

Chapter 5, the Millennium and Beyond

Millennium! Wow! That's a thousand years! And we are experiencing the second one in our history. Millennium is not a word of religious meanings, but it is hard to distinguish it from our church's history, since it has been announcing the gospel to the four corners of the earth every one of those years. With the guidance of the Holy Spirit, our church will no doubt continue its mission for the next 2000 years or more.

How are we doing in our mission of supporting vocations? These numbers are unofficial; but starting year 2000 we had 137 members and the Archdiocese had 22 seminarians. Both represent continued growth and positive results for our efforts.

Activities in 2000 started with the Serra International convention in Kansas City, Mo. hosted by the downtown Kansas City, Mo. Serra Club. It was the second international convention they had hosted since they were the hosts of the 1950 convention. Although it was not an activity of our Club several members volunteered and a number of our members attended. According to John Burge, convention committee chairman, they (the Missouri Serrans) were required to attend five prior conventions in order to be prepared to host one. Approximately 1150 Serrans from six continents came, representing a truly international organization.

In the year 2000, members of our Club made their first visits to our seminarians. With the encouragement of Arch-Jim, six Serrans visited St. Meinrad Seminary in southern Indiana and Mundelein Seminary near Chicago. We were, without doubt, the first Serrans to visit in person. So began a custom that continues today , popular with both seminarians and Serrans.

Do you remember the Regional Convention which was hosted by our Club in 2001? John Weideman, our Club president, headed the committee that included among others John Wissman, Norbert Haas (may he rest in peace) and Elmer Rottinghaus. In case you forgot, headquarters were in the Holiday Inn at I-35 and 87th St. in Lenexa, and Masses were held in the original Holy Trinity stone church. Arch-Jim was very supportive and he was one of our main presenters. Msgr. Mullen took part in a panel discussion of, what else, vocations. It was well attended.

Also in 2001 Father Brian Scheiber became our second Director of Vocations. In talking with Father Brian about this assignment, he indicated he enjoyed the opportunity and the challenge it brought. He served for six years and steady increases in seminarians were seen. He felt we are succeeding in our goal of changing the culture of vocations and our Club's efforts are appreciated. He indicated no one is more scrutinized upon application than our candidates for Priesthood.

In a very informative conversation with Msgr. Mullen we learned of the beginnings of two of our more recent activities starting in 2003. Father John Riley's mother felt there was a need for a closer relationship of the parents of seminarians, as well as the seminarians. From this evolved the Parent Seminarian Mass and lunch held each December. The four clubs took turns hosting the event at various parishes. At this time we present our Seminarian Support funds to the seminarians.

Have you attended one of our Lenten retreats led by Msgr. Mullen? Each year Msgr. plans a different theme around which his talks are featured. It is another wonderful way our spiritual lives benefit by our Serran experience. If you haven't attended one we encourage you to put it on your calendar.

If one thing is certain in life there will be change, dioceses not excluded. On Jan. 15, 2005, Archbishop James P. Keleher, better known as Arch-Jim, submitted his resignation as our Archbishop after 11 years. Although a Chicagoan by birth, he had become an adopted son of Kansas, and he loved the people of northeast Kansas. If there was one defining legacy it was his dedication to vocations and the appointment of a full time Vocation Director. His successor is our present Archbishop Joseph Naumann, a native of St. Louis. Their backgrounds prior to coming to Kansas were different. Arch-Jim was known primarily as an educator whereas Archbishop Naumann's resume was more connected to pastoring mostly inner-city parishes and a champion of Right to Life. Archbishop Naumann is also a St Louis Cardinals fan.

In 2005-2006 John Jurcyk was chosen to serve as District Governor elect. Then in 2007-2009 he moved on as District Governor. John was the second Governor to come from our club, Dr. Pretz being the first. Both men were outstanding Serrans as well as gentlemen.

The St. Lawrence center at KU has been a Strong Catholic presence on the campus for many years. Father Brian Scheiber was active there as a student. It so happens his replacement as Vocation Director, Father Mitchell Zimmerman, had close connections to the center prior to entering the seminary. And now, our current Director, Father Scott Wallish is a Jayhawk. What's with this KU connection? Vocations for the Archdiocese continued to grow in numbers and it was during Father Mitchell's term that we numbered more than 30 seminarians for the first time (unofficially).

Speaking of university, in Ohio a new program called College Connection was being formed by a Serra Club there. Thanks to the efforts of Bill McHale, a fairly new member, with the backing of the Archbishop and the Vocation Director, our club led the way in implementing the program in the Archdiocese. In conjunction with the Johnson County Club, our Archdiocese was recognized for our success in College Connection. It continues to perform although in a somewhat different format.

What an active 10 years. Our Club continued to grow in strength and purpose. We are about to celebrate our 40th anniversary. That, and additional happenings are ahead. Thanks to several contributors to this chapter, namely Arch-Jim, Msgr. Mullen, Father Brian Scheiber, John Wissman, Bill McHale, and of course John Jurcyk.

Once again we wish to thank those who have helped us write this article. Especially Archbishop Keleher. Also, John Wissman, Dale Putnam, Ben Zarda, and most reliable John Jurcyk . Thank you all.