



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

November 2021  
Volume 2, Issue 11

# Serran Sphere



## WOUNDED, WE WILL NEVER CEASE TO LOVE

The October Friday evening began at 5:30 PM with vespers in the chapel of Lumen Christi Monastery at the Community of the Lamb on south Boeke street in Kansas City, KS. Responsible little sister Judith had invited us to dinner when I called to inquire about doing a vocation story for the Serra Club newsletter. My wife and I arrived about fifteen minutes early bearing a few grocery bags of food for the little sisters and a bouquet of flowers. My wife is one of the most thoughtful people I know.

*Little sisters at evening Vespers*



Little sister Amaya, who grew up in Parkville, MO, gave us a tour of the public space in the monastery as some of the other sisters put away the groceries, added the final touches to the evening meal we had been invited to share, and prepared for evening vespers. The little sisters of the Lamb, we learned, is a contemplative community devoted to a life of prayer and witness to the Gospel of Jesus, the Lamb of God. In 2013, shortly after his election as Pope, the Holy Father described the community (by now with a presence in eight countries) thus: “The testimony of your life,

through prayer, the liturgy, begging for your daily bread, hitch-hiking; it’s a testimony of poverty and joy. That’s why people love you, and I want to thank you very much for this.” (Pope Francis – March 15th, 2013)

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### MEETING DATES:

- 11/4/2021—General Membership Meeting, Mass of Remembrance @ 6:00 PM, Curé of Ars.
- 11/5/2021—Holy Hour for Vocations @ 11:00 AM, Holy Spirit Church
- 11/15/2021—Board Meeting, 6:30 PM, Cornerstone Companies
- 11/27/2021—Global Rosary for Vocations (see calendar)

*See little sisters p. 3*



George Rhodes  
Theology III

## MEET GEORGE RHODES

The second of four children born to Jason and Kathy Rhodes of Olathe, KS, George first spoke of his desire to be a priest when he was in 5<sup>th</sup> grade, according to his parents. George clarified his belief at a young age that priesthood seemed to be a good way to live in service of others. The idea of becoming a priest remained a constant through his school years.

George continues pursuit of his dream in Theology III at Kenrick-Glennon Seminary. By God's grace, George will be ordained a transitional deacon for the Church in May 2022.

I connected with George via email, and he joined our son, Tim, at our house for

an evening over the summer. An engaging fellow, George indicated that he entered minor seminary, Cardinal Glennon College, after graduating from St. James Academy in 2014. He finished a philosophy degree in 2018 and entered major seminary at Glennon-Kenrick that fall.

George has an older brother, Paul, and younger twin sisters, Helen and Katie. The Rhodes family attended Prince of Peace Church in Olathe in his formative years, and later moved to John Paul II Parish, which George recognizes as his home parish.

"One of my favorite saints is St. John the Baptist," George related.

*"Jesus doesn't promise things will be made easy, but that he will be with us, even closest to us, when they are hard."*  
~ George Rhodes

### WEBSITE IS UP!

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

This dynamic site will become the hub of the Club's news, activities, and calendar. The monthly newsletter will continue to be published; there will be much more on the website, as the space is nearly unlimited.

### 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](mailto:contact@jocoserra.org), or call or text 402-462-0305.

*Serra club new website URL: <https://www.jocoserra.org>*

**CHECK IT OUT!**

"My devotion stems from admiration of many of his gifts. He recognizes Christ in others, even before his own birth at the Visitation of Mary and Elizabeth. His humility is also outstanding." George went on to acknowledge that John the Baptist is so focused on Christ that he identifies himself only in relation to Christ. (cf. John 1:19-20). "John was dedicated solely to promoting the kingdom of God and encouraging others to receive Christ."

Rhodes identifies his favorite Psalm as 142, verse 6: I cry out to you, LORD, I say, You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living. "I pray with it often," he said, "focusing on the idea of having God as my only possession."

I asked George to describe a personal encounter with Jesus. Here is what he said:

"A couple years ago, I had a powerful encounter in prayer of accompaniment by Christ. I was praying late one evening before the Eucharist when I was home on Christmas break. I was praying with a sense of loneliness in my discernment, and, in prayer, I received the consolation that Christ would be with me in that loneliness. It wasn't that he would guarantee I would never feel lonely, but that the pain I was experiencing can be a place of encounter with Christ, a place where he is with me. That changed my perspective on my experiences in pursuit of God's call. Jesus doesn't promise things will be made easy, but that he will be with us, even closest to us, when they are hard."

I then asked George to talk about a seminary assignment that proved particularly inspirational or rewarding. He replied, "Of my assignments as a seminarian, I have found bringing communion to the homebound to often be an edifying task." He went on to say priests are conformed to Christ in such a way that they become an instrumental cause in Christ's work. Christ works through priests, especially, in ministering the sacraments in such a way that Christ's power does the work, but the priest mediates. He used the analogy that an author writes with a pen, or a carpenter utilizes a hammer. So, too, Christ uses the priest. Rhodes pointed out truth to the fact that the instrument (pen, hammer, or priest) is part of the work. "Since this requires the sacrament of holy orders to configure a man's soul in such a way, there are only analogous ways seminarians can anticipate this working with Christ," he reflected. "In my experience, bringing Communion is about as close as I can get to working in the sacramental economy the way a priest does." He described bringing Communion as a way of concretely building up the Body of Christ in the world and acknowledged that it is a humbling thing to do.

"I have had the privilege of giving a man his Viaticum, his final Communion, and I am confident that it was one of the greatest single acts I have performed in my life for the work of the Church," he said.

When asked about some fact that people may not know about him, George replied, "My great great uncle was Bishop Stanley Ott of the Diocese of Baton Rouge, LA. It is certainly not every young man who can claim a Bishop as an uncle, great or otherwise!

## SISTERS

*Continued from p.1*



Our tour ended at the chapel where, at 5:30 sharp, where the little sisters gathered for evening vespers. Amaya explained that the little sisters sing a daily liturgy of the hours based on the Divine Office, but specific to the Community of the Lamb. One simply must experience the simplicity, the reverence, and the beauty. It is difficult to find words to adequately describe the experience.

Dinner was delicious. Broccoli soup, baked squash, rolls, homemade applesauce, fresh fruit, and a French cookie called a, “tartelette citron” (courtesy of little sister Bénédicte’s brother). While seated at the table after dinner, we shared our respective vocation stories; each of the sisters telling their story in turn, and Ginny and I relating our marriage vocation story. The little sisters’ stories were mesmerizing, filled with wonder, joy, and unexpected graces God gives to those seeking to do His will.

Little sister Stella, a Topeka native, recently returned from a 3-month sojourn in France (where the Community was founded in 1981) having gone to “receive the habit,” an occasion that signals the transition from postulancy (a period of 1-2 years) to novitiate (a period of 2-3 years) all in the time of formation and anticipation of profession of final vows. Stella is a KU graduate where she studied education and English. Homeschooled with her four siblings, she developed her agenda for life after high school that didn’t exactly include living a consecrated life. Through involvement at the St. Lawrence Center at KU and

relationships with people that God placed around her, Stella realized her vocation call, describing profound peace in knowing God’s will though it meant abandoning her own plan. Her smile radiated as she spoke about her experience.

Little sister Joyce, an Olathe, KS, native, is the oldest of eleven children. She readily admits that her high school years were marked by wrestling with the call to the religious life that she had heard when she was a child. She laughed as she observed, “I made it one semester at KU.” It was, however, during that semester that her world was turned upside down by a retreat encounter – a retreat she attended at the invitation of a friend.

“I didn’t even know what it was about. I just went,” she

admitted. Again, she laughed as she explained that, upon arrival, she was greeted by a sign announcing that the retreat was “for women in discernment.” She decided to stay primarily because she had arrived with her friend and had no way home. In the wake of that experience, she met the Little Sisters and admits difficulty in putting words to the encounter. What she did recognize was profound peace and joy – both she knew had been lacking in her life. She spoke of an abrupt change – inside and out. Laughter again, as she described experiences with friends who no longer recognized her. “I used to wear black all the time. Now, I was in color, I wore a skirt, and I even smiled!”

Women considering a vocation as a little sister (and there were seven little sisters in the room – each with their own beautifully moving story) can “come and see” what monastery life is like as they explore newfound realization of God’s call. A “come and see” experience can last from days to weeks to months. Postulancy follows for those willing to move more deeply into the response to God’s call.

As the little sisters spoke, we learned their understanding that the Church “sends us ‘as lambs’ amid the world.” Going in the footsteps of the Lamb, the sisters live out the Community motto: “wounded, we will never cease to love.”

Little sister Bénédicte, who has been with the Community for 25 years, recently returned to the Kansas City monastery after some years away. Having grown up in France, Bénédicte experienced the love and mercy of God at a young age. Although expecting to marry and have a family, when she heard deeply the call to consecrate her life to God, she knew that He provides more happiness than she could possibly know otherwise. She spoke tenderly of the sacrifices made to leave everything for this call, and the truth that God sees these and fulfills all desires of the heart in his “plan of love” for her, for each one.

Oliviana, we learned, was a FOCUS teammate of our son on the campus of the University of Nebraska at Lincoln nearly 10 years ago. She moved to Kansas City after that experience where she planned to get a job. She, too, was brought to her vocation with the Little Sisters through relationships that God promptly brought about in her life. Candice, upon realizing her call, said she asked Jesus, “Maybe someday I will think about it.” Once again, laughter pervaded the group. Candice, as did all her sisters, told of an awareness and deep desire for something more, knowing that God provides abiding happiness in answering His call.

Little sister Judith is the Responsible Sister of the local monastery. Other religious communities may have a Mother Abbess, or a Mother Superior. With the Little Sisters, each monastery has a Responsible Sister who is the servant guiding the fraternity of sisters, and at the Kansas City monastery, it is little sister Judith. Her vocation story, too, was poignant, marked by a plan she anticipated but was disrupted by God’s call to the consecrated life. She echoed the abiding peace and joy of God’s love.

*See Sisters, p. 5*

SERRA CLUB  
OF JOHNSON COUNTY

**2021-22  
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George Len

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Date	Agenda	Location
November 4 Thursday	General Membership Meeting Mass of Remembrance @ 6:00 PM	Curé of Ars Leawood, KS
November 5 Friday	Holy Hour for Vocations 11:00 AM	Holy Spirit Church Overland Park, KS
November 7-13 Sun—Sat	National Vocations Awareness Week	See website for details
November 11 Thursday	Weekly Rosary for Vocations	See the website for Zoom link
November 15 Monday	JOCO Serra Board Meeting 6:30 PM	Cornerstone Companies 4400 College Blvd Ste 350 Overland Park, KS
November 20/21	Membership Awareness Booth	Curé of Ars
November 27 Saturday	Global Rosary for Vocations	<a href="https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/314315981">https:// global.gotomeeting.com/ join/314315981</a>
December 2 Thursday	General Membership Meeting 6:30 PM	Curé of Ars Leawood, KS
December 3 Friday	Holy Hour for Vocations 11:00 AM	Holy Spirit Church Overland Park, KS

### *National Vocations Awareness Week, November 7-13*

#### *Serra Membership Awareness*

- **November 20/21**—the Serra Club of Johnson County will host a booth at all Masses @ Curé of Ars Church.
- **December 11/12**—the Serra Club of Johnson County will host a booth at all Masses @ Church of the Nativity.
- Contact Joane Wilkerson (joanewilkerson@gmail.com) or check our website [Serra Club of Johnson County \(jocoserra.org\)](http://Serra Club of Johnson County (jocoserra.org)) for details.

Join us on **Thursday evening, November 11, at 7:30 PM** for the first weekly Rosary for Vocations. This weekly virtual prayer will be held via Zoom; details and Zoom link above or at the JOCO Serra Club website!

## IN MEMORIUM

Dan Sage Spencer, Jr., 91, of Overland Park, KS, passed away August 1, 2021. He is survived by Josephine Jane, his wife of 69 years; his son, Dan Sage Spencer III (Linda); his daughters, Mary Lu Liolios (Glenn), Deborah Jane Mason, and Barbara Ann Green; 13 grandchildren and 18 great-grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his son, James Riley Spencer

Dan was a founding member of the Serra Club of Johnson County in Kansas. He was a past president of the club, holding that office in 2008—2009.

May the Lord grant eternal rest to Dan. May his soul, and all the souls of the faithfully departed, rest in peace. Amen.

## SISTERS

*Continued from p.3*



*Little Sisters in the Grotto*

Little sister Amaya pointed out in the monastery chapel a cupola, adorned with the Community crest, in turn bearing the little sisters' motto in French: "Blessé, je ne cesserai jamais d'aimer." In English: "Wounded, I will never cease to love."

The cupola is lighted at night, creating a beacon of hope in the neighborhood for all who see it.

God, it seems, has a way of disrupting life for the better.

Witnesses of the mystery of the Lamb, the little sisters of the Lamb go as pilgrims, praying, poor, and begging in the footsteps of Saint Dominic and Saint Francis to encounter the poorest of this world, so that all, rich and poor alike, might receive the Light of the Gospel: Jesus, the Lamb of God – the tenderness of the Father for all men. Mendicants (I learned a new word), the little sisters live by the generosity of the faithful, while bringing the Good News of the Gospel to those they meet.

Little sister Amaya pointed out in the

## SEMINARIAN BIRTHDAYS

November/December

**Cesar Gomez—Nov. 26**

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



*"We experienced that the only true revolution takes place in the depths of the heart."*

*~ little sister Marie*

*foundress of the Community of the Lamb*

A little monastery of the Lamb is to be a place where the Love of God can shine through, where we are called to go from darkness to light, to live in peace and brotherly love. Built in the heart of cities or in the solitude of the countryside, the little monasteries are a place of monastic life, prayer and silence for the Community, a place of formation for the little brothers and little sisters, where each is nourished by the Word of God.

Two hours at table passed in an instant. The little sisters invited us on a short walk to the grotto just down the hill from the monastery, where they often sing night prayer. The night air had a hint of fall. The grotto is a beautiful place, decorated with a mural of the Nativity. If you haven't been there, we highly encourage a visit. Night prayer was peaceful. After the short walk back up the hill, the little sisters asked if they could send us off with another blessing. Of course, we accepted.

And they sang, "May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you. May the Lord lift His countenance upon you and give you His peace."

God is here in this place.

## SEMINARY VISIT

The Serra Clubs of Johnson County and Kansas City KS visited Kenrick-Glennon Seminary in St. Louis Wednesday and Thursday, October 13 – 14. On Wednesday, we had lunch with Fr. James Mason (Rector) and several seminarians followed by a tour of the facility hosted by seminarians Dan Mauro and Deacon Sudeep Kodigandla.

Wednesday evening we had dinner with all the seminarians. Seminarians in attendance included Deacon Sudeep Kodigandla, George Rhodes, Will Carey, Cesar Gomez, Dan Mauro, Will Sutherland, Matthias Saiki, Daniel Schmidt, Alex Rickert, Trey Niesen, William Rosson and Michael Santamarina.

Thursday the group enjoyed a guided tour of the St. Louis Cathedral-Basilica following Mass, and a tour of the Old Cathedral.

There were nine Serrans in attendance from the JOCO Club and eight from the KCK Club. This is a fantastic opportunity for Serrans to meet the seminarians and spend quality time getting to know them better. Next year the Serrans will visit St. John Vianney Theological Seminary in Denver. Dates TBD but should be mid-October.

**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](mailto: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!*



*Like us on Facebook: @jocoserra*

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PLEASE  
PLACE  
STAMP  
HERE