

Saint Serra Club of Louisville VOCATION DIGEST

"Always Forward, Never Back" – Saint Junipero Serra

JANUARY, 2025 Newsletter

MISSION:

To foster and promote vocations to the priesthood and religious life.

DELIVERING CHRISTMAS CANDY AND FLOWERS TO 375 SISTERS

Thanks to Serran Bob Hublar for organizing us all; our Chaplain, Fr. Pat Dolan, for drafting the note we put with the boxes of chocolates; Ralph Williams and Melody Denson for shopping the candies; Ralph for arranging the purchase of boxes of Muth's chocolates and the pop-up flowers; and all the Serrans who volunteered to make many deliveries all over the archdiocese.

We gave boxes of chocolates and pop-up flowers to 375 sisters of the 13 orders in our archdiocese. For the





full list of these orders, see pages 69-70 of the <u>Arch-diocesan Directory</u>.

Serrans Mike and Bev Knoop decorated a foldable cart with Christmas lights and put a Christmas tree in the cart to help with their delivery. They also entertained the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth by playing their dulcimers and leading the sisters in singing Christmas Carols. The Nazareth Motherhouse put an <u>article and video</u> on their website about that visit.

The pictures on this page include Dominican Sisters in Springfield; Sisters of Loretto in Nerinx, KY with Paul Willett; a sample of the pop-up flowers with the note "St. Serra Club Appreciates You"; Bev and Mike Knoop's Christmas wagon they used in their deliveries; a table covered in the pop-up flowers before delivery; and Mike and Bev playing dulcimers.



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FR. JEFF SHOONER, VICAR GENERAL, SPOKE AT OUR DECEMBER 2 MEETING.

Very Reverend Jeffrey Shooner was born in 1971, in Covington, Kentucky. He grew up as an only child, but now has a half-sister, half-brother, and three stepsisters. As a youth, he was active in the Boy Scouts; attained the rank of Eagle Scout; graduated as valedictorian from Holy Cross High School; accepted an appointment to the U.S. Air Force Academy, where he graduated with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Political Science-International Relations; and was commissioned as a second lieutenant in 1993.

Fr. Jeff served as an intelligence officer in the Air Force with assignments in Texas, Korea, Missouri, and Saudi Arabia. Feeling the sense of call to the priesthood, he left the Air Force and began studies at Theological College at the Catholic University of America in 1996. Continuing his discernment and formation, he left seminary and worked as a general manager for a company in Louisville and founded an internet startup



in its initial phases. He then returned to Theological College after three years and was ordained for the Archdiocese of Louisville by Archbishop Kelly on December 11, 2004 – twenty years ago this month.

Upon ordination, Fr. Jeff served as associate pastor to Immaculate Conception Parish, and then St. James Parish, Elizabethtown, before

being appointed pastor at St. Lawrence parish in 2006. He was also appointed as the Associate Vocation Director. In 2010, Archbishop Kurtz appointed him the Vocation Director; and the following year, he was additionally appointed as the Vicar for Priests. In 2014, he was appointed as Pastor of St. Patrick parish, Louisville, while remaining the Vicar for Priests. In 2017, he was also appointed as pastor to St. Boniface Parish. In 2023, he was appointed as the Vicar General for the Archdiocese of Louisville, while continuing as the pastor of St. Patrick and St. Boniface parishes. In June 2024, he discontinued his service as pastor of St. Boniface parish.

During his nearly twenty years in priestly ministry, Fr. Jeff has served on various boards and committees of the archdiocese, including the College of Consultors, Priests Council, Priests Personnel Board, Priestly Life

UPCOMING MEETINGS AND EVENTS

<u>Regular meetings</u> - We target to have <u>most</u> meetings the <u>first and third Mondays</u> of each month, at **11:30 AM**, in the **Golden Corral at Hikes Point** (4032 Taylorsville Road). The charge will be \$12 for members and \$15 for guests. Non-members wanting to attend should contact Chuck Lynch in advance.

Jan 6 (1st Mon) – Dan Conway speaks on "Stewardship and the Joy of Giving."

Jan 8 (2nd Wed) - Holy Hour for Vocations – After the noon Mass in St. Margaret Mary Chapel.

Jan 13 (2nd Mon) - Rosary for Vocations, 7 pm, by Zoom. See separate article for details.

Jan 20 (3rd Mon) – Jennifer Wilson, of the Catholic Charities Indigent Burial Program, will speak on that program.

<u>Jan 20 (3rd Mon)</u> - "Serra Meets" – 8 pm Louisville time - national Zoom meeting for all Serrans – for details, click <u>here</u>.

<u>Jan 28 (Tue)</u> – 11:45 - Serra Board Meeting - St. Margaret Mary Spirituality Center.

Questions? - Contact Chuck Lynch at (502) 442-9302 or ChuckLynch4782@gmail.com.

and Ministry Cluster, Health Panel, Deacon Personnel Board, and Priest Retirement Committee. He has also served as part of the leadership team for an archdiocesan Lilly Foundation Grant and on various planning committees. In addition, he served on the Holy Cross High School Board of Directors, serving for a short time as the chairman, and as a Chaplain for Holy Cross High School. He has also participated in the Leadership Louisville Program and their most advanced leadership program, Bingham Fellows. Much of Father Jeff's ministry has involved the faith and vitality of parish communities, the promotion, discernment, and formation for priestly ministry, and support and development for priests.

Fr. Jeff attributed much of his call to the priesthood to the personal witness of faith from teachers, family, and friends who helped guide him to a deeply personal and profound encounter with Jesus and the Holy Spirit. The example of service and selfless love handed on to him fostered a life-long motivation to care for people, to sacrifice for the common good, and to leave the world better. With roots in Cincinnati, Ohio, and Northern Kentucky, his family has spread across the country with his mom still residing in Louisville and his dad in Colorado Springs.

In his spare time, Fr. Jeff loves hiking, backpacking, reading, traveling, spending time with his dog Jess,

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FR. JEFF SHOONER (continued from page 2)

is a lifelong Kentucky Wildcats fan.

Fr. Jeff joined us to speak of his job as Vicar General for the last 1 ¹/₂ years, as well as his vocation story.

He said that throughout his studies to be a priest, he always wanted to be a pastor. And about a year and a half after his ordination, he was made a pastor at St. Lawrence. However, in the last 20 years, there were only two months when he was "just a pastor." During the rest of his priesthood, he served multiple roles, besides that of pastor or associate pastor.

He likened the role of vicar general to that of vice president of the U.S. No one votes for the vice President or cares who it is, unless something happens to the president (or the archbishop). As vicar general, he only makes decisions with the heart and mind of the archbishop when asked to do so or there is a need.

For Fr. Jeff's first year as vicar general, Archbishop Shelton Fabre served as the Apostolic Administrator for the Knoxville diocese until a new bishop was appointed there. So, Fr. Jeff assisted the archbishop, spending a lot of time in Louisville and some in Knoxville. During Confirmation season in the Louisville Archdiocese, Fr. Jeff represented the archbishop many times.

As to Fr. Jeff's vocation journey, he says his faith journey and vocation journey are tied together. His parents were from around Cincinnati. After he was born, his parents lost two children born prematurely and another due to a miscarriage. They divorced when he was seven. Fr. Jeff attended six different Catholic elementary schools. However, in the fourth grade, he experienced God's presence once, and said it felt as if "time stopped."

In Holy Cross High School, he experienced healing from the trauma of having divorced parents, and not being as close to his father as many children were. One Catholic Scout Master was like a father to him – a man he was able to anoint many years later before he died.

Fr. Jeff said that throughout his faith journey he asked himself, "What do I want to be?" Early in elementary school he thought of being an architect, a fireman, or a priest. In the seventh or eighth grade, he boiled it down to architect. In high school, he experienced great retreat programs. Then his question changed to, "What difference is my life going to make?"

As a young man, he was very driven – being an Eagle Scout, valedictorian in high school, and setting big goals. In high school, his goals were to get married, have kids, make a million dollars by age 30, and become president of the U.S.

His father was in the military and that enabled Fr. Jeff and building relationships with family and friends. He to spend a summer in Korea. Through a congressional cultural exchange program, which allows two individuals per state to study abroad, he was allowed to spend time studying in Japan.

His grandmother offered him the option of a car, or attending the World Scout Jamboree in Australia. Knowing he could always buy a car later he chose the trip to Australia.

As a teenager, he concluded that "If God is love, and only a person can love, then God must be a person."

Once he got into the Air Force Academy, where most everyone had been an Eagle Scout or valedictorian, he felt sort of "average." He realized then that he needed the help of others. He attended daily Mass during basic training. At one point, he did daily Mass for three and a half years. It worked on him; and he concluded God wants to be #1 to all of us, and part of every area of our lives.

Next Fr. Jeff said his question changed to, "What is God's opinion of what he wants me to do." He said that to answer that question honestly was scary and terrifying. He thought of the priesthood for two years without telling anyone.

His biggest hurdle was going to be his mother, for whom he was an only child; and he knew she wanted grandchildren. (His mother is Laverne Ferguson, current President of the Priests' Parents Club.) After telling her he was considering the priesthood, she said, "Even if you don't become a priest, there's no guarantee you'll have kids. Do what makes you happy."

While in the Air Force, and after being invited to a vocation retreat at St. Meinrad, he answered a sevenquestion, yes/no survey about whether he might be called to the priesthood. The young men were told that if they answered 'yes' to three or more questions, they should seriously consider the priesthood. He answered 'yes' to all seven. This was when he worked up the courage to get out of the Air Force and go into the seminary.

Fr. Jeff did run into difficulties getting out of the Air Force. But of all the Air Force leaders who had to approve his leaving the Air Force, one was a Lutheran who was also getting out to be a Lutheran priest; and the rest of the chain of command were all Catholics. He was approved to leave early, but with the agreement that he had to reimburse the government for \$35,000 for his Air Force training. A priest he knew in Saudia Arabia told him all "the good, the bad and the ugly" about the priesthood, and then asked if he still wanted to become a priest. Upon saying 'yes," the priest wrote a check for \$1,375 to be applied toward his government debt.

FR. JEFF SHOONER (continued from page 3)

However, as Fr. Jeff put it, the serious discernment is in the seminary itself. And with his priest salary, Fr. Jeff was eventually able to pay off the government debt.

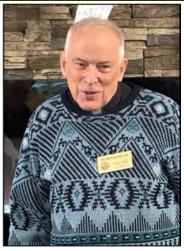
When asked how we can help him, as Vicar General, he said the best thing we can do is to support the Vocation Office. He also asked that we pray for him,

Long after ordination, his dad said that when Fr. Jeff was born premature, his dad made a deal with God, saying that if God would help his son get through this, "I'll do whatever I can to encourage him to consider being a priest."

We want to thank Fr. Jeff Shooner for taking the time to speak with us.

Thanks also to Mike Knoop for the picture with this article.

OUR CHAPLAIN, FR. PAT DOLAN, SPOKE AT OUR DEC. 16 MEETING.



Fr. Pat Dolan, Chaplain for our St. Serra Club of Louisville, joined us to provide his yearly Advent reflections. He started by thanking us for our prayers for all priests, who, of course, also represent the Church.

He chose to look more deeply at some of the world's Christmas symbols and traditions and asked us to reflect on people, past and present,

who celebrate Christmas with very limited circumstances.

Commoners haven't always had an abundance of food, sweets, etc. So, what did they do for special

celebrations? England, Ireland and Holland had frequent cold, damp weather. Dutch children were putting out their shoes to dry out at the foot of their bed alcoves.

Years ago, in some countries where many people only had a few pairs of socks and only a fireplace for warming themselves and dry their laundry. Christmas gifts to children may have simply been a treat in the clean socks hung on a fireplace to dry out. And parents who could afford it, might put a piece of citrus fruit (an orange or a lemon) in the sock – a healthy item that wasn't always affordable yearround, even though it could help provide vitamin C and avoid scurvy. Maybe some parents could afford a few pieces of candy for the sock.

Of course, nowadays we use fancy stockings, lots of candy and stocking stuffers, because fruit for most Americans is readily available.

Before people could afford expensive and elaborate musical instruments, people might have simple, wooden flutes or recorders; churches and abbeys had bells; monks chanted; family, friends and churchgoers would sing simple Christmas carols. The rhythmic chanting to the tempo of the rung bells gave us modern music.

"There are lots of places in our world where those limits are still there for a lot of families, though not too many in our own nation," Fr. Pat reminded us.

Back in the 9th through 12th centuries, gypsies in Europe entertained with more numerous musical instruments, while wearing colorful scarves and dancing. Such music, color and dance added to the festive nature of the Christmas season.

Back in the early 1200s, there were no Christmas cards; and most people could not afford to go and see expensive paintings about the birth of Christ. St. Francis introduced the first nativity – a live performance of the Gospel narratives on the birth of Christ, using actual people and live animals. His graphic presentation impressed people and heightened the imaginations of uneducated masses.

By contract, today we have hundreds of Christmas movies to watch on TV or in theaters. Holy Family

Parish in Louisville had 50 to 100 nativity sets in the back of their church this Advent, with some of them coming from around the world. And all of this evolved from what St. Francis started over 800 years ago.

Fr. Pat asked us to focus on the real reason for Advent, and to recognize the abundance we now have, com-



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FR. PAT DOLAN (continued from page 4)

pared to times of limitations.

"May you indeed take what you do in the Serra Club and continue to do it well. May you take Advent as a time of preparation, realizing that you, and maybe many others, didn't always have all the things that we're so flooded with," Fr. Pat said. We need to focus on the essence of Advent and the longing for the Messiah that existed even back many years before Christ. "That's what the candles to me represent, as we get closer and closer to the coming of Christ," he said.

The big thing is that, with all the abundance we have, people were once much more restricted and limited. All these other things take on more enhanced value. It's not just a matter of consumption. But people once loved you enough to give you an orange; to give you a piece of candy; to sing you a song or play music for you; or give you a visualization, as St. Francis did, of the Christmas scene – and loved you enough to let you be part of the Kingdom of God on earth, with all its benefits and its limitations – preparing us for fullness of the Kingdom of Heaven, beyond which we cannot even imagine.

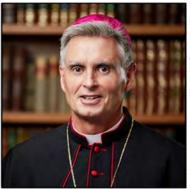
He prayed that we appreciate the little things of Christmas – songs, bells, music in church, colors of the vestments, etc.

We want to thank Fr. Pat for his presentation. Thanks, too, to Jerry Zimmerer for the pictures with this article.

OUR "SERRA MEETS" ZOOM MEETING WAS ON DEC. 16.

About our speaker

Our Serra US Council Episcopal Adviser, **Bishop Thomas Anthony Daly**, gave us some Advent re-



flections for our monthly Serra Meets by Zoom. This was our 48th Serra Meets, with the first one presented in December of 2020.

Bishop Daly is a native of San Francisco, and the seventh bishop of Spokane Washington. Ordained in 1987, he has been a teacher,

parochial vicar for a parish, a high school campus minister, high school president, bishop of San Jose (CA), a seminary president and rector, and (since 2015) Bishop of Spokane (WA). He currently serves as the chairman of the USCCB Committee on Catholic Education.

His presentation – Be Not Afraid!

Bishop Daly thanked us for our prayers for and support for vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life.

He started by speaking of the Gospel of Matthew where Joseph was told "Do not be afraid to take Mary into your home." "Do not be afraid" was told to Abraham, Daniel, Zachariah (the father of John the Baptist), Mother Mary, the shepherds, St. Peter, and Mary Magdalene. These words invite our reflection what does it mean to each of us? (For the 140+ times in the Bible that people are told to not be afraid, click here.)

In the first letter of John, we hear "Perfect love casts out fear. Whoever fears has not reached perfection in love." What does perfect love mean? Isaiah says, "The Lord himself will give you a sign; behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son and name him Emmanual." And Emmanual means "God is with us." Christmas is "God is with us."

Bishop Daly spoke of the many things we can fear – including being too sinful, unworthy, distracted, discouraged, or afraid of what the Lord is asking us.

Bishop Daly has seen many seminarians who fear that maybe they won't be happy as a priest, or faithful, or that God is asking too much of them. Sometimes the formators fear that they're not demanding enough of young seminarians. Sometimes lay people, even Serrans, can be fearful – that we are too insignificant, that God is too distant, or that we're not worthy of God's love.

Look at the manger, Jesus in the crib, and Jesus on the cross. All are reminders that "God gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life."

Are we willing to sacrifice whatever God asks of us out of love for Him and others? It's only then that we'll be free of fear to love as Jesus loves.

In St. Luke's Gospel we hear that the Angel Gabriel was sent to Galilee. He said "Hail, full of grace. The Lord is with you." But Mary was disturbed by all of this. The angel told Mary, "Do not be afraid. You have found favor with God." We know the story. Mary finally said, "May it be done to me according to your word." She was told no real specifics. She didn't know that she'd be a pregnant refugee traveling to another country, or that she'd someday witness the crucifixion of her son.

God only asked for Mary's trust; and she obeyed, "pondering all these things in her heart." That's why St. Luke sees Mary as the perfect disciple. Mary listened and then she acted on God's word, making an

SERRA MEETS (continued from page 5)

act of faith. Advent is a time to *believe* that the Christ child is our Savior and God.

An Irish Vincentian priest has written, "The mark of the believer is the commitment to action beyond the grasp of the intellect." We must go beyond the intellect and trust, as Mary did, that what the Lord has promised will be fulfilled. We're never told the details of our future. All God asks is that we believe and trust Him – that we seek Him.

"God always sees us, even when we can't see him," Bishop Daly said.

The entire Zoom meeting, including the business portion, can be found here.

SERRA U.S COUNCIL RALLY

The Rally will be Miami next year, January 23-26, 2025.

One of our many speakers will be Mother Adela Golindo, who gave the amazing final keynote address **DIETZ**, **O.C.S.O. RT. REV. ELIAS**, 1/25/03, at the National Eucharistic Congress. Come be inspired.

Now is a great time to sign up for the 2025 Serra US Rally! Retreat to sunny, warm Miami this winter! Serrans from around the country gather to pray, learn, and be inspired to promote vocations in new wavs.

Make new connections with other Serrans. Get new ideas to create a culture of vocations. Experience 23 years Miami's culture and beautiful weather and a special event with the Servants of the Pierced Hearts of Jesus and Mary, one of the fastest growing religious communities in the US.

Learn more and view the schedule here.

ANNUAL VOCATION POSTER AND ESSAY CONTESTS

Schools, parishes, home-schooled students and vouth leaders were notified in October of the annual Vocation Essay and Poster Contests sponsored by the Vocation Office and the Saint Serra Club of Louisville.

The Contest started with the National Vocation Awareness Week (the week that began November 3 this year); and entries must be received in the Vocation Office by January 8.

The Saint Serra Club will provide cash prizes to 1st, 2nd and 3rd place winners in each contest – the Essay Contest and the Poster Contest. All winners are invited to a St. Serra Club luncheon.

WORLD DAY FOR CONSECRATED **LIFE – JUBILARIAN MASS FEB 2**

The annual Jubilarian Mass, with Archbishop Shelton Fabre, is to be on Sunday, February 2, at the Cathedral of the Assumption, at noon. All are invited; and there will be a reception after the Mass.

This Mass is held on a Sunday near the World Day for Consecrated Life (February 2) each year to honor those men and women religious celebrating their 25th, 50th, 60th, 70th, 75th, and 80th anniversaries.

PRIESTS CELEBRATING **ORDINATION ANNIVERSARIES**

Congratulations to our priests celebrating anniversaries of ordination this month. We always include here any priests, from religious orders and other dioceses, who are working in our Archdiocese.

AKKARA, C.M.I., REV. OUSEPACHAN A., 1/2/94, 31 years

CHATHELY, C.M.I., REV. A. BIJU, 1/2/05, 20 years

22 years

GEORGE, C.M.I., REV. SHEEJAN P., 1/5/08, 17 years

GONZALEZ ROMERO, REV. JEANS, 1/2/04, 21 years

ILLIKKAL, C.M.I., REV. GEORGE S., 1/2/05, 20 years

THEKKUDAN, C.M.I., REV. JOHNSON, 1/5/02,

A list of all our diocesan priests can be found <u>here</u>. A list of other priests working in our diocese, from other dioceses and various religious orders, can be found here.

SEMINARIAN BIRTHDAYS THIS MONTH

Happy Birthday to our seminarians this month: **CUONG LE – January 18 THOMAS WICHMAN – January 18 DCN. COLE MCDOWELL – January 24**

You can get more information on all our seminarians, as well as where they're going to school, videos on hobbies, and videos on vocation stories by clicking here.

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

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The 2024 "Our Sunday Visitor" sville KY 40222 The 2024 "Our Sunday Visitor" Catholics of the Year – Read about them <u>here</u>.

ABOUT YOUNG CATHOLICS

Three U of L grads to become Catholic missionaries – Read the article from The Record <u>here</u>.

Carlo Acutis' canonization reflects Vatican desire to appeal to new generation - Read the article <u>here</u>.

ON HOLINESS AND SPIRITUALITY

The third part of our Serran mission statement is to further the holiness of our members. Some good reading:

Sanctity of Marriage in plain sight – Read the article <u>here</u>.

Pope Francis' 15 tips on happiness - Read the article <u>here</u>.

JOIN US FOR OUR MONTHLY "ROSARY FOR VOCATIONS"

Our Saint Serra Club of Louisville gathers online **by Zoom** for a Rosary for Vocations at **7 pm**, on the **second Monday of each month**. By link, click <u>here</u>.

By phone, call (312) 626 6799. Meeting ID is 874 8155 6033.

VARIOUS ITEMS OF INTEREST

Serran Birthdays this month:

Bill Moriarity, Jan 2 Bob Hublar, Jan 3 Ron Eades, Jan 31 Sarah Schurfranz, Jan 2 Lincoln Lewis, Jan 10 Six important dates for celebrating vocations in 2025:

 World Day for Consecrated Life (WDCL) – The Sunday coincident with or immediately following Feb 2 (the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord). The next one celebrated in parishes is Sunday, 2/2/25.
 National Catholic Sisters Week (NCSW) – Celebrated March 8 to 14 each year, regardless of the day of the week on which March 8 falls. This was just created in the last few years. It's part of Women's History Month.

3) <u>World Day of Prayer for Vocations</u> (WDPV) -Usually observed on "Good Shephard Sunday" the fourth Sunday of the Easter season (i.e., the third Sunday *after* Easter). The next one is Sunday, 5/11/25.

4) <u>Priesthood Sunday</u> - The last Sunday of September each year. The next one is Sunday, 9/28/25.
5) Deacon Sunday – Celebrated on the second Sun-

day of October. The next one is Sunday, 10/12/25.

6) National Vocation Awareness Week (NVAW) -The week beginning on the first Sunday in November each year. The next one is the week beginning on Sunday, 11/2/25.

New Year's Resolutions - An old (but great) list of 20 ideas for holier habits in the coming year - Read the article <u>here</u>.

Thanks to **Paul Willett** for maintaining our Facebook page at <u>www.facebook.com/SerraLouisville</u>.

Thanks to Lynn Haner & Charlie Francesconi for proofing our newsletters.

Newsletter questions, comments, or submissions? Contact Chuck Lynch, Editor, at (502) 442-9302.

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7/7 Women's Monthly Prayer Group: Vulnerability January 7, 2025 at 7:00 pm - 7:45 pm EST Event Series <u>(See All)</u>

Various Locations at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods

1 Sisters of Providence Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, IN 47876



Single women from ages 18-42 are invited to join together in this special virtual event that takes place monthly on the 7th day of every month at 7 p.m.

Each month will focus on a universal topic led by a Sister of Providence where attendees are welcomed and encouraged to bring prayer intentions, share an experience or give wisdom gained through experience with the monthly theme.

We want to empower and aid one another in life's challenges and struggles and also celebrate our joys as a community united.

Life can be difficult and no one should carry their troubles or concerns alone. Together we can learn to navigate life gracefully, from the darkest of personal storms to the most trying of circumstances.

We can learn to lean in faith on God's providence and can find help and comfort in one another.

- 1. Vulnerability Tuesday, January 7 with Sister Tracey Horan
- 2. Fear Friday, February 7 with Sister Marsha Speth
- 3. Hope Friday, March 7 with Sister Ann Sullivan
- 4. Shame Monday, April 7 with Sister Barbara Sheehan
- 5. Joy Wednesday, May 7 with Sister Betty Koressel
- 6. Gratitude Saturday, June 7 with Sister Marilyn Baker



Vocations Director Sister Joni Luna, SP 361 500 9505 https://spsmw-vocations.youcanbook.me

