

Chapter three, the 1980's

Before we continue with our Club's history we would like to tell you this story sent to us by Rick Wiseman. It is concerned with the golf and now famous George Gorman's steak dinner. Father Dolan, the longtime pastor of St. Joseph parish in Shawnee, would come to the dinner accompanied by his lazy- boy chair for his comfort. If Archbishop Strecker was not present Father Dolan would be the "Priest in charge" and sort of held court, entertaining everyone.

Now, back to the history. Entering into this time of the Club, the religious vocation landscape had changed. Msgr. Tank was a seminarian in the early sixties and one of 53 seminarians of our diocese at St. Johns Seminary in Denver. Yes, that's right, 53. Compare that with the number in the early 1980's of 10 to 15. Msgr. Tank pointed out there were many influences at that time which led to the change in culture, including changes in the church through Vatican II, as well as, a change in the appeal to young men to enter into a religious vocation. To compound matters, Priests were leaving the church as well.

This reversal of fortune called for an increased effort on the part of our Club. More Serrans were needed and more activities as well. Fortunately, Serra had the answer, a plan of action consisting of Pray, Invite, Encourage, and Affirm. It would take all of them to reverse the downward trend.

Our Club was at the disposal of Archbishop Strecker and the Vocation Director. Father Dennis Wait was the Director at that time, on a part- time basis. He was the first Director to form a committee consisting of himself, Father Jim Ludwikoski, and Sister Mary Schweiger, OSB. They often had events for aspiring candidates that would include both women and men. They would meet a couple times a year with their contemporaries from dioceses in Region 9, exchanging ideas.

In keeping with the Serran plan our Club designed activities to answer each part. In terms of prayer we participated in prayer at our meetings, attended Vocation Masses, formed 31 Clubs in parishes and individually prayed for vocations before the Blessed Sacrament. ("Invite", the second area was probably the most difficult for us.) The 6th grade essay was a way to introduce religious vocations to young people. The Call by Name Program, a unique parish activity developed by Serra International, where parishioners "called out" certain younger members names who the parishioner felt had qualities consistent with a religious vocation. For a period, as Serrans, we were given the opportunity to administer a Vocation Aptitude test to high school seniors in their religion classes. The tests were sent to a firm back east for evaluation and results were forwarded to the Vocation Director. In some ways the Vocation Masses in parishes could be considered as inviting. We also made ourselves available to the Vocation Director as he needed us. Encourage and affirm were easier to accomplish. From the Priest Appreciation

Luncheon to visits to rural Priests, we were active. The Priest Appreciation event was held each year to recognize the Quinquennial Anniversary of our Priests (including the Monks of St Benedicts). When Msgr. Mullen became our Chaplain he gave a short bio of each honoree. It started as a dinner but conflicts of scheduling caused it to be moved to a luncheon event. Visits to rural Priests (no longer an activity like the Priest Appreciation) were made by Serrans in pairs. It usually involved a tour of the parish by the Priest and lunch at a café.

Finally, the Nuns picnic, as we called it, started in the late 80's as recalled by George Gorman. Once again it was organized by George and Virginia Gorman. Since we had several activities for the benefit of our Priests it was felt we needed to do likewise for the Nuns. The first several were held at Wyandotte Co. Park we are told. Jim and Charlene Conrad as co-chairpersons moved it to Pierson Park also in KCK. It had a small lake for fishing, room for volleyball and a shelter house. It was common to see the nuns competing in volleyball in their habits. However, due to steep steps, flies, and smelly bathrooms, it was moved to St. Peters parish center. Bob Dougherty was the voice of bingo. Fried chicken was served and our wives brought deserts. George was able to convince several local businesses to volunteer prizes for winners. Attendance grew steadily

The 1980's were a decade of continued growth, with strong leadership provided by Serrans John Phillips, Jim Wavada, Bob Clune, John Anderson, DDS, and Ed Rafferty. We strove to live up to Serra's motto "Always Forward, Never Back". Next, we'll see how we continue our ministry into the 90's.

We would be remiss if we failed to acknowledge the contributions of George Lucas, Rick Wiseman, John Jurcyk, and George Gorman. This wouldn't have happened without their help. Stay tuned.