



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

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Serran Sphere

THE CARDINAL VIRTUES: WHAT MAKES THEM “CARDINAL” AND WHY ARE THEY IMPORTANT?

*Or if one loves righteousness, whose works are virtues,
She teaches moderation and prudence, righteousness and fortitude,
and nothing in life is more useful than these.
Wisdom 8:7*

Thanks to Len Chmelka for his prompting of this article.

Michael Skoch, MD, Editor

From the Catechism of the Catholic Church (1803), “a virtue is an habitual and firm disposition to do the good. It allows the person not only to perform good acts, but to give the best of himself. The virtuous person tends toward the good with all his sensory and spiritual powers; he pursues the good and chooses it in concrete actions.

The goal of a virtuous life is to become like God.”

The four cardinal virtues are prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance. They are the kingpins of the human virtues that make possible ease, self-mastery, and joy in leading a morally good life. Think of them as the hinge upon which all other human virtues turn. “Cardinal” is derived from the Latin root: “cardo,” which means

“hinge.” The door to a holy life hangs on these hinges. They are human virtues because they are acquired by human effort. One who is not baptized, through practice, can acquire the Cardinal Virtues. They are the seeds of morally good acts; the Cardinal Virtues render the bearer capable of communion with divine love. Without the cardinal virtues, life risks becoming a waste.



Prudence, according to St. Thomas Aquinas, is “right reason in action.” Prudence guides the conscience. It aids us in overcoming doubts about the good to achieve and the evil to avoid.

Justice is the will to give to God and to neighbor the due that is theirs. Scripture tells us, “The souls of the just are in the hand of God.” (Wisdom 3:1) And “The just man, though he die early, shall be at rest.” (Wisdom 4:7) Living with neither partiality to the poor, nor deference to the great, the just man judges neighbor righteously. St. Thomas More said this about justice: “to pursue your own interests is prudent; to pursue the public interest as well is pious; but to pursue your own pleasure by depriving others of



theirs is unjust.”

Fortitude is the virtue that causes one to remain firm in difficulty and constant in the pursuit of good. One with fortitude does not get rattled. Fortitude provides strength in the resistance of temptation and aids in overcoming obstacles in the moral life. It enables one to conquer fear. St. Bernadette Soubirous, the 14-year-old French girl who witnessed the apparitions

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MEETING/EVENT DATES:

- **10/6/2022—6:30 PM**, General Membership Meeting—**Cure of Ars**
- **10/7/2022—0800 AM**, Regional Serra Meeting, Belleville, IL
- **10/11/2022—8:30 AM**, Serra Club visit to St. John Vianney Theological Seminary, Denver, CO
- **10/24/2022—7:00 PM**, JOCO Serra Board Meeting, Holy Spirit Church
- **11/3/2022—6:30 PM** General Membership Meeting, Memorial Mass, Curé of Ars.

MEET CESAR GOMEZ



Cesar Gomez and I caught up for breakfast not long ago after 6:30 AM Mass at St. Michael the Archangel Church, where Cesar is serving his Pastoral Year. Our spot for breakfast was First Watch on 151st St, just west of Metcalf. I was struck by his amicable, unpretentious nature.

Cesar shared his vocation story. He grew up in a Catholic family in Puruandiro, a city of just over 32,000, in the west central state of Michoacán, Mexico. He described a perfunctory (my word, not his) early approach to his faith. The family went to Mass on Sunday. “It was kind of superficial,” he acknowledged of his own faith. He is the youngest of four children.

When he was in high school, a good friend who was also a nominal Catholic asked him to go to a religious retreat. Because he didn’t want to disappoint his friend, he agreed. During the retreat, Cesar describes a profound conversion experience in front of the Blessed Sacrament. “Nothing like that had ever happened to me before,” he said. Subsequently, Cesar admits, “daily Mass became a need.” “I started to pray the Rosary daily,” he added, and he realized a distinct call not only to practice a deeper faith, but to become a priest. At age 18, he joined a

Franciscan community, Heraldos de la Paz (Heralds of Peace), and soon began the “Total Consecration to Jesus through Mary & 33-Day Preparation,” as outlined by St. Louis-Marie Grignon de Monfort.

Parallel to this, Cesar’s father had come to the United States to work in construction. This is not an uncommon experience among immigrant families: one or the other of the parents come to America for work and send money back to Mexico to support their family. To keep a Green Card, one must live in the U.S. at least six months out of every year.

“It was so funny, because my dad applied for a Green Card for me without telling me,” Cesar said. He indicated that his dad had approached him about coming to America, but he (Cesar) spoke no English, and was happy on the path he was taking.

“Consecrate your life to Jesus through the Blessed Virgin Mary.”

~Cesar Gomez

was in the religious community, “and I was praying about it. It was at the time I was doing the Consecration to Jesus through Mary, and I remember asking Our Lady for a specific sign telling me what to do about coming to America.”

The very next day, the Green Card approval, about which he had no foreknowledge, arrived. This was October 2014.

We acknowledged the reality that one ought never ask Our Lady for something that one does not truly desire, and we both laughed at the immediacy with which prayer is sometimes answered when Our Lady intervenes.

Cesar’s parents, while not discouraging to him about his response to God’s call, were lukewarm to it, at best. Cesar had planned to go to college and study chemistry. His mom encouraged him to do this, “and then be a priest if you want to do that.” Cesar recalled a conversation with his dad about seminary and the prospect of coming to America, with his dad suggesting that he (Cesar) could “just find a seminary in the U.S.” “In December (2014) my dad was moved to Leavenworth, KS, for work. One day he went to Wal-Mart and met some Benedictine nuns. They started asking him about his faith. He turned the conversation and told them about me, ‘his son who was in the seminary in Mexico.’” Cesar said, “They got all excited!” Cesar’s father gave the nuns Cesar’s contact information.

Cesar recalled being contacted by one of the Benedictines and learning of the need in the Archdiocese for Spanish-speaking priests. “My dad gave them my contact information. They arranged for me to be in communication with the Archdiocesan Vocations Office,” he said. One of the initial conversations Cesar recalls was with Fr. Oswaldo Sandoval, who acted ultimately as his translator during Cesar’s eventual acceptance into priestly studies for the Archdiocese. Gomez marvels at God’s ability to use his earthly father in his bringing about the fullness of his vocation.

In 2015, Cesar entered the English program at Conception Seminary College for 1 1/2 years prior to his transition to Cardinal Glennon College Seminary in St. Louis for four years of philosophy studies. Currently between his second and third years of Theology, Cesar looks forward to continuing his studies at Kenrick-Glennon Seminary as a Theology III student next year, after which he anticipates being ordained to the transitional diaconate.

His favorite part of seminary life? “The brotherhood, the family that develops,” he said. Though he loves his family, he admits, “I don’t miss my family. The church and my brothers are my family.”

“Don’t tell your mother about not missing your family,” I encouraged Cesar with a wink and a chuckle. He laughed.

Gomez reflected on his time already spent at St. Michael the Archangel Parish. “Much of my responsibilities involve visiting the sick and homebound,” he reflected, adding, “It is so powerful that God uses me to visit His people. You know, He cannot go to them on His own, and it is such an honor to be able to be his hands and feet.” It is the grace of awareness.

And, by the way, the high school friend with whom Cesar attended that retreat in 2014? It turns out he had a very similar retreat experience as Cesar — a fact they never acknowledged to one another until years later. His friend’s religious name is Br. José, and he is with Opus Angelorum, an Augustinian order. Br. José is now in Brazil, anticipating his own ordination to the priesthood someday. Let us pray for Cesar and for Br. José!

Brother Maximilian Anderson, OSB

Brother Maximilian Anderson, OSB, and I connected at the Runnin' with the Revs event in March. I introduced myself and, as a former FOCUS missionary, Br. Maximilian recognized the name because of my son (and Serra Club member), JohnMarc Skoch, who is a 10-year FOCUS missionary veteran. Later, I reached out to Br. Maximilian and asked him to share his vocation story. Here it is.
 -Michael Skoch, MD, Editor

My parents taught me from an early age the importance and determining factor of a vocation. I remember my dad and mom, Joe and Jeannie Anderson, impressing upon me that the most important thing in picking a wife is that she should help me go to heaven. I learned from that the importance of my eternal destiny as the defining horizon of my life in matters big and small.

I had also internalized from them that I am not the one who determines the pathway to that destiny. I recall being asked by some of my dad's fellow Knights of Columbus when I was 12 about whether I would be a priest. I responded that it wasn't up to me. When they asked what I meant, I said that it was up to God; they said "that's right!"

It wasn't until much later in high school that I learned about religious life in general. I knew a bit from movies and the lives of the saints, but the only celibates I knew were either diocesan priests or elderly sisters. When I went to Mount Michael Benedictine Preparatory School, I met Benedictine monks for the first time. Going to school there drew me to learn more about my faith in high school and beyond. After graduating from high school in 2012, I went to Benedictine College and that's where I had a big reversion experience to my Catholic faith. I recognized that my relationship with God was way more important than mere knowledge about him or just following the rules. This led me to desire giving myself more totally to him, so I began to spend more time with God in prayer and sought to share my experience of gladness in knowing Him with others.



Brother Maximilian (l) and Brother Angelus (r) pictured in St. Benedict Abbey Church, Atchison, KS

After graduating from Benedictine in 2016, I became a FOCUS missionary in order to minister to college students; I wanted to be an impact for others at a time in their lives that proved pivotal in mine. While doing this, I recognized a desire placed in me for belonging even more totally to the Lord. Jesus was calling me to virginity, the way that the Church has given to her children of following the Lord in the most radical way possible, in way that witnesses that Jesus Christ is the only reason for why anything at all is worth doing.

SEMINARIAN BIRTHDAYS

October/November

Michael Santamarina . . Oct 6

Keegan Colburn Oct 13

Will Sutherland Oct 20

Cesar Gomez Nov 26

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

At that point I began speaking with my home diocesan vocation director back in Wyoming and looking for any opportunities to go on discernment retreats. Br. Leven Harton from St. Benedict's Abbey in Atchison, KS contacted me after I had seen him at a conference and invited me to a Come and See retreat at the Abbey. I went and recognized a deep correspondence between the needs in my heart and the call I had received and the life I saw there.

I was surprised because I desired a life given to intimacy with the Lord in prayer more than I had initially expected. I was struck also by the fraternal life and deeply desired the aid it would be to me in my own journey and hoped that I could also be a good brother to the others. Most surprising during my time here, though, is that it is increasingly the case that I don't really know how else I could be Christian. I know deep down that I must be here in order to continue following Jesus!

As a brother, it is possible that I could go on to priestly studies. I live with a number of monks who will never be priests because God has not called them to that. The essence of the monastic vocation, the vocation to being a monk, is to live out the vows of obedience, stability, and *conversatio morum* (fidelity to the monastic life). That means that we are obedient to the Abbot according to the Rule of St. Benedict, we are stable in *this* monastery (most of us will be formed, live, pray, work, and die here), and we hold to the monastic tradition handed down to us through the Church and through our own monastic family; this includes living celibately and in simple communal poverty. God has called some monks to be priests, so they've gone through studies and been ordained, but all are monks first because of vows made at monastic profession.

Living the monastic life has been a grace to me. I find that it's been an opportunity for me to continue in some part the ministry I began as a FOCUS missionary because Benedictine College is right next to our monastery, St. Benedict's Abbey. I have immensely enjoyed my work in being assistant vocations director and working with Br. Leven to help young men discern their vocation, whatever God wants it to be. This is probably the biggest grace, in that it continually keeps me focused on the grace that of my vocation; it is a big correction frequently because I am prodded to give myself more fully to the life. I ask you to pray for us here at St. Benedict's Abbey and to pray for me as well as we strive daily to grow in our awareness of, and adherence to the Lord's will!

National Vocations Awareness Week
 November 6-12,
 2022

Pray for Vocations

Check the website
Calendar and the
 website **News** tab

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

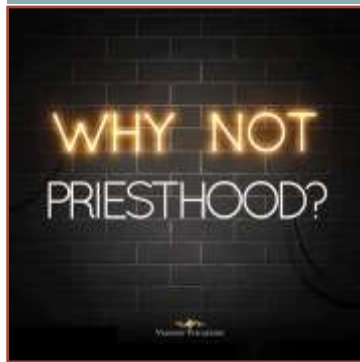
Membership
Joane Wilkerson

Programs
Larry Ryan

Communications
Michael Skoch

Trustees
Len Chmelka
Ray Zielinski
George Len

District Governor
John Caton



**Vocation Awareness
Week 11/6-12/2022**

Date	Agenda	Location
October 4 Tuesday	First Tuesday Holy Hour For Vocations 6:00 PM	Curé of Ars Church Leawood, KS
October 6 Thursday	JOCO Serra General Member- ship Meeting	Curé of Ars Church Leawood, KS
October 7 Friday	First Friday Holy Hour For Vocations 11:00 AM	Holy Spirit Church Overland Park, KS
October 7-8 Friday & Sat- urday	Regional Serra Conference	National Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows Belleville, IL
October 11 Tuesday	Annual Seminary Visit	St. John Vianney Theological Seminary Denver, CO
October 13 Thursday	Thursday Evening Rosary for Vocations 7:30 PM	See the website calendar for on-line link
October 20 Thursday	Thursday Evening Rosary for Vocations 7:30 PM	See the website calendar for on-line link
October 24 Monday	JOCO Serra Board Meeting 7:00 PM	St. Isidore Room Holy Spirit Church
October 27 Thursday	Thursday Evening Rosary for Vocations 7:30 PM	See the website calendar for on-line link
November 1 Tuesday	First Tuesday Holy Hour For Vocations 6:00 PM	Curé of Ars Church Leawood, KS
November 3 Thursday	JOCO Serra General Member- ship Meeting	Curé of Ars Church Leawood, KS
November 4 Friday	First Friday Holy Hour For Vocations 11:00 AM	Holy Spirit Church Overland Park, KS
November 6-12 Week	Vocations Awareness Week	See the website for details

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of Our Blessed Mother at Lourdes, suffered many crosses during her lifetime. About fortitude, she observed, “Anyone who is not prepared to suffer all for the Beloved and to do his will in all things is not worthy of the sweet name of Friend, for here below, Love without suffering does not exist.

Temperance is moderation of the attraction of pleasures, providing balance in the use of created goods. “Moderation in all things” and “sobriety” are terms that describe temperance. St. Therese of Lisieux, a model of temperance, said, “Holiness consists simply in doing God’s will, and being just what God wants us to be.”

The practice of the cardinal virtues paves the pathway to heaven. And it makes life better on earth, as well.



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**ANNUAL SERRA PICNIC
A HIT!**

Kudos to Don and Janice Arth and hearty thanks, too, for opening the Arth Farm and their farm home to Serra club members for the return of the Annual Serra Picnic, which has been absent from the calendar since COVID. Serenity (apart from an isolated episode of locking one’s keys in one car!) prevailed. A staple of the Serra summer experience prior to COVID, the picnic was a wonderful and welcomed respite!



Camaraderie, friendship, a delicious BBQ and fried chicken meal (complemented by an assortment of potluck dishes brought by the group), and recitation of the Rosary for Vocations filled the time together. Don enthusiastically provided farm tours to groups of four on his Ranger. The picturesque setting, complete with an oxbow lake, became a little corner of Paradise for the group encounter. Not pictured with the group above left, but in attendance, were John Caton and 3 of his grandsons (who were fishing at the time!) and George and Maggie Lentz (who arrived early and had to leave early due to a prior engagement at home.) Photos clockwise from upper right: Arth Farm home and adjacent pond; Don and Janice Arth, Joane Wilkerson, and Kathy Ryan prepare for the mid-afternoon meal; the oxbow lake; the group photo taken just after the Rosary recitation; Don Arth (driving), Joane and Bryan Wilkerson, and Mike Skoch on a tour of the farm; and the same farm tour group, this time with Dale Romme replacing Mike in this photo, stopped along the oxbow lake.