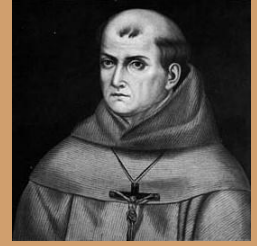




SERRA CLUB OF ORANGE COUNTY



November 2023

Pacific Region

District 79

Charter 438

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

FUTURE EVENTS

Nov. 2 - Club Meeting, Mass: Rev. Erialdo Ramirez Alfaro; Speaker: Sister Nadine

Nov. 4 - Feast Day of St. Charles Borromeo, Patron of Seminarians

Nov. 5-11 - National Vocation Awareness Week

Nov. 11 - Serra Meets - 9am - Zoom - Kathleen Beckman, author of the book "Praying for Priests"

Dec. 7 - Christmas Party

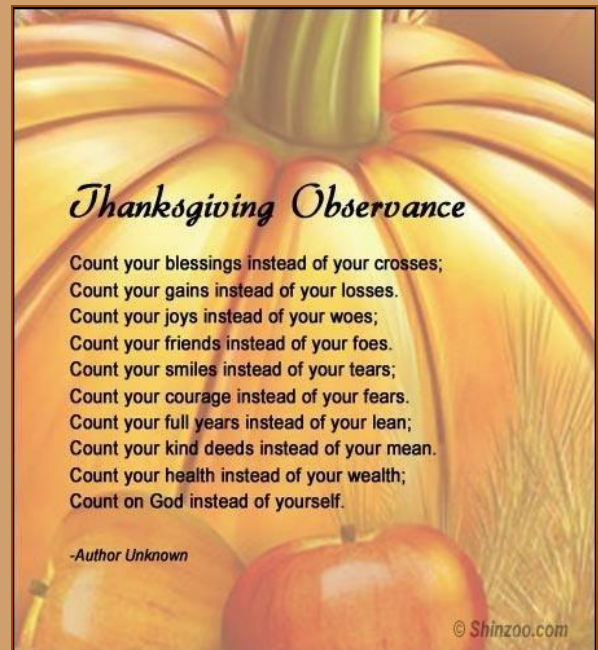
PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



As we approach Thanksgiving, let us count our many Serra blessings.

Thank you to all of you members of our Serra club. You are a source of strength to our seminarians by your generosity in donating gift cards, adopting a seminarian and offering your prayers.

For those members who can no longer attend our meetings due to health reasons but continue to support us financially and with their prayers, we give thanks.



For those members who after years of faithful service to our club had to discontinue their membership, let us give thanks.

Thank you for our deceased members - those who have gone before us and who established this club and those who kept it going all these years.

We are thankful for our "parent" organizations - Serra International and Serra USA - that continue to supply support and resources for our Serra mission.

We give thanks for this, our Serra community. May our club be blessed with many new members this coming year.

Happy Thanksgiving,
Catherine Walton

SPEAKER



This month's Serra Speaker was Fr. Hoa Tran, parochial vicar at St. Cecilia's parish in Tustin. Fr. Hoa shared an inspiring story of faith and perseverance against the Vietnamese Communist regime.

Fr. Hoa was born on January 9, 1982 into a cradle-Catholic family in North Vietnam. In 1967 the Communist Party had closed down all the seminaries but in 1977 re-opened one seminary with nine seminarians allowed to attend only one class. As a result, there would be only 1 priest serving 13 parishes in North Vietnam.

It became customary at the end of Mass for the pastor to encourage the young men to respond to God's call. Inspired by his mother who was a Catechist for 30 years, a parish Choir Director and his First Communion & Confirmation teacher, the young 11 year old Hoa felt he had a priestly vocation. Although Mrs. Tran worked very hard being the main breadwinner of the family, she always maintained a smile on her face. Sadly, she died of cancer at the age of 54.

Fr. Hoa found another mentor in his pastor, a true holy man who had recently retired but was still serving. He informed his pastor of his desire to become a priest, to which his pastor responded by giving him some books and telling him he would discuss the matter further upon the young man entering the 9th grade. When the young 9th grader returned to speak to his pastor, the pastor requested he return upon completing his high school studies.

Shortly afterward, the Diocese made changes requiring seminarians to have a college degree. Fr.

Hoa was unable to pass his university entrance exam, which led him down another road. He was called to enter into the army for which he served two years. Upon completing his civil duty, his pastor and family members encouraged him to keep learning.

He entered Hanoi University but the Communists controlled how many could enter seminary. There were 30 candidates who applied and only 10 were allowed to enter. Furthermore, candidates had only two opportunities to pass the entrance exam, otherwise you were out forever! However, Vietnamese Bishop Joseph Khiet had ways of getting candidates into seminary by sending them out of Vietnam. As the Diocese of Orange and the Diocese of Vietnam are "sister dioceses", the late Bishop Tod Brown was able to sponsor 4 seminarians to study in the Diocese of Orange sponsorship program.

Bishop Brown's idea was to have the candidates study, be ordained and return to Vietnam. Vietnamese Bishop Khiet's plan was to have 2 of the ordained stay in Orange County and the other 2 return to Vietnam. During that period prior to ordination, Bishop Brown retired and under Vietnamese pressure, 58 year-old Bishop Khiet was forced to retire and resign. As a consequence, Bishop Vann knew nothing about these 4 Vietnamese seminarians, as nothing was written as to who stays and who goes. Fr. Hoa was supposed to go back home, but they met with Bishop Vann and Fr. Moneypenny (Vocations Director) to explain how they feared losing their vocation should they return home. Bishop Vann and Fr. Moneypenny agreed to write a letter with three options:

1) Have seminarians remain 4-5 years in Orange to serve and learn, 2) Be ordained as deacons and priests or 3) Be ordained deacons and sent back home.

Hanoi did not accept! Therefore the seminarians asked if they could change their diocese and Bishop Vann accepted them into the Diocese of Orange.

Fr. Hoa was 27 years old when he came to the U.S. and he has been here for 15 years serving in his priesthood for 7 years. He is appreciative of the Diocese of Orange and for all the prayers and works of the Serra Club. He asks us to please continue to pray for priests and seminarians.

Gabriella Negrete

VOCATIONS REPORT



The seminarian who received the gift card for November, donated by Lulu Papac, is Eddie Huber. Eddie is Lulu's adopted seminarian. Eddie is in Pre-Theology Discipleship Stage 4 at St. John's Seminary. His parish is St. Martin de Porres.

Our on-going activities to support the seminarians are: Adopt a Seminarian and A Gift Card to One Seminarian Each Month. Club members have signed up for the gift cards through the end of the year. We have twenty-three seminarians and just three have not been adopted. The road to Ordination is long and challenging at times. For that reason our prayers and support are vital to the seminarians.

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

VOCATIONS PRAYER: Dear God, we ask you to inspire men and women to respond generously to your call and embrace the gift of their vocation. Bless them with the joy that comes through loving service. We pray in union with the Communion of saints in the name of Jesus, your son. Amen.

Mary Brockschmidt
Vice President, Vocations



 **SERRA RALLY**
MIAMI
JANUARY 18-21, 2024



If you've never been to a national Serra event, this is the one to attend! Let's join together to create a culture of vocations! **REGISTER TODAY**