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Serran Sphere

JOANE WILKERSON, VP MEMBERSHIP SERRA LIFE A COINCIDENCE?



It's fair to say that Joane Wilkerson's role as VP Membership of the Serra Club of Johnson County is likely not a matter of coincidence. Upon hearing that her dad, Joe VanDyke, had been a 58-year member and former president of the Serra Club of Kansas City, MO, I was determined to get the full story. First meeting Joane when my wife, Ginny, and I joined the Serra Club 18 months ago, I heard her remark that it was her father's involvement with Serra that became her motivation to belong to a Serra Club.

Joane and her husband, Bryan Wilkerson, live in Leawood, KS. They are the parents of four children. I was able to connect with Joane over a mocha at McClain's Market at I-435 and Roe not long ago. It was a

busy Saturday morning.

"So how did it happen?" I asked Joane, in reference to her becoming a Serran.

"While he never said, 'I want you to join Serra,'" Joane recalled with obvious fondness, "my dad was a great role model, an inspiration, and a mentor. He went to daily Mass first at St. Francis Xavier and later at St. Thomas More, prayed the Serran Prayer for Vocations every day, and was totally devoted to my mom."

Joane went on to explain that Joe was raised by his mother after his father died at age 26 of complications of strep throat. Joe was 13 months of age. "Dad was raised by his mother, Tillie Metzler VanDyke, with help from her sister, Anna O'Callaghan, and her husband, Jim. Dad graduated from Rockhurst High School and went on to Notre Dame University, where he met my mom, Maryhelen McGraw."

The youngest of four VanDyke children, Joane related that her brother, Mike, is the current president of the Serra Club of KCMO. Her brother, Jim, is also a member of the club. The photo at right was taken the day of their induction into the Serra Club, which was also the day their father, Joe, was honored for his 50-year membership in the club, May 17, 2006. In the group photo (right), Mike is on the left, and Jim is second from left. In the photo below left, Joe VanDyke is congratulated by Bishop Joseph Finn, of the Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph, MO.



A note from that ceremony confirms, in his own words, Joe's observation that during the previous 50 years he didn't think that he had ever forgotten to daily pray the Serra Prayer for Vocations, adding, "Sometimes I even prayed it more than once," before finishing with, "I must have recited the vocation prayer at least 18,250 times during my lifetime." Quite a feat. Not to mention an inspired response to a calling!



Joane continued her thought about her dad, and the example he provided to her and her siblings. "My dad was a simple man. Being an only child, he loved being married to my mom, in part, because she was one of five children in her family. He loved the togetherness of family. Mom and Dad were always together. They

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MEETING/EVENT DATES:

- **12/1/2022—6:30 PM,** General Membership Meeting—**Church of the Nativity**
- **12/2/2022—11:00 AM,** First Friday Holy Hour—**Curé of Ars**
- **12/5/2022—6:00 PM,** First Tuesday Holy Hour—**Curé of Ars**
- **12/16—12/18/2022,** Quo Vadis discernment experience—**Savior Pastoral Center**
- **12/26/2022—7:00 PM,** JOCO Serra Board Meeting, **Holy Spirit Church**
- **1/5/2023—6:30 PM** General Membership Meeting—**Curé of Ars**

Advent and the Vocational Call to Holiness

As the Church draws Ordinary Time to a close each year, she looks to the Book of Revelation as both an invitation and a word of caution to the faithful. In the Lectionary Cycle C (just finished), one recent reading that caught my attention in a way I have never previously experienced was the story about Jesus and his entry into Jerusalem. He had just dined with Zaccheus, the tax collector, in Jericho. Geographically, Jericho is on the West Bank of the Jordan River and about 30 miles east of Jerusalem. To get from Jericho to Jerusalem requires passage over a mountainous area that, in Jesus' day, would have taken more than a day.

*As he drew near, he saw the city and wept over it, saying, "If this day you only knew what makes for peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes. For the days are coming upon you when your enemies will raise a palisade against you; they will encircle you and hem you in on all sides. They will smash you to the ground and your children within you, and they will not leave one stone upon another within you **because you did not recognize the time of your visitation.**" (Luke 19:41-44)*

I added the emphasis in the final phrase to call attention to that portion of the reading that caught my attention.

In Advent 2019, pre-COVID, Ginny and I were blessed to travel to the Holy Land. We saw the very spot where Jesus wept over Jerusalem. There now stands the church, Dominus Flevit, which literally translates, "the master wept." The photo was taken peering through the window in Dominus Flevit. The view is both breathtaking and haunting, given Jesus' sorrow in the moments He stood there.

Jesus, in his approach to his Passion and Crucifixion, lamented those who had not come to know him.

How, I wondered as I meditated on this Gospel passage that I had heard many times before, does one come to know anyone, let alone know Jesus?

Of course, it happens through conversation. In the case of our relationship with Jesus, this conversation is prayer. In our culture today, how many no



"Prayer is our humble answer to the inconceivable surprise of living." ~Abraham Heschel

longer know, or have ever known, Jesus? In my reflection, I realized that **often I do not recognize Him.**

Polish-born American philosopher and rabbi, Abraham Heschel (1907 – 1972) said, "Prayer is our humble answer to the inconceivable surprise of living." One might expect nothing less from an individual who escaped Poland after his arrest by the Nazis. His mother was later murdered by the Nazis, and two sisters died in Nazi concentration camps. Heschel's reflection is *en pointe*. Gratitude, an ideal state from which to start any prayer conversation, begins with recognizing life itself as a gift. *Thank you, Jesus, for the gift of my life.*

Yet another perspective on prayer comes from President Abraham Lincoln, in an 1863 proclamation of A National Day of Fasting, Humiliation, and Prayer, in which he offered the following words, as applicable to our nation today as they were 160 years ago in a nation ravaged by Civil War.

Lincoln said: "We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of Heaven. We have been preserved, these many years, in peace and prosperity. We have grown in numbers, wealth, and power, as no other nation has ever grown. But we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace, and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own, intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us."

Finally, in a verse from the closing hymn at Mass on the Feast of Christ the King, another phrase caught my attention in a way I had never before recognized, despite having played and sung the song at least a hundred times or more over the years. From the 1987 song, "Lead Me, Lord," by John Becker, the following line from the second verse jumped off the page and left me again in rather deep thought as I finished my post-Mass thanksgiving to Jesus: "Blest are those whose hunger only holiness can fill, for I say they shall be satisfied."

Hmmm . . . true satisfaction comes from a hunger for holiness. Go figure.

In a world that clamors for validation on the human level – everyone hungers to be recognized, rewarded, made to

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SERRA USA COUNCIL OF SERRA INTERNATIONAL A SPONSOR OF SEEK23!

The Serra USA Council of Serra International will be a booth sponsor at the annual FOCUS rally, known this year as SEEK23! This development, further evidence to support the notion that Serra membership is a natural segue for former FOCUS missionaries, occurred in the last month.



For those not familiar, SEEK is a biennial FOCUS event that draws thousands of college students from around the country (indeed, around the world!) into a week-long immersion in their Catholic faith. SEEK23 will happen January 2–6, 2023, in St. Louis, MO.

While college students are the “focus” of SEEK, it is an event open to Catholics of all ages. If you have never experienced 10,000+ folks in silent adoration of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament (a pinnacle among many inspiring SEEK events!) you simply must afford yourself the opportunity to partake in this event.

From the SEEK23 official website, “*Through prayer, sacraments, inspiring keynotes, and more, this event is an opportunity to encounter the Gospel anew and to be revived, equipped and encouraged for the life of faith Christ is calling us to lead.*”

If the Holy Spirit moves you to join the excitement, [Register here for SEEK23!](#)

Check out these individuals from a great line-up of keynote speakers:

- [Chika Anyanwu](#) — Nigerian Catholic speaker and evangelist, author of “*My Encounter: How I Met Jesus in Prayer.*”
- [Hilary Draftz](#) — FOCUS missionary since 2005, now director of the West Region where she leads a team of 6 regional directors. Hilary and her husband, Tom, adopted five (5) amazing children in 2021.
- [Fr. Josh Johnson](#) — Director of Vocations for the Diocese of Baton Rouge and Pastor, Sacred Heart of Jesus Catholic Church. Popularly known for his podcast, “Ask Fr. Josh,” and his Ascension Presents YouTube series, “The Ask Fr Josh Show,” his greatest desire is to become a saint, followed by the desire to form saints within his parish boundaries.
- [Sr. Mariam James Heidlund, SOLT](#) — a former Division I athlete who experienced a radical conversion in 1998 and joined the Society of Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity (SOLT). She tweets at @onegroovynun.
- [Sr. Bethany Madonna, SV](#), a 2006 graduate of the University of Central Florida, joined the Sisters of Life in 2007, drawn by a profound encounter with the Lord, which drew her heart toward the vulnerable unborn and their mothers.
- [Fr. Mike Schmitz](#) — need anymore be said?

SEMINARIAN BIRTHDAYS

November/December

Cesar GomezNov 26

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

**PLAN NOW TO BE AT THE JANUARY SERRA CLUB
GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING
AT CURÉ OF ARS
6:30 PM THURSDAY, JANUARY 5, 2023**



*Calling all expert (and novice) chili-makers!
Compete for prizes and help raise \$\$ for vocations!
Bring your best pot of chili to share with
friends and guests!*

Taste the fare and cast votes with cash!

DON'T FORGET:

**General
Membership
Meeting**

**Thursday, Dec 1,
2023
6:30 PM**

**CHURCH OF
THE NATIVITY**

**New member
Recruitment**

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**SERRA CLUB
OF JOHNSON COUNTY**

**2022-23
Officers**

President
John Weber

President Elect
Dale Romme

**Immediate Past
President**
Doug Leibbrandt

Secretary
Judy Rielley

Treasurer
Chuck Lillis

Vice Presidents

Vocations
Thomas and Nicole Skoch

Membership
Joane Wilkerson

Programs
Larry Ryan

Communications
Michael Skoch

Trustees
Len Chmelka
Ray Zielinski
George Len

District Governor
John Caton

Date	Agenda	Location
December 1 Thursday	JOCO Serra General Member- ship Meeting 6:30 PM	Church of the Nativity Leawood, KS MEMBERSHIP RECRUITMENT
December 2 Friday	First Friday Holy Hour For Vocations 11:00 AM	Holy Spirit Church Overland Park, KS
December 6 Tuesday	First Tuesday Holy Hour For Vocations 6:00 PM	Curé of Ars Church Leawood, KS
December 8 Thursday	JOCO Serra Rosary for Vocations 7:30 PM	See website for Zoom link
December 15 Thursday	JOCO Serra Rosary for Vocations 7:30 PM	See website for Zoom link
December 16- 18 Fri/Sun	Quo Vadis Discernment experience for young men	Savior Pastoral Center Kansas City, KS
December 22 Thursday	JOCO Serra Rosary for Vocations 7:30 PM	See website for Zoom link
December 26 Monday	JOCO Serra Board Meeting 7:00 PM	Holy Spirit Church Overland Park, KS
December 29 Thursday	JOCO Serra Rosary for Vocations 7:30 PM	See website for Zoom link
January 2-6 Mon/Fri	SEEK23	St. Louis, MO (See article in this newsletter)
January 3 Tuesday	First Tuesday Holy Hour for Vocations 6:00 PM	Curé of Ars Church Leawood, KS
January 5 Thursday	JOCO Serra General Membership Meeting Great Chili Cook-Off 6:30 PM	Curé of Ars Church Leawood, KS

**Pray for the
QUO VADIS**

**Discernment Weekend
December 16-18, 2022
and for the young men at-
tending this event!**

SERRA RALLY – JANUARY 12-15, 2023, Irving, TX!

Make plans now to attend the annual Serra Rally, "Serra: now more than ever!"
Register here for the event or go to <https://serraus.org/serra-rally-2023/>

Held at the Westin Irving Convention Center in Irving, TX, this year's event features Serra International Episcopal Adviser **Thomas Cardinal Collins**, Archbishop of Toronto, **Fr. Jorge Torres**, Executive Director, USCCB Committee on Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations, the **Most Rev. Edward Burns**, Bishop, Diocese of Dallas, and **Dr. Jonathan Sanford**, President, University of Dallas.



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feel special often for simply doing what is expected of them, let alone anything extraordinary – it is imperative to understand the purpose of one’s being: to know God, to love God, and to serve God in this life, so that we can spend eternity with Him in Heaven. Nothing more, nothing less. To the extent that one is certain of this self-worth rooted God’s love and generosity, the need for human affirmation dissipates exponentially. To the extent *we do not recognize Him*, our cup will forever remain half-empty.

Advent is a time to change how well we know Jesus. As we anticipate the commemoration of Jesus’ birth at Christmas, let us take up our vocational call to holiness – the foundation of our mission as Serrans – by entering into conversation with Jesus . . . repeatedly. St. Paul, in his first letter to the Thessalonians said, “Pray without ceasing.” (1 Thes 5:17)

It doesn’t have to be elaborate. Talk to Jesus like you talk to your best friend. Make this Advent a time to get to know Jesus, too, as a best friend. You won’t be disappointed. In fact, you will be satisfied.

QUO VADIS DISCERNMENT WEEKEND EXPERIENCE for high school age young men of the Archdiocese will occur **December 16–18, 2022** at Savior Pastoral Center. The Serra Clubs of Johnson County and KCKS will help sponsor the event. Vocations Director, Fr. Dan Morris, expects 50–75 young men in attendance. This year’s event will feature a pancake breakfast provided by KCK Knights of Columbus clubs on Saturday morning, along with opportunity for pro-life activities. Keep the young men attending the Quo Vadis weekend experience in your prayers!

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They celebrated their anniversary every year for as long as I can remember by having a lobster dinner together at the Savoy Grill.”

“I remember sitting on my dad’s lap as a young girl. He would sometimes take out his wallet, and I would explore. I recall finding the Serran Prayer card tucked into it,” she said, “the same card we use today.”

Joane noted that she and her siblings are all different combinations of her parents’ traits. “Dad studied engineering at Notre Dame and, of course, had the mind of an engineer. Mom’s favorite thing to do in the world was to volunteer. My oldest brother, Mike, has an engineering mind. He’s the thinker and organizer. Jim is the sentimental one,” she related. “He used to send flowers to our mother every year on *his* birthday,” emphasizing the word, “his,” with the obvious pride of a younger sister, adding, “I mean, what other guy does that kind of a thing?” She laughed with recalled amazement. Joane has an older sister, Mary Jayneen, who is 16 1/2 years older, and moved away when Joane was 6 years old. Mary Jayneen lives in Tulsa, OK.

“Me? I am a bit the thinker and the volunteer,” she said, before adding a comment that, because of her parents’ community involvement in many ways, she grew up knowing “lots of people in the Kansas City area.” She considers this, too, a blessing.



Joe VanDyke died April 22, 2014, of congestive heart failure. His wife, Maryhelen, had preceded him in death by four years. Joe was with his family at home during his final days; in fact, Joane and her niece, Amy, spent his final hours with him. He was alert until the end, when he looked at Joane and asked her to cancel the evening’s reservations for Taco Tuesday at Bogies, “...because I am having lobster dinner with Mom tonight.” The day of Joe’s death would have been Joe and Maryhelen’s 70th wedding anniversary.

While the notion of becoming a Serran was already a part of her experience, Joane shared that, after her father’s death, Jerry Malone who, at that time, was a member and former president of the Serra Club of Johnson County, began to prompt her with repeated invitations to join the club, citing her dad’s long-time membership as a reason to do so.

“Jerry Malone put me over the top. He told me that he had seen my dad every morning at Mass at St. Thomas More, and he just knew that Dad would want me to be a Serran. Then, in 2019, Jerry died suddenly, and I know I had a calling. I felt as though someone actually tapped me on the shoulder. I had this sense that Jerry and Dad had teamed up, making it impossible for me to put it off any longer,” she said, a tear now appearing in the corner of her eye. “I knew it was where I wanted to be.”

Not only did Joane join Serra, but she soon took on the role of VP Membership, and what enthusiasm she brings to the role! She explains that, like her dad, she’s after souls eager to join the Serran cause of supporting vocations to the priesthood and religious life. She knows from her experience that the work of Serra involves good marriages, strong families, and a commitment to living out the Catholic faith. “We are all bound by the faith we share and the call to build up the Church through living out our own vocations.”

Being a Serran is not a coincidence in life. No, not at all.