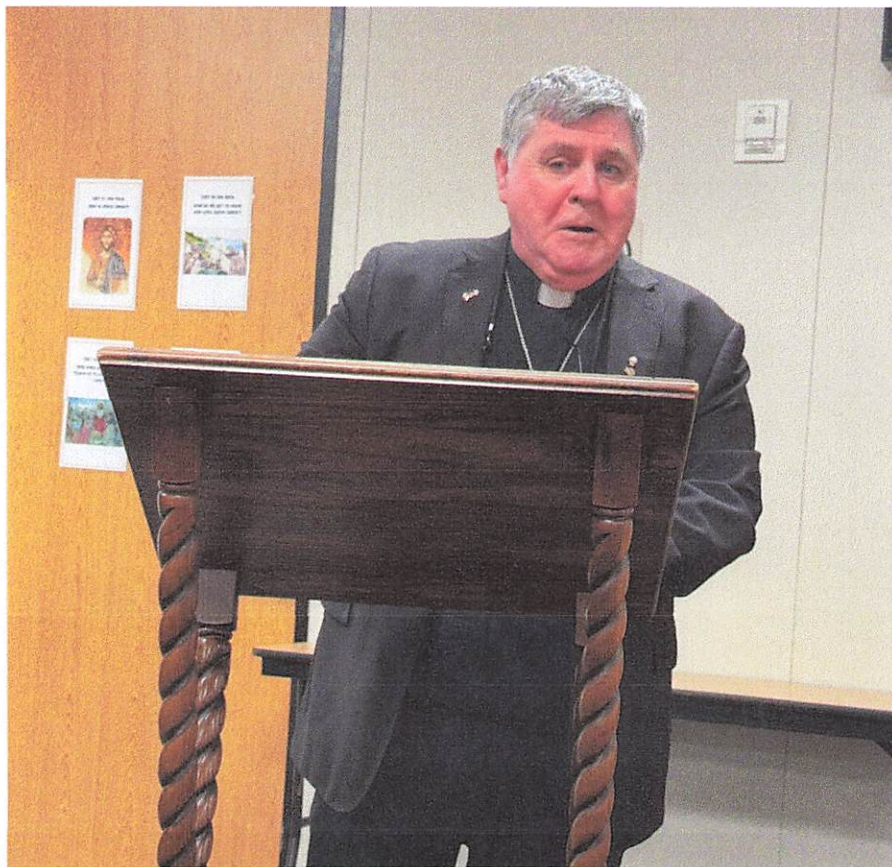




VOCARE

Newsletter of Serra Club of Bay Area
February 2026

January Program Meeting



Fr. Jeremy Morais MS, parochial vicar at Mary Queen, was our program speaker. He shared his vocation story. He was raised in a family who took their Catholic faith seriously. His vocation began in his family. At the age of six he followed his older brothers to become an altar server. The seed to become a missionary was planted in his elementary school when a missionary came to speak about their missionary life. At the age of 15 he went to minor seminary in Illinois. He then went to St. Francis seminary college in Wisconsin. After he was ordained, he immediately asked to go to the mission. He was asked to serve in the U.S. for six years and then they would consider sending him to a mission. After six years, he was sent to the MaryKnolls in

New York to go through a course to see if he was fit to go to a mission. He did very well and was then sent to do missionary work in Madagascar. After 36 years in Madagascar, he was asked to move to the mission office in St. Louis. He has been temporarily assigned to Mary Queen. He then expects to return to the mission office.

Fr. Jeremy talked about the missionary work in Madagascar. Sometimes he traveled by foot, occasionally he was able to use a vehicle, often he went by ox cart. He lived without electricity or running water. Despite living in primitive conditions, he felt very blessed to work with such good, friendly people. The bishop of Madagascar feels it is very important to have indigenous people as priests. Fr. Jeremy is thankful that every place he has worked boys/men have answered the call to study for the priesthood. The last part of his talk was to answer any questions we had.

Why Serra?

We continue to remind ourselves about the basics of Serra in our newsletters.

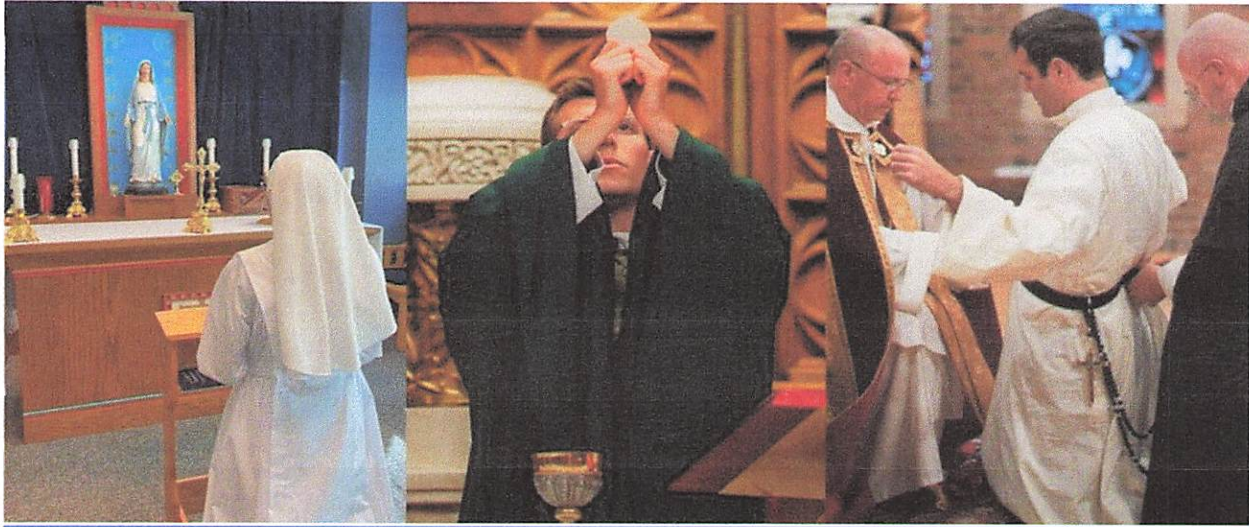
FOSTER, PROMOTE, AND AFFIRM VOCATIONS

The first two objectives of Serra are:

1. To foster and promote vocations to the ministerial priesthood in the Catholic Church, as a particular vocation to service and to support priests in their sacred ministry.
2. Also, to encourage and affirm vocations to consecrated religious life in the Catholic Church.

The Labouré Society & Fund for Vocations

LABOURÉ®



The Labouré Society Vision:

A world where Catholic priests, sisters and brothers exist in abundant numbers to fill the world's needs; where young people called to the priesthood or religious life can freely answer that call without being held back by education debt.

The Labouré Society Mission:

Labouré is a national, Catholic, non-profit organization that rescues Catholic vocations from the impediment of education debt. Many seminaries, convents and religious communities in the U.S. cannot accept men and women into formation with outstanding debt. Labouré teaches verified vocation candidates ("aspirants") a multi-dimensional, Catholic-based fundraising model they use to accelerate the resolution of their education debt in 4-24 months rather than 10-20 years. The result: Since 2003, Labouré has delivered over 330 aspirants into seminaries and religious communities nationwide and has awarded over \$15 million in debt mitigation.

Why Is Labouré's Program So Successful?

1. Labouré works with each aspirant to ensure that all personal means are used to mitigate their student loan amounts (consolidation, asset review, counseling, full-time employment etc.).
2. Labouré professionally trains each aspirant in Catholic-based philanthropy grounded in humility, gratitude and hope for the Church.
3. Labouré forms "classes" of aspirants who, after receiving in-person training, return to their dioceses around the country and begin fundraising not for themselves, but collectively as a class. Funds raised are never ear-marked for an individual aspirant.

4. Labouré mentors, counsels, and guides each aspirant over his/her fundraising journey. Each aspirant is assigned an individual mentor ("accountability partner") who encourages the aspirant in proper preparation and completion of personal fundraising plans.
5. Labouré empowers each aspirant with media platforms, marketing/communication tools including videos and written materials, donor software, free laptops, and continual webinar conferencing with the aspirant individually and with the class as a whole.
6. Labouré aspirants undergo a significant human formation process during which confidence, vocational discernment/commitment, social interaction skills, public speaking skills, relationship building skills, evangelization skills and fundraising skills are strengthened. The rigor of the Labouré program tests the aspirants' commitment to their vocation. Bishops, vocations directors and superiors cite this human formation process as an invaluable dimension of the Labouré program.
7. Labouré aspirants meet with thousands of Catholics each year. During these meetings, the aspirants share the joy of their vocation story, their courageous and faithful devotion to the Church, and their desire to lay down their lives for the Lord and His people in order to build God's Kingdom. These meetings encourage Catholics nationwide and spread hope for the Church's future!
8. Labouré is the only lay organization of its kind to rescue education-debt impeded vocations by delivering better-prepared candidates into the arms of the Catholic Church.

For more information: visit rescuevocations.org

Fund for Vocations

The Fund for Vocations assists men and women to follow God's call to a life of consecrated service in the Church through student debt relief grants. They realized that many young men and women are called to religious life but cannot enter formation because of student loan debt. The Fund for Vocations makes grants to young men and women who have already been accepted for religious formation and whose student loans are the last barrier to entry.

They have designed their grant program so that men and women who seek to answer God's call can do so immediately, without delay or distractions. They assume monthly student loan payments while an aspirant is in formation thereby enabling them to enter formation right away, free from financial worry. When a newly minted priest, sister, or brother takes final vows, Fund for Vocations pays off the loan balance within five years. If the person in formation discerns out, they simply reassume their monthly loan payments, which have been kept up to date.

You can read about the application process, eligibility requirements and application deadline dates on their website. For example, one thing that is required is a letter of acceptance from the religious superior or vocation director.

Responding to God's Call to Holiness

The Psalms

Part of Serra's mission is to "assist members to recognize and respond, each in one's own life, to God's call to holiness in Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit." We continue our journey through the Psalms to strive to respond to that call.

Psalm 126 (125)

1 *A Song of Ascents.*

**When the Lord brought back the exiles of Sión,
we thought we were dreaming.**

**2 Then was our mouth filled with laughter;
on our tongues, songs of joy.**

**Then the nations themselves said, "What great deeds
the Lord worked for them!"**

**3 What great deeds the Lord worked for us!
Indeed, we were glad.**

**4 Bring back our exiles, O Lord,
as streams in the south.**

**5 Those who are sowing in tears
will sing when they reap.**

**6 They go out, they go out, full of tears,
bearing seed for the sowing;
they come back, they come back with a song,
bearing their sheaves.**

Psalm 126 – Sowing in Tears

Certain historical moments have significance for both communities and individuals. In the Bible, the return from the Babylonian exile (c. 539 B.C.) had an overwhelming

influence on Israel's national identity and how they understood their relationship with God.

In an earlier era they had experienced liberation from oppression in Egypt as an act of God's power and love for them, and centuries later, the mighty arm of their compassionate God again came to their rescue in bringing back the people of Judah from captivity in Babylon. Small and insignificant, Judah had been largely integrated into the life and culture of Babylon, and the apparent hopelessness of their situation seemed to leave no future for the identity of God's people as an independent community.

Only a miracle of divine love could bring about the reversal of fortunes that faithful among the captives hoped for. And that is what happened: the impossible occurred. Stunned by the event, the people "thought [they] were dreaming" (v. 1).

Here we encounter an important truth about how God's actions are presented in Scripture. The exodus from Egypt does not represent a one-time experience; the movement from oppression to freedom is brought about again and again in the life of the people of Israel.

The word "exodus," from the Greek *ex hodos*, means quite literally, "a way out." Think of the many ways such a concept of liberation can be applied to human experience, individually or in community. When war or civil strife breaks out (such as we have seen so often in the Middle East and Africa recently), the true "way out" must include taking hold of the grace which God provides (v. 3), and putting forth the best human efforts to bring about situations of justice and equity.

On an individual level, when two people experience a rupture in relationship, the "way out" must involve the grace of forgiveness and understanding, moving forward with a new perspective, each allowing the other the space to grow and mature.

In both situations, seeds sown in the tears of forgiveness and relinquishing of past hurts will flow naturally into a song of grace, giving voice to joy of heart and praise for God's reconciling love. Such experiences enjoin us to open our hearts to the newness of God's Spirit, who invites us to find a "way out" of life's hurts and misunderstandings; each time we are freed of our subjugation (too often self-imposed), we are strengthened in our witness to the transforming power of the gospel.

St. Paul borrows this image from Psalm 126 when he writes, "The one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.... The One who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply

and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness” (2 Cor 9:6, 10). Let us assert with the Psalmist: “What great deeds the Lord works for us in this our day; indeed, we are glad” (v. 3).

Prayer for Psalm 126

God of the Harvest, who have sown among us seeds of divine compassion and mercy: open our hearts to know your guidance as we journey from oppression to freedom, from sadness to joy, that at all times and in all things we may praise you for your bountiful love. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.