

Serra Club Installation

November 8, 2005

by The Most Reverend John C. Nienstedt

In St. Luke's Gospel, Jesus at the Last Supper told his apostles how much he had greatly desired to share that Passover with them. (Lk 22:14) In much the same way, I can say that I have looked forward to this evening and the establishment of our own diocesan Serra Club.

From the first moment of my Installation here in this very Church four years and three months ago, I announced that priestly vocations was the #1 priority in this local Church. To that end, I urged that prayers for that intention be offered every day in each of our households and at every gathering of parish or diocesan committees. I also asked that an intention to this end be included in every Prayer of the Faithful. And I asked all Catholics, young and old, to abstain from meat on Fridays in order to "sacrifice" behind our prayer.

Now you, Serrans, take the lead in this movement by dedicating your efforts in a formal way to the promotion of our #1 priority: more priests and more religious for God's service.

Your efforts, I firmly believe, model those of the early Church depicted in today's first reading. There was a unity of understanding and purpose that is so readily observed by what we read there. They shared everything in common, so no one was in need. How can we not see an analogy here for our parents and grandparents of today who might willingly share a son or grandson to serve the Church's needs?

They came together for Eucharist, the "breaking of the bread" and shared prayer. And by doing so they become an example for others, who soon wanted to be added to their numbers. They, too, wanted to be able to say, as you all have said, "Here I am, Lord, I come to do your will." I sincerely believe that it is the Lord's will that we labor with all our energy and strength to invite and encourage young men (even not so young men) to give their lives for Christ as "other Christs."

And we know that this is not an easy sell as we hear in tonight's Gospel: for the one who is called must be able to deny his very self, take up his cross and follow after Jesus. That demands the highest of ideals and the most generous of hearts. But whoever loses his life for Jesus' sake will truly find the ultimate fulfillment of that life.

Finally, I wish to encourage your daily prayer. Be convinced that it is a powerful tool even though you may not see its full effects being realized before your very eyes.

Story of Aaron.

We never know how God is going to use the grace of our prayer, but we must continue to believe that he will.

Priestly and religious vocations require faith, a faith that is vibrant and full. May you Serrans be true witnesses of that faith here in our Diocese and may many, many young men and women be encouraged to respond to God's call because of your faith.