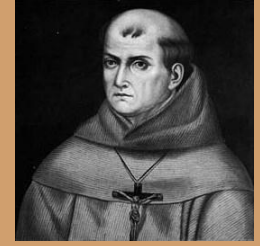




# SERRA CLUB OF ORANGE COUNTY



November 2024

Pacific Region

District 79

Charter 438

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

## FUTURE EVENTS

**Nov. 3 – 9 – National Vocation Awareness Week**

**Nov. 4 – Feast of St. Charles Borromeo, Patron  
Saint of Seminarians**

**Nov. 7- Club Meeting, Speaker: Fr. Robert Capone**

**Dec. 5 – Christmas Party**

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



In our Catholic tradition, the month of November honors many things. Among them we honor all the saints in Heaven, the dead, relieving the sufferings of the souls in purgatory, as well as celebrating the Feast of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, celebrated annually on November 21<sup>st</sup>. On this day we commemorate the presentation of the Blessed Virgin as a child by her parents in the Temple in Jerusalem. Before Mary's birth, her parents received a heavenly message that they would bear a child. In thanksgiving for God's gift of Mary's birth, they brought her to the Temple to consecrate their only daughter to The Lord. Reminded of this feast, I would like to invite my fellow Serrans to visit St. Thomas More Parish in Irvine as they will be hosting a rare and special Missionary Image of the Tilma of Our Lady of Guadalupe!



It is one of only four Missionary Images in the world. Many miracles and healings have been attributed to the relic. The parish visitation and veneration of the Missionary Image will be November 7-8, 2024.

## PRAYER FOR THE POOR SOULS

**By St. Alphonsus Marie Liguori**

O most sweet Jesus, through the bloody sweat which Thou didst suffer in the Garden of Gethsemane, have mercy on these Blessed Souls. Have mercy on them.  
R. Have mercy on them, O Lord.

O most sweet Jesus, through the pains which Thou didst suffer during Thy most cruel scourging, have mercy on them.  
R. Have mercy on them, O Lord.

O most sweet Jesus, through the pains which Thou didst suffer in Thy most painful crowning with thorns, have mercy on them.  
R. Have mercy on them, O Lord.

O most sweet Jesus, through the pains which Thou didst suffer in carrying Thy cross to Calvary, have mercy on them.

R. Have mercy on them, O Lord.

O most sweet Jesus, through the pains which Thou didst suffer during Thy most cruel Crucifixion, have mercy on them.

R. Have mercy on them, O Lord.

O most sweet Jesus, through the pains which Thou didst suffer in Thy most bitter agony on the Cross, have mercy on them.

R. Have mercy on them, O Lord.

O most sweet Jesus, through the immense pain which Thou didst suffer in breathing forth Thy Blessed Soul, have mercy on them.

R. Have mercy on them, O Lord.

Amen.

God bless you all,  
Gabriella Negrete

### SPEAKER



Is it just me or is every Vietnamese priest in the Diocese of Orange a joy filled stand-up comic? If you agree, I'm betting it has something to do with a childhood interrupted by the uncertainty, adventure, and trial of abandoning your home and starting over in a land "flowing with milk and honey" AND a home to wolves. Our October speaker, Father Martin Nguyen, Pastor at La Purisima in Orange, fits the profile of a Vietnamese priest. Joy-filled and entertaining, Father Nguyen gave to us a homily on the Gospel of Luke, 10:1-12, that asked and answered the pain-filled question, "Why did Jesus send his 72 disciples out into the wolves?" They were sent as we are sent to battle sin. In contrast to that dire message, we next heard Virginia Mort's delightful introduction of Father Nguyen as "the Pastor of the best Fish Fry in all Orange County," followed by Father's self-proclaimed moniker, "Rock Star," because he was born to a winning trifecta of the youngest of eight children, a boy, and a Priest.

Can you imagine the pain of dividing your family into three groups, then sending each group on an exodus from your home country to unknown lands with no job and no home. That was reality for Father Nguyen's parents. In 1979 they sent half their children out to the wolves. In 1981 they sent the other half. In 1985 they took their youngest, Martin now eight years old, and escaped Vietnam to re-unite with their other children for the first time in six years. Martin's exodus started with floating lost on the ocean for one week. Then there were eleven months in Indonesia. Finally, they settled in Los Alamitos, California, where Martin Nguyen graduated high school in 1994.

Do you recall our September speaker, Father Erialdo Ramirez, told us God calls many to be a priest when they are young? It is at that age they are most able to hear God's call. It was like that for Father Nguyen who heard God's call and wanted to be a priest before he left Vietnam at the age of 7 or 8. Father Nguyen's journey to ordination, like his immigration to the United States, was long, exhausting, and threatened by wolves at every turn. After high school graduation, Martin shared his call to the priesthood with his parents and his friends. His parents were supportive, but his friends were incredulous. A bit like wolves they attacked with "What no girls?" "No cursing?" Unmoved by their snarls Martin responded to God's call. He first asked the Salesians and then the Redemptorists. Both orders turned him away saying he was too young. In perseverance Martin turned onto the path leading toward becoming a diocesan priest. He entered Saint John Seminary in Camarillo. Five years later in 1999, he received degrees in Philosophy and in English.

The wolves made their move attacking quietly. Martin was deafened. He lost the sound of God's voice and could not feel the touch of God's love. He left the seminary and enrolled at Cypress College.

We heard and we saw Father act out the hilarious story of the girl who invited him to a movie at the Irvine Spectrum. An invitation that made him so anxious he got his first speeding ticket. Needless to say, it did not work out for the two of them. Life for Martin had devolved into bowling 4 times a week.

A year later Martin began washing out his ears and believed he was ready to "give God a second

chance.” This time God was silent. We know why. No call. No sign. And now the begging begins. “God P L E A S E give me a sign.” Martin enrolled into an intensive spiritual training program where talking was forbidden on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Friday of each month. On one particular Friday, God “gave Martin a second chance” and provided a sign in the form of tears, many, many, tears of Joy. Martin knew, heard, and felt God’s call.

Five years later at the age of 29 Martin Nguyen was ordained a priest and sent to Los Alamitos to serve in his home parish of St. Hedwig. Four years later he was transferred to Angela Merici in Brea and it was there that the wolves began to circle with a more cunning plan. The devil tempts the good with the good. Bishop Tod Brown heard about Father Nguyen’s interest in social work and paved the way for Father Nguyen to attend the University of Southern California and to earn his 3<sup>rd</sup> Master’s Degree, this time in Social Work. Father Nguyen was assigned to Holy Family church and began work as a counselor for Catholic Ministry. This work tired Father. He was not happy. He was tired, too tired. At this point Father Nguyen stepped back and gave us a little history about how years before he was rejected by Cal State from entering their Master’s program for Social Work while his best friend was accepted into the program. Recognizing his interest in social work was not God’s calling but instead a call to settle the score with his friend, Father Nguyen returned to parish work.

He served for two years at St. Irenaeus in Cypress followed by another two years at St. Pius in Buena Park. Now as the Pastor at La Purisima in Orange, Father Nguyen is challenged but free, happy, and yes, not so tired. God never abandoned him. The wolves may try to be loud and block the sound of God’s voice, or cunning and veil the eyes of his heart, but God always sent messengers to help. Father Nguyen thanked the Serra Club for being one of those messengers. Our prayers are a valued help to our priests. Father Nguyen asked us to be patient with our Pastors. In his words “if we want happy, solid, healthy pastors we need to be the pastor’s eyes, hands, and feet. Happy, solid, healthy parishes come from happy, solid, healthy teamwork.”

After nineteen years as a priest Father Nguyen exhorts that we are together on a pilgrimage, an exodus, to a place we have never been. We are

migrating to a new home in a new country. If we follow the true authentic call of God, there will be good and bad days AND there will always be joy. He reminded us there is no Christmas without Advent. There is no Easter without Lent. And we cannot glory in the Resurrection without a Crucifixion. We have been entrusted with many gifts & talents to help us along the way. Work to engrave your name in heaven. Pray for better priests and better parishioners.

## VOCATIONS REPORT



The gift Card for November, donated by Gabriella Negrete, is scheduled to go to Thomas Andrews of St. Kilian Parish in Mission Viejo. Thomas is in the process of his Discernment Year at the Pastoral Center on the grounds of the Cathedral.

I received a note from David Hoang, who is doing a Pastoral Internship at Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Santa Ana and will be there till the end of this year. He was very happy to see me at the Cathedral and thanked me for remembering his birthday.

At present the Diocese of Orange has 27 seminarians at various seminaries and in various stages of study.

Any questions concerning discernment, contact our Vocations Director. Father Cheeyoon Chun. Father's assistant, Elizabeth Sandoval, can be reached at [esandoval@rcbo.org](mailto:esandoval@rcbo.org).

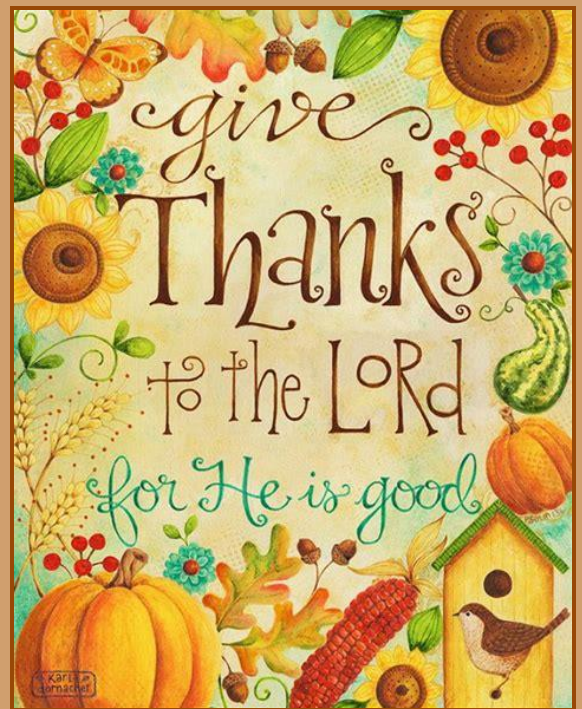
**VOCATIONS PRAYER:** God our Father, we ask that You inspire young people whom You call to the Priesthood and consecrated life to courageously follow Your will. Amen.

Phyllis Soloy  
Vice President, Vocations





**President Gabriella Negrete presents pin to Silvia Uriarte for her 14 years of service as a member of Serra**



A promotional graphic for the "SERRA RALLY MIAMI" held from January 23-26, 2025. It features a photo of four people (a priest and three women) standing together. A circular inset shows Mother Adela Galindo speaking at a podium. The text reads: "One of our many speakers will be Mother Adela Galindo, who gave the amazing final keynote address at the National Eucharistic Congress. Come be inspired!!!". The graphic is decorated with pink hibiscus flowers.