



The Serra Club of Johnson County
Region 9 District 12-2 Central Club 949

October 2021
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Serran Sphere

FOR WHOM THE BELLS TOLL

Born in 1713 on the island of Majorca off the east coast of Spain, Miguel José Serra was ordained a Franciscan priest in 1737, taking the name Fr. Junipero Serra. At age 37, he landed in Mexico City, beginning the missionary work that would consume the rest of his life.

In 1768, Fr. Serra assumed control of recently abandoned Jesuit missions, 17 in all, of the Spanish territories that constitute a large portion of the present-day state of California. The Jesuits, after 65 years, were ousted by the Spanish government after rumors were spread that they were keeping riches acquired in California (gold, silver, pearls) and not sharing treasures with the king. Jesuit expulsion began three days after a delivery of the king's order on February 2, 1768. The Jesuits sailed from California to begin their exile back to Europe. Subsequent inventory of the abandoned missions revealed Jesuit abject poverty. Enter the Franciscans.

Serra was in large part responsible for the foundation and spread of the Church on the West Coast of the United States when it was still mission territory. He founded twenty-one missions and converted thousands of Indians. The converts were taught sound methods of agriculture, cattle raising, and arts and crafts. Fr. Junipero Serra died August 28, 1784, at the age of 70.



Mrs. Armitage "Harrye" Forbes

The El Camino Real (literally translated "The Royal Road," and often referred to as "The King's Highway") in 1769 was a footpath begun by the Franciscans north from San Diego to Sonoma, some 529 miles, along which twenty-one missions were founded. The length of the El Camino Real is variously described between 600 and 800 miles in length. The missions are roughly 30 miles apart, a long day's ride on horseback. Today, the El Camino Real is a designated National Historic Landmark.

See Bells, p. 3



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MEETING DATES:

- 10/1/2021—Friday, Holy Hour for Vocations @ Holy Spirit Church **CANCELED**
- 10/7/2021—General Membership Meeting, Mass @ 6:00 PM, Curé of Ars. Includes Mass and dinner, induction of new members
- 10/18/2021—Board Meeting, 6:30 PM, Cornerstone Companies
- 11/4/2021—General Membership Meeting, Mass @ 6:00 PM, Curé of Ars.
- 11/15/2021—Board Meeting, 6:30 PM, Cornerstone Companies



John Donart
Pre-Theology II

MEET JOHN DONART

A 2015 graduate of St. James Academy, John Donart is the son of John (Sr.) and Lisa Donart of Shawnee, KS. John has an older sister, Abby, and credits his parents and his sister with influence of his vocation.

John graduated from KU in December 2018 with a degree in Geography. He entered St. John Vianney Theological Seminary (SJV) in the fall of 2019, spending the first year of seminary in "Spirituality Year" experience. With no formal classes, the Spirituality Year is an opportunity to withdraw from the influence of society and deepen prayer life. A fruitful first year completed, John returned to Pre-Theology I in the fall of 2020 to begin the philosophy

phase of seminary education, and he is now in Pre-Theology II.

Of his seminary experience, John admits, "I am really enjoying my philosophical studies here at SJV; God has really given me a sense of wonder for these topics!"

John describes his vocational call to the priesthood being shaped not only by his family, but also by the witness of priests and seminarians, acknowledging "That witness of many seminarians and priests, as well as an intimate experience with Christ in his sacraments (particularly in the Eucharist and Confession) were integral in spurring me on

*"That witness of many seminarians and priests, as well as an intimate experience with Christ in his sacraments (particularly in the Eucharist and Confession) were integral in spurring me on to answer God's call to the priesthood."
~ John Donart*

WEBSITE UPDATE

Construction continues on the Johnson County Serra Club's website, with the help of **Non-profit Websites**, a national company with more than 20 years' experience websites for nonprofits.

We're getting close to a soft launch, anticipating full public availability by the end of the year.

Stay tuned!

LOOKING FOR HELP

If you have an interest in being part of the communications team for the Serra Club of Johnson County, we have need of help.

We look to develop a social media presence with FaceBook and Twitter.

Please email interest to contact@jocoserra.org, or call or text 402-462-0305.

to answer God's call to the priesthood."

When asked about God-given talents, John offered the following, "God has graced me with some pretty bizarre talents such as grammar, navigating around cities, and the Latin language." A sense of humor appears also to be one of God's gifts to John!

Among his favorite scripture passages is Hebrews 5:14-16. "Having therefore a great high priest who has passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we have not a high priest who cannot have compassion on our infirmities, but one tried as we are in all things except sin. Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

Donart described his reaction to the scripture quote: "This passage illuminates the mystery of the Incarnation, particularly Christ's humanity: he has suffered as we suffer and therefore understands the depths of our miseries. He never sinned but is not unmerciful: He wants to pour every grace upon us to lead us to eternal beatitude."

In his spare time, Donart enjoys playing disc golf and watching college football adding that it can be difficult to find time for either of these in the seminary. He also enjoys making rosaries. "This hobby came about because I could never find a rosary exactly the way I wanted it to be,



Donart Rosary design

so I decided to make my own!"

A little-known fact about John: he went to both K-State and KU. This may qualify as another of Donart's God-given talents.

Keep John and his vocation in your prayers!

BELLS

Continued from p.1



Founded 1892, the California Federation of Women's Clubs adopted in 1902 an effort to preserve California's El Camino Real. The lack of standardized road signs at the time resulted in the placement of distinctive bells along the route, hung on supports in the form of an 11-foot (3.4 m) high shepherd's crook, also described as "a Franciscan walking stick".

The bells were designed by Mrs. Armitage S. C. (Harrye) Forbes, owner of the California Bell Company where they were cast. Harrye Forbes, it turns out, had Kansas connections.

Born in Pennsylvania in 1861, Harrye Rebecca Piper Forbes (née Smith) moved with her family to Wichita, KS, in the 1870s. One of at least nine children, she graduated from Wichita Episcopal College and, in 1868, married English businessman, A.S.C. Forbes (not of Forbes Magazine fame). She became an historical preservationist, journalist, and author. Among her achievements was ownership of The California Bell Company, makers of the first of 450 bells of the El Camino Real, which was unveiled on August 15, 1906, near Olvera Street in Los Angeles. Each bell was inscribed with, "El Camino Real 1769-1906," the dates reflect the founding of the first Mission in 1769 and the dedication of the first bell in Los Angeles in August 1906.

Between 1914 and 1955, The California Bell Company made 9 1/2" replicas of the original El Camino Real bells (original bronze casting bell weight estimate at 100 pounds!). The "El Camino Real Mission Guidepost Desk Bell" was cast of patina bronze and can be found online. The Serra Club of Johnson County happens to have in its possession eighteen of these bells. "How might this have happened?" one may ask. I asked myself!



In search of the answer, my wife and I spent a lovely evening at the Ray and Jennifer Zielinski home, seeing and hearing what they knew about the bells, as Ray had mentioned the bells at a recent Serra Club board meeting. They related that they had been given the collection by Fr. Francis Hund a few years ago, indicating further they had no knowledge of how Fr. Francis had come into possession of them. Ray recalled that it was Fr. Francis' desire that the bells should be connected to the Serra Club mission.

Fr. Francis agreed to meet after 0615 AM Mass on a Monday morning in the church narthex at Prince of Peace. He led me to a conference room just inside the school where we got acquainted and spoke about the bells. He related that he had been given the bells in 2010 or 2011 by long-time Curé of Ars parishioner, Mr. Florent Wagner. Uncertain as to Mr. Wagner's current whereabouts, Fr. Francis indicated that Mr. Wagner, "lived for years across the parking lot behind Curé of Ars."



Fr. Francis related a narrative of his visits to the El Camino Real, and his desire to return in the not-too-distant future. He described the beauty he encountered at various missions he has visited. Fr. Francis kept the bells in his possession until about 2017, when he was preparing to leave Nativity and recognizing the need to downsize. Keeping one bell in his possession, Fr. Francis entrusted the remaining bell collection to the Zielinskis, parishioners at Nativity and members of the Serra Club of Johnson County. Our delightful conversation came to an end all too soon. I thanked Fr. Francis for his time.

I found Florent Wagner in the White Pages and placed a call to his residence on a Thursday morning. I was greeted by a message recorded in Mr. Wagner's voice, asking me to leave my name, number, and a brief message. Mr. Wagner returned the call a few hours later, from his post as docent of the Overland Park Historical Society Museum on west 79th Street, at the northwest corner of old town Overland Park, where he spends every weekday afternoon from 1 PM to 5 PM. He indicated his willingness to meet. As only God can do, it so happened that I had a two-hour hole in my workday. Mr. Wagner said, "Come on over. I will be here."

I grabbed pen and pad and headed to Overland Park.

See Wagner, p. 5

SERRA CLUB
OF JOHNSON COUNTY

**2021-22
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George Len

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Date	Agenda	Location
October 1 Friday	Holy Hour for Vocations CANCELED	Holy Spirit Church Overland Park
October 7-10	Serra International Convention	Palmer House Hilton Chicago, IL
October 7 Thursday	General Membership Meeting (Mass/Initiation of new members) Mass @ 6:00 PM	Fr. Burak Room Curé of Ars Leawood, KS
October 13-14	Visit to Kenrick-Glennon Seminary	St. Louis, MO
October 16 Saturday	Bishop Ward High School Homeward Bound Auction 5:30 PM	Ward High School Kansas City, KS
October 18 Monday	Board Meeting	Cornerstone Companies 6:30 PM
October 30 Saturday	Serra International Rosary for Vocations 8:00 AM	https:// global.gotomeeting.com/ join/314315981
November 4 Thursday	General Membership Meeting Mass @ 6:00 PM	Curé of Ars Leawood, KS
November 5 Friday	Holy Hour for Vocations 11:00 AM	Holy Spirit Church Overland Park

*St. Michael the Archangel,
defend us in battle. Be our
defense against the wicked-
ness and snares of the devil.*

*May God rebuke him, we
humbly pray, and do Thou,
O Prince of Heavenly Hosts,
cast into hell Satan and all
evil spirits, who prowl
about the world seeking the
ruin of souls.*

Amen.



WAGNER

Continued from p.3

The next 45 minutes blew by. Mr. Wagner was gracious in relating his story. Several stories. Never married, he grew up a collector. A collection of bells happens to be one his biggest. He also collects clocks and music boxes. He estimated that he purchased the El Camino Real bells individually “at antique shows, rummage sales, estate sales, wherever one appeared, between about 1954 and 1990.”

“I bought them wherever I could find them,” adding, “my mother was a collector and started taking me to antique shows when I was about three years old.”

Conversation turned momentarily to an old cream separator in the window of the museum. I pointed out to Florent that I remembered my maternal grandmother operating a cream separator on the farm when I was a kid. She had a Guernsey cow she milked twice daily.

“Okay,” he began thoughtfully, “very few people come in who actually know what that is.” He launched into the value of the Guernsey cow to the dairy industry, remarking that the dairy industry was big in Kansas City, KS, and in Johnson County. He asked about my family and northeast Kansas, and we soon connected insofar as his mother’s family included a very common name in my hometown community of Seneca, KS. He had been there.

I described my home communities (the Seneca/St. Benedict area) as German Catholic communities, “with a few of us Czechs sprinkled around the area.”

“Well, there were Czechs who were good Catholics, too!” At 84, Wagner did not miss a beat. The world quickly got smaller. We covered so much more ground than I can relate.

*“Priests are probably the most important part of our lives, at least my life.”
~Florent Wagner*

A history buff, Wagner experienced part of the El Camino Real during a family vacation as a youth. He recalled being at a couple of the California missions. His dream for his bell collection was to build a model/map of California, placing a bell on the map locating each of the twenty-one missions founded by Fr. Junipero Serra and the Franciscans. Raised a Catholic, he has been a parishioner at Curé of Ars for 54 years, and a member of the Serra Club of Kansas City, Kansas for “about 35 years.” He began volunteering after retirement. “I retired at 48,” he said, adding flatly, “that was a mistake!”

Wagner grew up in Kansas City, MO. His home parish was St. Thérèse the Little Flower, at 58th and Euclid. He described both of his parents having grown up in religious families. “Grandma Wagner was a very religious person.” He appreciates having learned “the rules and regulations” along with the effort his parents made at instilling a faith life in him and his brother. Two of his aunts were religious sisters. Wagner graduated from law school in 1960 and went into legal work in the banking industry. “It did. I thought I was floating in the clouds.”

When informed that the trail of the El Camino Real bells led to him, he responded with direct it elsewhere.”

Florent spoke from the heart about the importance of his Catholic faith, indicating that he has the Serran prayer for vocations memorized, saying it regularly for vocations.

“Every time I get a bill from Serra, I remember to say it, for sure!” he quipped with a smile. Florent lamented the fact that health issues kept him from being involved as much as he might like. “I keep paying the membership even though I don’t get there,” he added, describing his fidelity to the Serran mission despite his occasional inability to participate more fully.

When asked about priests important in his life, he mentioned three: Fr. McKenna and Msgr. Coates of St. Thérèse Parish during his early life. “I wrote a biography of Msgr. Coates when I was in school there.” He included Fr. Richard Story, Pastor of Curé of Ars, with whom he enjoys an occasional lunch. “Priests are probably the most important part of our lives, at least my life,” he observed after a moment of reflection.

The gift of the encounter was entirely mine. I learned once again about the joy that exists in every soul, waiting to be tapped. Before I departed, I asked if I could snap a picture for the article.

“The way I look?” He smiled again, his eyes twinkling.

Because of a collection of small bells forged in the image of great bells along the El Camino Real, Florent and I were gifted with our time together. Once again, pilgrim paths intersected and God blessed the encounter. God draws us all together in ways only He can direct. St. Junipero Serra. The Zielinskis. Fr. Francis. Florent Wagner. All of us. We are for whom the bells toll.

SEMINARIAN BIRTHDAYS

October/November

Michael Santamarina—Oct. 6

Will Sutherland—Oct. 20

Cesar Gomez—Nov. 26

Mark your calendar with Seminarian Birthdays and pray for the seminarian’s intention.

CORRECTION:

The September newsletter incorrectly stated Will Sutherland’s birthday. His birthday is October 20.



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**SERRA CLUB
OF JOHNSON COUNTY**

The mission of the Serra Club of Johnson County is to pray for and support vocations to the ministerial priesthood and to the consecrated life of the Catholic Church in the Archdiocese of Kansas City in Kansas.

Membership is open to lay Catholics inspired to join the mission of prayer and support for vocations.

Invite friends to email a note of interest in joining the Club to: contact@jocoserra.org

The club will soon launch a new website. Stay tuned for this exciting development!

SERRAN PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS

O God, Who wills not the death of a sinner, but rather that he be converted and live, grant we beseech you, through the intercession of the Blessed Mary ever Virgin, Saint Joseph, her spouse, Saint Junipero Serra, and all the saints, an increase of laborers for Your church, fellow laborers with Christ to spend and consume themselves for souls, through the same Jesus Christ Your Son, Who lives and reigns with You, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God forever, and ever. Amen.

Prayer is the basis of Serra.

We pray like everything depends on God and work like everything depends on us!

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PLEASE
PLACE
STAMP
HERE

