



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

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Serran Sphere

THE BIRTH OF A VOCATION MICHAEL SKOCH, MD



On Christmas Day, I was among family holding my youngest grandson, Simon Thomas, having a peaceful moment with him amid the cacophony of what are our usual gatherings. Simon was, at the time, just past his 2nd month birthday. Totally unaware of the intimacy I experienced, he was peacefully asleep on my crossed knee, his face reflecting a smile as he enjoyed his nap. My maternal grandmother called these “angel smiles.”

Holding Simon, I appreciated the magnanimity of his life that this point in time. His birth reflects to me an act of faith undertaken by his father (our son, Thomas) and his mother (our daughter-in-law, Nicole). Marriage and starting a family are not the 21st century norm for young people in their mid-

20s. Statistics tell us that, increasingly, young adults do not choose marriage until their mid-thirties or later, if at all. My son and his wife are blessed to be among a group of courageous young married adults, tackling parenthood in a time when many reject it temporarily or permanently. I rejoiced in that quiet moment with God and with Simon at the courage of his parents, and other parents like Simon’s, in their cooperation with faith that brings about new life like his.

I considered Simon’s innocence, and his dependence on his mother for the basics of nutrition (and much more!); and on both his parents for warmth, security, and love. I admired for Nicole in her sacrifice for her son, not at all unlike the sacrifice I witnessed in my wife, Ginny, as she nurtured our children in infancy. I was deeply moved by the whole encounter with Simon even as I experienced the peripheral antics of older grandchildren. It wasn’t more than a few minutes. I pondered the devotion of young parents – our children and their spouses - to raising their families. Marriage and parenting are challenging at any time, but in today’s culture, it seems especially so.

Privileged to hold each of my grandchildren in their earliest days, each encounter was memorable. Here, smitten with Simon, I sensed the rush of God’s grace upon me and upon our family. My wife and I are blessed with thirteen grandchildren. I had a “God-moment.”

The very next day, I read an article written for [The Catholic Thing](#) by Fr. Paul Scalia (son of former Supreme Court Justice, Antonin Scalia) on the Feast of the Holy Family. “*The Pilgrim Family*” addressed important attributes of family, especially a family modeled after the Holy Family which, Fr. Scalia asserts, is not only realistic but **the Holy Family provides the perfect example to be modeled.** I wish I could say that we had been entirely intentional about modeling the Holy Family. That’s another story. Suffice it to say, our children appear to be doing much better at it. Scalia identifies focus, purpose, and direction in life, all traits of the Holy Family. Though materially poor, the Holy Family was spiritually rich, parents possessing a healthy sense that the life to come is far more important than earthly existence now.

See Birth p. 3



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MEETING/EVENT DATES:

- 2/2/2022 World Day for Consecrated Life
- 2/3/2022—General Membership Meeting, 6:30 PM, **HOLY TRINITY PARISH**, Lenexa, KS
- 2/28/2022—Board Meeting, 7:00 PM, Cornerstone Companies
- 3/3/2022—General Membership meeting, 6:30 PM, Curé of Ars



Sudeep Kodigandla
Theology IV

MEET DEACON SUDEEP KODIGANDLA

Editor’s note: This month’s story is written in first person, authored by seminarian, Deacon Sudeep Kodigandla. Enjoy his story!

“My Soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my savior” – Lk 1:46-47

My name is Sudeep Kodigandla. I am a transitional deacon of the Archdiocese of Kansas City in Kansas. I come from a small town called C.N. Kota, in Anantapur district, in the state of Andhra Pradesh, India. My father was a teacher in a Catholic elementary school and my mother is a housewife. I have an elder brother and a younger brother. All my family lives in India. I grew up in a traditional Catholic joint family with uncles, aunts and their children and grandchildren, all living together in the same house.

I went to Catholic grade school that gave priority to Christian and human values. Later I joined “Andhra Loyola College,” (the equivalent of an American college prep school) run by Jesuit priests when, for the first time, I was away from my family. It was here that I had opportunities to prove my talents and grow in confidence. The best things I learned at college that continue to help me are public speaking and organizational skills. On finishing my junior college, I joined A.V.S. college to pursue my bachelor’s degree in business and commerce in a neighboring state.

“As I grew older, I understood the magnitude of the work done by the missionaries that came to India, which inspired me to become a missionary to go to other countries where there is a need for priests.” – Deacon Sudeep Kodigandla

WEBSITE UPDATE

Have a look at the Johnson County Serra Club’s website! You can find it at [Serra Club of Johnson County \(jocoserra.org\)](https://www.jocoserra.org)

Find out the latest news, check the calendar, learn about how Serra can benefit you while your work in Serra benefits others. Volunteer to help at special events!

WELCOME CLAUDIA!

The JOCO Serra Communications team has a new member. Claudia Caton is helping with the Serran Sphere. Welcome aboard, Claudia!

If you have interest in joining the team, let us know.

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

Check us out on the web @ <https://www.jocoserra.org>

Here, were many opportunities to understand different cultures, traditions, and ways of life of different people, which prepared me for my future journey to the United States. It was a very enriching experience.

When I was still a young boy, I encountered many good and holy priests that were good friends of my family. These encounters enabled me to consider the idea of becoming a priest. Around the same time, my grandfather, who was educated by missionaries that came to India, shared lots of stories about several priests doing God’s holy work. These stories nurtured my desire to become a priest. When only four years old, I attended the priestly ordination of my uncles. My mom reminds me that I told her on that day, that someday I would become a priest like them. As I grew up, I witnessed other people in my family and extended family making their professions as religious nuns and priests. This further strengthened my desire to become a priest, after the model of Jesus Christ. As I grew older, I understood the magnitude of the work done by the missionaries that came to India, which inspired me to become a missionary to go to other countries where there is a need for priests. I spent several years pursuing this desire to be a missionary. With the help of my uncle, Fr. Marinand Mendem, current pastor of Sacred Heart and St. Casimir parishes in Leavenworth, I was able to communicate with the Archdiocese of Kansas City, KS. It was during my final year of college that I received a call from the Archdiocese. I was invited to the Archdiocese for a visit which helped me to see and know more about its people.

During my visit to Kansas, I felt at home and at peace. I applied and was accepted as a seminarian for the Archdiocese of Kansas City in Kansas in 2015. I began my seminary studies at Kenrick Glennon Seminary. I entered the Pre-Theology program and graduated with Bachelor’s in philosophy on 13 May 2017. I entered the theology program in August 2017, and I was ordained a deacon on 22 May 2021. I continue my formation in anticipation of being ordained a priest for the Archdiocese of Kansas City in Kansas on 28 May 2022. The ordination will occur at Cathedral of St. Peter in Kansas City, Kansas.

It is a blessing to be called by God and the Archbishop to serve here in the Archdiocese. I am excited to serve the people of the Archdiocese who have accepted me as their own. This diocese is my home, and I am blessed to call it home.

Many have asked me about my likes. I enjoy playing table-tennis (pong-pong), fishing, and spending time near water. Cooking is a passion and, while I am very good at Indian cooking, I am learning to cook other cuisines as well. I have been told that I can be funny! I appreciate learning new things and meeting new people.

I have one request: pray for me as I continue this journey through my formation toward priesthood, so that I may dedicate myself completely and freely to the service of Christ and his Church here in the Archdiocese. Please know that my prayers are with you. May God’s graces be with you, may our Blessed Mother guide you and may St. Joseph guard and protect you.

Our Blessed Mother began preparing for her Son's vocation even before His birth. This is perhaps among the most significant of her actions for us to consider as we move through an age in which the paramount purpose of family lies in the supernatural – the handing on of the faith.

Fr. Scalia wrote, "It is increasingly necessary for us, in our culture, to recall this supernatural purpose of the family. The necessities and benefits the family once provided an individual (financial security, physical security, education, etc.) the state now provides (or promises, anyway). Rightly or wrongly, we don't rely on the family for those things anymore. It's now clearer that the family provides what no one else can: a place where Christ is learned, worshipped, and lived. In short, the domestic church."

Our work in Serra is focused on vocations: we pray for the vocational call to holiness given to each of us; we pray for priestly and religious vocations in the Church; we pray for healthy and holy marriages for ourselves (those of us married) and our children and grandchildren called to the Sacrament of Matrimony.

Our Serran purpose is to help one another in living out God's call in our lives, even while we devote our prayer to vocations and contribute materially to the support of vocations in the Church, assisting those who, in answering their vocational call, accept a life of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Serra is a place where the family – the primary domestic church – can find strength and support; Serra is a secondary domestic church.

I became aware, during my quiet reverie with Simon on this memorable past Christmas day, of the privilege I have as his "YeYe" (our grandchildren call me "YeYe" – Chinese for "grandpa" – another story in itself. . .) to pray for his vocation, pray for his parents' marriage vocation, and pass along the gift of faith that I have been given. With God's help, it will happen. The interdependency of vocations became clear as I later read Fr. Scalia's essay about the pilgrim family on the Feast of the Holy Family. Solid marriages are based on a relationship centered on Christ. I thanked God for the gifts of the faithful priests and religious sisters who touched my life and the life of my family, helping us along our journey, keeping us centered. Priestly and religious vocations are rooted in the faith life of the family – the domestic church – as imperfect as it may at times be. It is out of the domestic church that God calls laborers to serve in His vineyard, the greater Church.

The Holy Family pilgrimage to Jerusalem, a caravan migrating for the Feast of Passover, foretells our pilgrimage journey to heaven. Our purpose is to get there and to help one another along the way. In its [Prologue](#), the Catechism of the Catholic Church defines our purpose, to know and love God:

"God, infinitely perfect and blessed in himself, in a plan of sheer goodness freely created man to make him share in his own blessed life. For this reason, at every time and in every place, God draws close to man. He calls

man to seek him, to know him, to love him with all his strength. He calls together all men, scattered and divided by sin, into the unity of his family, the Church. To accomplish this, when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son as Redeemer and Savior. In his Son and through him, he invites men to become, in the Holy Spirit, his adopted children and thus heirs of his blessed life."

Fr. Scalia said in his article, "Purpose . . . brings perseverance. If you're uncertain about your destination, you're not likely to continue striving for it. A pilgrim without a destination is no longer a pilgrim." Once the vision is lost, the will is diminished.

Encountering my sleeping cherub grandson on Christmas Day, I considered Simon's birth the birth of a vocation, the first time such a thought about a child's birth occurred to me. It is, nonetheless, true. Parents and grandparents (the domestic church), while unable to know a child's vocation a priori, assume the responsibility of cultivating the child's response to whatever vocational call God reveals in time. Parents give a child tools and preparation to recognize God's call and respond when a vocation call is realized.

Scripture tells us that God does indeed have a plan for us. "For thus says the Lord: I know well the plans I have in mind for you—oracle of the LORD—plans for your welfare and not for woe, so as to give you a future of hope." (Jer 29:10-11) His plan is laid for us before we are born. "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you." (Jer 1:5)

While Simon may not know his vocation, and his YeYe may not know Simon's vocation, I am privileged to pray for both Simon and his vocation, and to assist his parents in assuring that the faith I know becomes part of Simon's experience.



I do hope (and anticipate fully) that Simon will be much quicker on the trigger than his YeYe in realizing important things in life. The birth of a child is the birth of a vocation. I don't know why the understanding eluded me for so long.

The domestic church isn't meant to stand alone. It is meant to be strengthened and supported by God's extended family, the pilgrim Church. I am delighted that Serra is a part of the pilgrim Church and even more delighted to be part of Serra. It is great vehicle of support, Catholic Christian friendship, and strength for the journey. Children, like Simon, benefit immeasurably. So does this YeYe.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**SERRA CLUB
OF JOHNSON COUNTY**

**2022
Officers**

President
John Weber

President Elect
Dale Romme

**Immediate Past
President**
Doug Leibbrandt

Secretary
Judy Rielley

Treasurer
Chuck Lillis

Vice Presidents

Vocations
Judy Mueller

Membership
Joane Wilkerson

Programs
John Caton

Communications
Michael Skoch

Trustees
Len Chmelka
Ray Zielinski
George Len

Date	Agenda	Location
February 1 Tuesday	First Tuesday Holy Hour for Vocations 6:00 PM	Curé of Ars Church Leawood KS
February 2 Wednesday	World Day for Consecrated Life	See p.5 for details
February 3 Thursday	General Membership Meeting 6:30 PM	Holy Trinity Parish Lenexa KS See below for details
February 4 Friday	First Friday Holy Hour for Vocations 11:00 AM	Holy Spirit Church Overland Park, KS
February 10 Thursday	JOCO Serra Rosary for Vocations 7:30 PM	Zoom link—Website Calendar
February 17 Thursday	JOCO Serra Rosary for Vocations 7:30 PM	Zoom link—Website Calendar
February 24 Thursday	JOCO Serra Rosary for Vocations 7:30 PM	Zoom link—Website Calendar
February 28 Monday	JOCO Serra Board Meeting 7:00 PM	Zoom link—Website Calendar
March 1 Tuesday	First Tuesday Holy Hour for Vocations 6:00 PM	Curé of Ars Church Leawood KS
March 3 Thursday	General Membership Meeting 6:30 PM	Curé of Ars Church Leawood, KS
March 4 Friday	First Friday Holy Hour for Vocations 11:00 AM	Holy Spirit Church Overland Park, KS
March 10 Thursday	JOCO Serra Rosary for Vocations 7:30 PM	Zoom link—Website Calendar

REMINDER: the February General Membership Meeting will be held at

HOLY TRINITY CHURCH

13615 W 92nd St

Lenexa KS

Thursday, February 3, 2022

6:30 PM

Gast Conference Room



Guest speakers will be Fr. Keith Chadwick (pictured above left), Parochial Vicar at Holy Trinity Parish, and Fr. Luke Doyle (pictured above right), Parochial Vicar at St. Michael The Archangel Parish in Leawood, KS. The Fathers will speak of their vocation stories and the impact of Serran witness and the Serra mission on their formation.

DISTRICT GOVERNOR TO SERRA RALLY *MICHAEL SKOCH, MD*



Newly installed Serra District Governor, John Caton, a member of the Serra Club of Johnson County, recently attended the annual [Serra Rally](#), held in Irving, TX, January 13-16, 2022. Caton had never previously attended a Serra Rally, indicating that his new responsibilities as the District Governor triggered his attendance this year. "I needed to learn the role of District Governor," he said.

Caton assumed the District Governor role January 1, 2021. The district includes Serra clubs of Atchison, KS; Kansas City, KS; the Serra Club of Johnson County, KS, and the anticipated Serra club of Topeka, KS, currently under formation. Caton is especially excited about this new club development. "I met this past Monday with ten pastors in and around Topeka about a Serra Club," he stated. "The level of enthusiasm is high for this new endeavor."

Other Serra leaders from the area at the rally included Pat McAnany, President of the Serra Club of Kansas City, KS, and Jim Burns, Serra Regional Director and member of the KCK club.

Caton identified takeaways from the rally, noting first the witness of three bishops in attendance, expressing appreciation for what Serrans do to foster vocations. Present were Bishop Thomas Daly, Spokane WA; Bishop Edward Burns, Dallas, TX; and Bishop Michael Olson, Fort Worth, TX. Caton said it was edifying to hear the bishops' comments about the Serra influence on vocations.

Also noted was the training received (all currently on-line) from Serra USA President-elect, Michael Downing. "While we received the training at the rally, Mike Downing has just done a phenomenal job to put training for officers on-line," Caton said. Caton encouraged all Serra leaders to access training for their specific roles. It can be found at the [SerraUSA website](#).

"One of the keynote speakers was John Zimmer, Vice President of Apostolate Development at FOCUS," Caton observed. "He talked about the true connection between Serra and FOCUS missionaries." FOCUS, since inception at Benedictine College in Atchison, KS, in 1998, has identified more than 1000 young men and women having decided to pursue a priestly or religious vocation. Another keynote address was delivered by Jared Zimmerer, Director of the Word on Fire Institute.

"I was in group sessions with other district governors, and they all share best practices with one another," Caton said. He identified significant learning opportunities in small group discussions, the opportunity for adoration during the rally, and the opportunity to attend Mass every day as additional benefits of the event.

A special encounter, Caton crossed paths with Dee Herbert (pictured right with her husband, Wayne Greene), charter member and 4th president of the Serra Club of Johnson County. Dee shared her planned move to Louisiana soon, where she hopes to continue work in Serra. Caton said that Dee sends her greetings to all her acquaintances and friends of the Johnson County Serra Club.

"I truly encourage other Serrans to attend the rally, planned again next year in Dallas." Exact dates are pending, but the rally is held in January. "You get a very special understanding of the benefits of Serra USA and all they do."



SEMINARIAN BIRTHDAYS

February/March

- Will Carey** -January 28
- Jonathan Fox** -February 13
- Trey Nissen** -February 13
- Alex Rickert** -March 31

CORRECTION FROM LAST MONTH: January 28 is Will Carey's birthday. Apologies for the incorrect listing last month.

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



In 1997, Pope Saint John Paul II instituted a day of prayer for women and men in consecrated life. This celebration is attached to the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord on February 2nd. This Feast is also known as Candlemas Day; the day on which candles are blessed symbolizing Christ who is the light of the world. So too, those in consecrated life are called to reflect the light of Jesus Christ to all peoples. The celebration of World Day for Consecrated Life is transferred to the following Sunday in order to highlight the gift of consecrated persons for the whole Church.

World Day for Consecrated Life is celebrated on February 2nd however, it is observed in parishes on the Sunday after February 2nd. In 2022, this day will be celebrated in parishes February 5-6, 2022.