

Vol. 66 No. 3 | December 2019

# the Serran



**THE SERRA INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION**  
Nurturing Religious Vocations Around the World

*-Pietro*

Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

2 Corinthians 9:6-7

## The Serran Calendar

**January 16-19, 2020**

The Serra Rally, Ventura, California

**February 2, 2020**

World Day for Consecrated Life

**March 8-14, 2020**

National Catholic Sisters Week

**May 3, 2020**

World Day of Prayer for Vocations

**June 25-28, 2020**

Serra's 78th International Convention

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**ON OUR COVER:**  
'Bird in Hand' by Anne Goetze  
Archival pigment ink, oil, ashes 2015

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*The Serran* Editor: Anne McCormack  
Serra International Executive Director: John Liston  
333 W Wacker Drive, Suite 500 Chicago, IL 60606  
[www.serrainternational.org](http://www.serrainternational.org)



## Where Is Your Treasure?

*Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:  
But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:  
For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*

Matthew 6: 19-21

**T**hanks to the generosity of many Serrans and Serra Clubs, the Serra International Foundation was able to distribute over \$ 120,000.00 in grants to 26 worthy organizations helping to foster and support vocations to the Catholic Church around the world this past year. Throughout this issue of *The Serran* you will see some of the tangible results from Serra International Foundation grants awarded in the past two years. None of these grants would have been possible without the support of numerous Serrans across the United States and around the world. On behalf of the Serra International Foundation Board and numerous grant recipients: Thank You.



Michael W. Bragg  
President

While it is not featured in this particular issue, I am particularly pleased with the \$7,500 grant awarded to the United States Council for continued work on the Serra SPARK online resource ([www.serras-park.org](http://www.serras-park.org)). I am also pleased that we were able to continue our support of the National Conference of Diocesan Vocation Directors, the Institute for Priestly Formation, and the Pontifical North American College in Rome. These continued collaborations enhance Serra's presence in the vocations arena and help provide Serra a seat at the table with the highest levels of the Church hierarchy.

Everything we have is a gift from God. We are called to be good stewards of all that God has given us. God cannot be outdone in generosity. Therefore I ask you not to give until it hurts, but rather to give until it feels good.

May God richly bless you and your families this Advent Season.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael W. Bragg".

Michael W. Bragg  
President, Serra International Foundation



## Nashville Melchizedek Project invites young men to discern vocation, bloom in faith

by Fr. Gervan Menezes, Chaplain, University Catholic

**F**ifteen men are currently involved in the **Melchizedek Project for the Diocese of Nashville** and are actively seeking God's will for their lives. The Melchizedek Project educates and inspires Catholic students to seriously consider a vocation to priesthood.

We began by personally inviting young men to join our discernment group. We meet once a month for a very nice meal, fellowship, and a program. Our discernment group uses as a guide Fr. Brett Brannen's book, *To Save a Thousand Souls: A Guide for Discerning a*

### *Vocation to Diocesan Priesthood.*

Our monthly gatherings also include a vocation talk from a priest mentor or seminarian. These guest speakers share their personal story of answering the Lord's call and provide great inspiration. Their talks also demonstrate how unique each individual man's call is. These dinner meetings provide a safe and welcoming environment for men to openly explore the priesthood. Lively question-and-answer sessions follow. Relationships are built so that discerning men feel free to call upon me or other priests for guidance.

In my new role as chaplain of University Catholic, the Diocese of Nashville's college campus ministry, I see an opportunity for my work with the Melchizedek Project to be more meaningful than before. The college students are mature, ready and eager to discern what God wants for their lives. Two of University Catholic's recent graduates have been ordained to the priesthood: Fr. Josh Altonji, a 2011 graduate of Vanderbilt University was ordained in Birmingham, Alabama in 2017; Fr. Stephen Schumacher, a 2014 graduate of Vanderbilt, was ordained



Above: Autumn Melchizedek Project discernment retreatants attend all-night Eucharistic Adoration.

Facing page: Fr. Menezes with attendees at the inaugural Melchizedek Project dinner at University Catholic.



Above: Discernment retreatants pose with Most Rev. J. Mark Spalding, Bishop of Nashville, Tennessee.

in May in St. Louis, Missouri. In addition, University Catholic currently has five of its graduates in seminary. Each of these men will attest that their vocation was nurtured, if not discovered, through their involvement here.

One of the seniors from Nashville involved with our Melchizedek Project says his faith has blossomed as a college student. “I now have a greater appreciation for adoration — to quietly sit, read Scripture, and simply be present with the Lord,” he says. “It has been life-changing to open up and allow God to work in my life. All those graces have really lit me on fire.” So much so, in fact, that this young man is now certain he will be going to seminary next year.

The Melchizedek Project has been a tremendous help for the Diocese of Nashville in fostering vocations to the priesthood, and our efforts are building the universal Church as well. Many of the men in college here come from across the United States. The five men in seminary from University Catholic are from five different dioceses.

The funds awarded through the Serra International Foundation grant have made these dinner meetings possible. The fine meals we serve are an enticement for attendance – but the camaraderie and brotherhood that result are the priceless, eternal dividend.

This November, we conducted a very successful Discernment Retreat attended by 11 young men. Fr. John Sims Baker, Fr. Austin Gilstrap, Bishop J. Mark Spalding and I



Above: Most Rev. J. Mark Spalding celebrates Mass at the Discernment Retreat.

shared different aspects of the diocesan priesthood. We also had an all-night adoration to the Blessed Sacrament. It was an awesome experience and opportunity to pray and listen to God’s voice. The local Serra Club of Williamson County further supported us by paying for the meals that weekend.

We are grateful for the Serra International Foundation’s support of our efforts. ☺



## Pray to Love, Love to Pray

Artist brings 400-year-old Visitation Order nuns to the modern eye

**A**nne Goetze is a Tennessee artist whose work has lately turned to fulfill her calling to document the lives and mission of the sisters of the Visitation Order through photography and painting. Her traveling exhibit, “Pray to Love, Love to Pray: The Visitation Nuns” was recently supported by a grant from the Serra International Foundation.

“With a grateful heart, I thank you, SERRA, for your support of ‘Pray to Love,’ the mixed-media art exhibition that has been traveling to Visitation monasteries and schools, museums,

art galleries, and various Catholic-related venues throughout the United States,” Goetze wrote in a report to the Foundation.

“These contemplative women, who give their lives as the underpinning of the Church, are in need of exposure for new postulants,” Goetze points out. “With your help, we are sharing with others their motto and message ‘to be a gentle presence in a violent world.’”

In 2018, Goetze and her exhibit found wide exposure throughout the United States, especially at Catholic universities such as De Sales University in

Center Valley, Pennsylvania. Here her work was viewed by nearly 2,000 people. The exhibit was also shown at the University of Portland, Oregon’s Garaventa Center for Catholic Intellectual Life and American Culture, and the National Shrine of Divine Mercy in Stockbridge, Massachusetts.

In March, Goetze received the Beacon of Light Award. This award is presented by the Williamson County Cultural Arts Commission and recognizes women in the arts “who help to be beacons of light for others through their work.” Several hundred people at-

*Right:*  
'Sr. Margarite Marie Birth-  
place', France by Anne  
Goetze. Archival pigment  
ink, oil, ashes 2018

*Facing page:*  
'See No, Hear No, Speak No  
Evil' by Anne Goetze.  
Archival pigment ink, oil,  
ashes 2015



tended the two-day event, which coincided with International Women's Day and National Catholic Sisters Week.

Inspired by Goetze's Aunt Helen, who was a cloistered Visitation Order nun in Annecy, France, what began as documentation through painting and photography has now expanded to the creation of a film featuring the personal blessings and stories of the nuns. Goetze was granted permission by the Order to film inside the monastery and stay with the nuns in Annecy, where the order began over 400 years ago.

"The beauty of their art and history are truly the talents given by God and given to the glory of God," Goetze said of the Visitation sisters. "As an artist, I was deeply moved. Material gathered will become new paintings."

Recently, the film trailer was screened at the Franklin International Independent Film Festival. The theatre was well attended with a question and answer afterwards, where the discussions covered topics about the existing numbers of Visitation sisters, why the awareness and exposure for the women is needed, and the impact that they make in the lives of others. Coverage on TV and social media reached many thousands. 📌

[www.annegoetze.com](http://www.annegoetze.com)



Above: 'Washing Dishes' by Anne Goetze. Archival pigment ink, oil, 2019



Painter, photographer and filmmaker Anne Goetze at the Visitation Monastery in Annecy, France, where the Order started over 400 years ago.

# Divine Word College prepares missionaries from diverse ethnic and economic backgrounds

## Two seminarians benefit from Serra-supported scholarships

by Emily Shedek



Tomerot Lambert  
DWC seminarian  
Class of 2020



Mark Varghese  
DWC seminarian  
Class of 2020

**D**ivine Word College (DWC) in Epworth, Iowa, is the only Roman Catholic undergraduate seminary in the United States dedicated to educating men and women for missionary service. The college combines a liberal arts education with spiritual formation and mission preparation. It is owned and operated by the Society of the Divine Word (SVD), an international order of over 6,000 missionary priests and brothers. The student body is made up of more than 120 men and women from approximately 20 countries around the world.

Many DWC students come from humble beginnings and require financial assistance to complete their educations. Qualified students sincerely interested in pursuing religious life as a Divine Word Missionary will never be turned away because of an inability to pay.

A \$2,500 grant from the Serra International Foundation will help Divine Word College students achieve their goals by providing financial assistance through scholarships.

DWC Senior Mark Varghese is one of them. Born and raised in Dubai,

United Arab Emirates, Mark's family moved to Canada when he was 13. His family joined an SVD parish when they moved to Canada and attended daily Mass.

From a young age, Mark recalls feeling a desire to be a priest. He was very active in his parish community, taking part in youth groups, the Knights of Columbus and children's Masses.

After talking with his pastor to learn more about Divine Word Missionaries, Mark met with a college vocation director and later enrolled at DWC.

Today, Mark says he wants to be a priest so he can share the Word of God and let people know that God loves them. He will graduate in May 2020 and hopes to work in South America someday.

At DWC, the rich cultural diversity helps students learn to live in an intercultural community, preparing them for life as a missionary priest or brother.

Senior Tomerot Lambert said the multicultural student body is part of what drew him to the college. Born in Ethiopia, Tomerot and his brother were

adopted by a Wisconsin family when he was 7.

In high school, Tomerot decided he wanted to do missionary work and had hopes of opening an orphanage in Ethiopia after college. But his father learned about Divine Word College from a local retired priest and suggested his son consider it. Tomerot did just that, and after three years of classes and discernment, today Tomerot feels called to be a missionary priest. He hopes to be an educator in a developing nation one day.

The scholarship money provided by the Serra International Foundation will help students like Mark and Tomerot. In turn, their service as missionaries will help individuals and communities around the globe in years to come.

The support of the Serra International Foundation and our local Serra Club means so much to our students. Thank you for helping provide scholarship assistance to our students as they discern a call to religious missionary life. [www.dwci.edu](http://www.dwci.edu)

# Nyombayirebaziga Priest Vocational Training Centre thrives after civil war in Rwanda

by Rev. Fr. John Kayitare, Rector

**N**yombayirebaziga Priest Vocational Training Centre was established in 1983 by the Catholic Church Administration of Rwanda. The Centre was started with the major aim of training youth in priesthood ministry and to promote vocations that enable priests to assist Christians in recognizing and responding in their own lives to God's Call to holiness in Jesus Christ.

Although the Centre was established in 1983, after 11 years it suffered the effects of genocide and civil war in Rwanda. This caused a lot of destruction to most of the equipment, machinery and structures at the Centre. As a result, all its activities came to a standstill.

In 2013, the Catholic Church Administration from Rwanda again revived the Centre and it started training programmes for youth in priesthood. This training continues to the present.

In 2015, the Serra International Foundation supported our Centre with a grant that helped us revive the training programmes. This helped us to train some priests who were ordained and who are now serving in churches and institutions.

In 2017, we needed to secure more equipment, materials and bedding because our number of trainees had increased. The Training Centre was then blessed when part of the grant requested was covered by the Serra International Foundation. This grant

helped us a lot in acquiring some of the items we needed.

We at the Nyombayirebaziga Priest Vocational Training Centre appreciate the support from the Serra International Foundation which has helped the implementation of the Priesthood Vocational Training project at our Centre.

It has also enabled us to ordain more priests who are now serving in various churches, schools, in organisations in Rwanda.

Thank you for all you do for the development of the Catholic Churches in the world. We too in Rwanda are committed to priesthood vocation training for youth. 🙏

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## IPF Summer Program helps seminarians “fall more deeply in love with God”

by Kevin Armshaw

**T**he Institute for Priestly Formation was founded to assist bishops in the spiritual formation of diocesan seminarians and priests in the Roman Catholic Church. The Institute responds to the need to foster spiritual formation as the integrating and governing principle of all aspects of priestly formation.

For 25 years, the Institute has been sponsoring a two-month summer program for diocesan seminarians, which takes place on the campus of Creighton University in Omaha, Nebraska. The program includes an eight-day silent directed retreat, classes, and apostolic service.

The essential goal of the program is to provide the time and place for seminarians to “fall more deeply in love

with God,” and to learn how to stay in love, so that love becomes the rock and foundation of everything in their future lives as priests.

The 2019 Summer Program for Seminarians took place from May 26 through July 28. The program opened with 177 participants. The seminarians this year came from 61 United States dioceses and two Canadian dioceses: Vancouver, British Columbia and Kamloops, British Columbia. New York was a new archdiocese this year for the seminarian program.

We deeply appreciate the ongoing support of Serra International, as well as the service of our local Serra Clubs. We are particularly grateful that representatives from Serra International were able to join us for *A Reason for Your Hope*-the IPF 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration. Thank you for helping us offer to seminarians this life-changing experience which deepens their friendship with Christ and sets them on a solid path toward helping others do the same once they become ordained priests. 🙏

# Pallottine Sisters give Mozambican girls confidence, faith, and discernment

by Sr. Elisabete Augusto Ferreira

**T**he project we call **Comprehensive Formation of Pallottine Girls with a Vocation and in Formation**, created by the Congregation of the Sisters of the Catholic Apostle's special mission in Mozambique, is in progress. Thanks to the help of the Serra International Foundation – with whom we are in profound harmony in relation to the objective of promoting vocations to the priestly ministry and consecrated life in the Catholic Church – we are beginning to see some results.

The young girls have been participating in formative meetings aiming to help them in self-knowledge, in the recognition of their own dignity, and in the as-

similation of human and Christian values. Additionally, we provide them with opportunities for discernment for firm and free decisions.

We share with them our charism, whose motto is to “Revive Faith and Rekindle Charity” by striving to bring it closer to the Mozambican reality, helping them to experience the spirituality of St. Vincent Pallotti today. In one of the meetings we spoke about the African saints. This deeply impacted them, as they realised that the saints were young like them, and that they lived their daily lives in a holy way. They understood that the life of sanctity is within their reach, as Pope Francis

teaches, speaking of possible, “down to earth” achievements.

**We can cite some concrete examples of how the project has had an impact on the lives of young girls:**

Two young girls have traveled 400 kilometers to participate in our program. They are already able to express themselves with an open spirit, joy and creativity. One is 16 years old, and despite being very young, she is very motivated to continue participating in the vocational meetings.

One lives some 20 km away and comes everyday to school close to our community. On weekends she is a catechist and



participates in the catechetical formation that the parish offers. She practices beautiful leadership with the girls, and encourages them to participate with commitment in the community and formation meetings.

Another young girl cares for a farm with her widowed mother, goes to school and on Saturdays is also a catechist, a mission she carries out very well. She comes whenever she is asked to attend meetings in the Sisters' house and ani-

mates her colleagues in the organization of the meetings, studies and the work of cooking and cleaning the areas that they occupy during the meeting.

Another young woman is 60 km away and participates in the catechesis of confirmation on weekends and comes with great joy to participate in the meetings in our house.

Two women in formation are taking part in specific courses of formation for

them in the Higher Mother Institute of Africa.

We are happy and grateful for the possibility of helping them with your support. We see that they are exercising their spirituality, in biblical reflections, in reading, and in the preparation of catechesis. They have grown a lot and developed their creativity and openness, as well as their spontaneity. If they become committed women, disciples and apostles of Jesus, it will be worth it! 🙏

Fr. Kerry Abbott, OFM Conv (Vice Rector) speaks to the new class of seminarians.



## Formed to a Priestly Identity and Life: Pontifical North American College's Fall Program

by Mark Randall, Executive Director, Pontifical North American College (Rome)

Every September at the **North American College**, before university courses at the Ecclesiastical Universities begin, each class of seminarians receives a month of intensive conferences on some aspect of our formation. This is the College's opportunity to supplement what the seminarians receive in the classroom with practical, hands-on learning adapted specifically for the culture to which the seminarians will return in their dioceses. For the second-year men, these conferences focus on Priestly Identity. Over three weeks of conferences and a weeklong silent retreat, various faculty members from the College shared from the wealth of their experience to illuminate this theme.

Fr. Joshua Rodrigue, the Director of Spiritual Formation, began the month with an overview of the various aspects of priestly identity enlivened by stories of his own priestly ministry. Accompanying the second-year men to a retreat house in Greccio, Italy for

a week of silence and recollection, Fr. Rodrigue offered brief conferences each day, inviting the to meditate more deeply on the meaning of the priesthood and the mystery of our call to share in the priesthood of Jesus Christ. The retreat each year is greatly anticipated and provides a time for rest and renewal before the beginning the new academic year. The opportunity to spend such time with God, reflecting on the priestly experience shared by our formation and the men's experiences in formation over the previous year, comes as a great blessing.

After returning to the College, Fr. Randy Soto, the new Carl J. Peter Chair of Homiletics, gave a series of conferences on preaching. Discussing everything from the theology of the homily to practical tips for preparation and delivery, Fr. Soto gave great life to the conferences by sharing many of his own experiences in the pulpit. The seminarians also broke out into smaller groups to write and preach practice homilies. Each group

had a faculty moderator who provided feedback and encouragement.

The final week of conferences built on the previous weeks' material, with lectures on the biblical and historical roots of the priesthood, the theology of the priesthood, and a presentation on priestly celibacy by Fr. David Songy, O.F.M. Cap., of the St. Luke Institute. The culmination of the month was a panel discussion open to any and all questions from the seminarians on priestly identity and ministry.

For the seminarians in Third and Fourth Theology, the College invites professionals from the United States to give the men helpful insights into their future ministerial experiences. Weeklong conferences on Pastoral Counselling, Marriage Preparation, developing leadership skills and presiding at the Liturgy are all intended to help the seminarian round off his classroom experiences with an eye toward his new role in the life of the Church. 🕊



## “The sisters who also speak our language”

Servants of the Plan of God Sisters in Ayaviri, Peru,  
learn Quechua to better serve, evangelize, and connect  
with the native population

By Sr. Elizabeth Sánchez Valdivia

**T**he Servants of the Plan of God is a new religious community inspired by the Holy Spirit as an answer for this Third Millennium. We are a community of consecrated women who live the Full Apostolic Availability, living in community and giving ourselves to God in evangelization and solidarity in service.

We were founded on August 15, 1998 with the approval of the Cardinal Augusto Vargas Alzamora S.J., Archbishop of Lima and Primate of Peru. Our particular spirituality received the approval of Pope Saint John Paul II.

The Servants feel the invitation of the Lord Jesus to live apostolate preaching the Gospel to all. We seek to live charity

intensively but particularly with people who have material or spiritual needs. We consecrate ourselves to evangelize youth, culture, family and we give special attention to fragile, sick and poor people, and to our brothers and sisters who suffer.

We wear a habit that identifies us, so that in this apostolic service and charitable work we carry out, our explicit support to the faith of the Church and its mission may be recognized. We develop our apostolic mission in countries of America, Asia, Europe and Africa.

During 2018, our sisters learned Quechua with high qualified teachers and have practiced speaking the lan-

guage with native people. The Serra International Foundation provided us with a \$1,000.00 grant to make this language learning possible.

Quechua is a language that is very poetic, simple, full of similes and onomatopoeia related to the environment of a peasant, for example, nature, crops, weather conditions, etc. It is a language that expresses much emotion and depth.

Knowing all these features helps the Quechua speaker recognize the culture and way of thinking and feeling of the peasants. It helps the speaker understand the peasants' identity, their greatest needs, their relationship with God, and above all, how we could help them

with utmost respect for their culture and customs.

Our sisters have improved their Quechua skills; they are now able to better communicate with these needy people who only speak Quechua. The peasants are very happy when they receive social and pastoral attention from the “sisters who also speak our language.” The peasants, women, elderly, and children have allowed the sisters to know their actual needs, their problems, and to go deeper into their lives.

With this, our sisters have been able to better serve them and really solve some of their problems. These results encourage us to go forward with more Quechua lessons so we can continually improve our service to the poorest people.

During 2018 our sisters have developed these social programs in Ayaviri:

- Mission trips to different Andean villages
- Medical campaigns
- Literacy programs
- Educational service for children and youths
- Assistance for abandoned elderly

It has been a pleasure for us to have fully completed this project. The formation received by our sisters in Ayaviri has borne abundant and good fruits.

We thank the Serra Foundation for being part of these big efforts in evangelization and works of mercy developed by sisters. May Our Mother Mary obtain for you abundant blessings and graces. 🙏  
[www.siervasdelplandios.org](http://www.siervasdelplandios.org)



Above: Catechesis in Quechua with children.

Below: Servants of the Plan of God sisters minister to the most remote mountain villages of Ayaviri (left). They also provide education on hygiene and nutrition (right).



Altar Servers of St. Michael's Parish in Alagapuram attended the local Serra club's "Vocation Bible School" program.



## Salem Diocese's Youth Vocation Programs Yield Real Results

**T**he Diocese of Salem, India, held no less than four day-long "Vocation Bible School" events for youth between November 2018 and May 2019. Three of these events were targeted specifically at altar servers, aiming to strengthen their sense of the true meaning of their service at the altar, as well as to promote vocations to the priesthood and religious life. The topics presented at these events were: "The Value of Vocation," "Holy Altar and Altar Servers," and "Guide to Good Confession." Each attendee received a vocation guide book and each event concluded with Mass. For two vicariate-level events, lunch and transportation were provided to 337 participants from 17 dioceses. One event took place in a single parish; the remaining event took place in a school with 26 students who were encouraged to consider a religious vocation. All in all, these events touched nearly 400 children; of these, 54 came forward to express their interest in the religious life.

On June 28, 2019, the Salem Diocese held a program for seminarians at St. Xavier's Minor University, which has been blessed with five new seminarians this year. Attended by Most Rev. Dr. S. Singaroyan, Bishop of Salem, the program featured the gifting of vocation kits (including the New RSV Bible, Tamil Bible, Oxford Dictionary, Holy Rosary, prayer book, towel, and uniform dress) to all seminarians.

All five of these events were planned and coordinated by the Serra Club of Salem, Tamilnadu, India, led by their chaplain, Rev. Fr. M. Solomonraj.

At the end of the project, five altar servers joined the diocesan seminary and one enrolled in the religious seminary.

The Diocese of Salem is very grateful to the Serra International Foundation for the financial assistance given to facilitate these programs. 🙏

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Total Donations to the Foundation in 2018: \$97,415.90  
 Number of Donations: 319  
 Average Donation: \$306.33

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