetings in recent times, her heart and spirit were with us always. In



her dedication to praying for vocations she knew the importance of the clergy and religious throughout our lives including at the hour of death. This family was with her as they prayed with her, as she received the Eucharist and finally as she received the Last Rites and the Apostolic pardon.

So while I hate to miss a meeting, I know that during our time apart we will connect together spiritually in our common faith and in our shared mission of support for vocations.

I wish you a blessed and fruitful Lent. Attend our Lenten Morning of Recollection, if you can. Let us set out in our Lenten observances of prayer, fasting and almsgiving to strengthen our reliance on God rather than reliance on self and give ourselves over to Divine Providence. Ask our Lady, who said, "be it done unto me according to Thy word," to help us find what our biggest obstacles are to our relationship with God so she can point them out and give us the grace to go after them with prayer, fasting and almsgiving.

In God's Love,  
Catherine Walton

### **SPEAKER**



The Serra Club of Orange County was delighted to welcome February's guest speaker, Fr. Michael Fitzpatrick, Parochial Vicar at St. John Neumann in Irvine. Recently ordained in 2021 at Christ Cathedral, Fr. Fitzpatrick tells us a moving story of love, loyalty, faith and gratitude which formed the basis of his vocation to the priesthood.

Fr. Fitzpatrick's story begins with his parents, Michael and Cathy, who were high school sweethearts living in Pennsylvania. They married soon after graduating college, but two years into the marriage his father was diagnosed with Stage 3 Hodgkin's Lymphoma at the age of 23. His father

underwent 18 months of chemotherapy and Cathy never left his side, even having to sleep at the hospital. Fr. Fitzpatrick's parents emphasized to him that faith was what gave them strength.

Although his father recovered, he was left infertile. One day while driving from work, Cathy heard on the news that a mother had murdered her newborn. In total dismay, Cathy began to cry and pray to God as to how this could happen. She heard God answer, "there are other children in this world." It was the early 90's when they decided to adopt a child from Korea, and six months later they adopted their son, Michael, and five and one-half years later they adopted a girl, his sister, who is also from Korea. Fr. Fitzpatrick has observed that adoption gets a negative connotation, however it is not a lesser kind of love. In fact, that is what God does with us, a Divine Adoption. It is a conscious decision. His parents viewed them as a gift, through a perspective of thankfulness.

His parents also taught them the importance of having faith, knowing that their rebellious son would encounter tough trials, and it is something that has always stayed with him. Growing up, his family was always close, even though they would frequently move. First New Jersey, then Ohio to California, Georgia and finally California for good. Although they were frequently moving, they ALWAYS had dinner together. However, dinner conversations were dominated by Mom and Sis, the family extroverts as Father and his Dad are the introverts. Father and his sister are very close, being raised with a strong family life, attending Catholic schools and participating in Catholic programs.

It was at Servite that he first heard the call to vocation. At 15 his parents said, "you should ask God what to do with your life" and so he did, and God responded, "I want you to become a priest." He did not want to hear that! He wanted a wife and a career. Much like Father's favorite book in the Bible, the story of Jonah, Father ran from that call and enrolled at Cal State Fullerton to study to be a teacher. However, nearly ready to finish his undergraduate work, he realized that he was not excited about becoming a teacher. Without consulting his parents, he switched majors to become a Sports Writer. His parents were not happy and he

soon discovered that he disliked Sports Journalism more than Teaching. Feeling lost (like Jonah being swallowed by the whale), and anxious, he turned to God and listened, surrendering to that call and finally feeling at peace. He admits God wanted him to see that this would be the happiest role for him.

As a newly ordained priest and this being his first talk to our Serra Club, Fr. Fitzpatrick was gifted a beautiful stole with the Serran insignia. He was very appreciative and noted that every time he wears the stole he will remember and pray for the Serrans.

Gabriella Negrete

## VOCATIONS REPORT



The seminarian who received the gift card for March, donated by Sophia Wickson, is Rev. Benjamin Nguyen. Benjamin is Lil Hanson's adopted seminarian. He is in Theology 4 at St. John's Seminary, and is from Christ Cathedral Parish and will be ordained to the priesthood in June. Rev. Ian Gaston and Rev. David Moreno will also be ordained in June. Please continue to especially pray for these seminarians as they are preparing for their future lives in the priesthood.

Our club is fortunate to have gained five new members and they have all adopted a seminarian. The Club activities to support the seminarians are: The 31 Club, Adopt a Seminarian and the Monthly Gift Card. The 31 Club: You pick a date each month and especially pray for future priests, religious sisters, brothers and deacons. Adopt a Seminarian: A member adopts a seminarian, prays for him every day and sends him notes of encouragement, cards for his birthday and holidays. Monthly Gift card: Our

club sends a Target gift card to one seminarian each month. Members sign up for a particular month. Members will be able to sign up to support these activities at our meeting.

Any questions concerning discernment, contact our Vocations Director, Father Brandon Dang, at 714-282-3036, or [bdang@rcbo.org](mailto:bdang@rcbo.org) Father's assistant, Elizabeth Sandoval, can be reached at [esandoval@rcbo.org](mailto:esandoval@rcbo.org)

**VOCATIONS PRAYER:** God our Father, You made each of us to use our gifts in the Body of Christ. We ask that You inspire young people whom You call to the priesthood and consecrated life to courageously follow Your will. Send workers into Your great harvest so that the Gospel is preached, the poor are served with love, the suffering are comforted, and Your people are strengthened by the sacraments. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen

Mary Brockschmidt  
Vice President, Vocations



Father Michael Fitzpatrick  
with Madrienne Peters  
who was installed as Trustee.

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



Virginia Mort presenting Father Michael Fitzpatrick with our gift of a stole.