



Club chartered May 22, 1955

Saint Serra Club of Louisville VOCATION DIGEST

"Always Forward, Never Back"
- Saint Junipero Serra

October, 2026
Newsletter

MISSION:

To foster and promote
vocations to the priesthood,
diaconate, and consecrated
religious life.

FR. CHARLES DITTMEIER SPOKE AT OUR SEP. 21 MEETING.

About Our Speaker

Fr. Charles Dittmeier was ordained in 1970 after six years at St. Thomas Seminary in Louisville and then six years at St. Mary's Seminary in Baltimore. He had two parish assignments, at St. Lawrence on Rockford Lane and at Saints Simon and Jude on Hazelwood Avenue; but most of his ministry was with the Youth Ministry Commission, the Catholic Deaf Office, and Angela Merici High School, where he spent thirteen years as teacher, chaplain, counselor.

Fr. Charlie began working with Catholic deaf people while in the seminary in Baltimore. After the St. Lawrence assignment, he set up the Catholic Deaf Office in Louisville. He was invited to work at a deaf technical training center for the deaf in Bangalore, India, and spent two years there where he fell in love with Asia. He then became a Maryknoll Associate Priest and spent 13 years working with Catholic deaf people in Hong Kong. Followed by 25 years with the Deaf Development Programme in Cambodia. In Phnom Penh he was also pastor of the English-speaking parish.

After 42 years living in other countries, Fr. Charlie returned to the United States in 2025 and now, at age 82, lives at Nazareth Home Clifton on Payne Street.

Fr. Charlie's Presentation

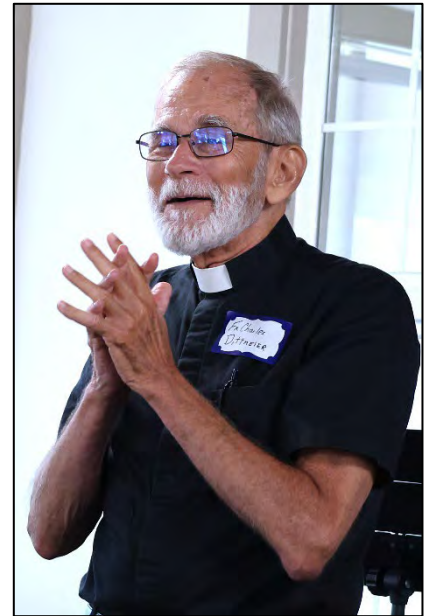
He said that if it weren't for his large family (he's the oldest of eight siblings), he probably would have retired in Cambodia, since life would be much simpler and easier there and because he's really gotten to know and love that country and its people so well in the last 25 years.

He felt his work with the deaf community in Louisville was providential as it led to similar work in Asia. He learned the Cambodian language. Each time a five-

year stay abroad ended, he was approved for another. He ended up being permitted to stay there by each of our last four archbishops until he retired last year.

Unlike a priest's life in the U.S., he had no chancery office, no marriage tribunal, etc. He had to make do with what little there was in a very poor missionary country. Initially, he even had some concerns since, during the Vietnam War, the U.S. bombed so much of both Vietnam and Cambodia. There are still millions of land mines in Cambodia. Fr. Charlie says he has been very well received; and he even spoke of receiving "loving kindness" from so many in the deaf community and his parish.

Out of 16 million people in Cambodia, there are only about 5,000 Cambodian Catholics. The medical care in Cambodia is very poor and in some places nonexistent. And most of the deaf people were simply thought to be "crazy." However, Fr. Charlie was able to set up programs for the deaf, as well as develop a sign language for the Cambodian deaf.



There are not many social service agencies in Cambodia and when people need help they often go to the Buddhist monks. Fr. Charlie said, "Buddhism is the glue that holds Cambodia together."

To help with various social needs, Fr. Charlie started a chapter of the St. Vincent de Paul at his parish. They would get 50 to 100 requests per day for various types of help!

The average Cambodian Catholic parish has only 35 to 50 people. But his, the only English-speaking parish, had 900 people.

When poor people there get very sick, they generally just expect to die. Those who could afford something more will often travel to neighboring countries for medical assistance.

He ended up working with a lot of the deaf community who were around 18 or older. Learning sign language gave them a life; and they wanted to learn all they could. Fr. Charlie developed a routine of two years of informal education, followed by one year of job training. They taught very simple reading and writing and math and a lot of life skills. Some of the deaf became barbers. This was followed by assistance with social services and community development.

Fr. Charlie had a staff of 89 in four centers treating the deaf at one time, with financial help from various sources, including foreign NGOs (non-government organizations) and the Maryknoll organization. With the 2020 covid pandemic, he had to let go of more than 50 staff members as the international charities suffered a reduction in donations from around the world.

Out of the estimated 60,000 deaf in Cambodia, he and his staff were only able to find and help about 3,000. But Fr. Charlie truly loved what he did.

We want to thank Fr. Charlie Dittmeier for his very enlightening presentation.

(And thanks to Sally Lynch for the pictures with this article.)

UPCOMING MEETINGS AND EVENTS

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

OCT 5 (1st Mon) – Fr. Pat Delahanty (a Laudato Si'

Animator) will speak on Faithful Finance: Caring for Our Common Home.

OCT 12 (2nd Mon) – **Zoom Rosary for Vocations**, 7 pm. See the separate article for details.

OCT 14 (2nd Wed) – **Holy Hour for Vocations** – after the Noon Mass at St. Margaret Mary.

OCT 19 (3rd Mon) – **Retreat for Serrans only** – Mt. St. Francis, IN.

OCT 19 (3rd Mon) – **"Serra Meets"** by Zoom – Fr. Kyle Ratuiste speaks. He is the Director of Vocations of the Diocese of Spokane, Washington. 8 pm Louisville time. Click [here](#) for details.

OCT 27 (Tue) - 11:45 - **Serra Board Meeting** - St. Margaret Mary Spirituality Center.

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

"SERRA MEETS" BY ZOOM HOSTED A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE ARCHDIOCESE FOR THE MILITARY SERVICES.

Bill Newbrough currently serves **Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio** as the Major Gift and Donor Relations Officer for the [Archdiocese for the Military Services, USA \(AMS\)](#). He is the primary fundraiser supporting the pastoral mission and ministry of the Military Archdiocese tasked with providing for the sacramental, spiritual and faith formation care of 1.8 million Catholic service members and their families.

Bill's fundraising activities include soliciting funds for the important work of the Vocations Director of the Military Archdiocese, **Fr. Paul Anthony Halladay**. The [AMS Co-Sponsored Seminarian Program](#) funds half of the formation cost of seminarians studying for the military chaplaincy while their home diocese funds the remaining half.

Bill, at age 62, is married and has two adult sons. He studied for the priesthood for the diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, WV, from 1978 to 1984, and fondly



remembers addressing the Serra Club in Wheeling years ago.

Bill presented on the pastoral mission of the AMS, which provides sacramental and spiritual care for 1.8 million Catholic service members and their families. He highlighted several critical operational aspects:

- 1) The shortage of Catholic chaplains, noting that while Catholics comprise 20% of the military, they make up only 6% of the 3,000-member chaplain corps.
- 2) The distinction between the 359 active duty/reserve chaplains and the 304 contract priests serving in garrison and VA hospitals in 29 countries around the world.
- 3) The AMS Co-Sponsored Seminarian Program, which partners with 20 dioceses to split the cost of education for chaplain candidates.
- 4) The role of the [AMS Department of Evangelization](#) in supporting over 59,000 registered families globally.

Bill also addressed questions regarding how civilian dioceses support the AMS, explaining the national triennial appeal authorized by the USCCB (on the Sunday before Veterans Day), for those dioceses wishing to support the AMS.

Bill emphasized that the mission is to ensure those who defend national freedoms can practice their faith freely.

When a U.S. diocese allows a priest to help as a contract chaplain in the AMS, it is usually for a period of five years.

In addition to the challenges listed above, Bill says that chaplains are always on the move; and the service men and women are also on the move. Masses are sometimes celebrated in tents in the desert and on the decks of aircraft carriers. The chaplains must deal with their own fears on the battlefield, as well as those of the people in military service. Bill says sometimes they all see things that can't be unseen. He even spoke of chaplains who suffer from PTSD.

The AMS manages pastoral care across all six service branches (Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, Coast Guard, and Space Force) and multiple international locations without being geographically based. This includes foreign diplomats and the service academies, like West Point.

Father Paul Anthony Halliday serves as the AMS vocations director to recruit new chaplains. The AMS Co-Sponsored Seminarian program partners with 20

dioceses to share education costs for chaplain candidates.

Bill also addressed a question regarding two paths for military vocation. First is someone moving from a diocese to the military. Second is someone entering military service first and then discerning the priesthood while in the service.

Evangelization efforts include catechist training and initiatives like [Team St. Paul](#) at various military bases. This is the military version of college F.O.C.U.S. program.

EWTN made a 40-minute video documentary ["Frontline Fathers"](#); and Bill recommends we check it out. Bill said that "... just like a medic tends to physical wounds, chaplains attend to our spiritual wounds."

Bill quoted one general as saying that, "Without the Catholic priests and Catholic chaplains, there is no Catholic Community in the military."

We want to thank Bill Newbrough for his presentation.

A video of the meeting, including Bill's talk, as well as other business items, can be found [here](#).

PREPARE FOR DEACON SUNDAY – SECOND SUNDAY OF OCTOBER

During the 2025 calendar year, an estimated 570 new permanent deacons were ordained in US dioceses. At the same time, 494 deacons retired from active ministry, and another 390 deacons died. So, the number ordained falls short of the number retiring or dying.

The second Sunday of October each year (10/11/26 this year) is Deacon Sunday. Here are some resources to learn more about deacons, help prepare for the day, and even consider the diaconate.

To learn more about how to celebrate Deacon Sunday and affirm our deacons, click [here](#).

For a short history of the permanent diaconate, click [here](#). For an article on the first Deacon Sunday in 2022, click [here](#).

For frequently asked questions about the permanent diaconate, by the USCCB, click [here](#).

To read blogs by Catholic deacons, click [here](#) and [here](#). For a step-by-step guide to becoming a permanent deacon, click [here](#). For the NADD, the National Association of Diaconate Directors, website, click [here](#).

To read an article in The Record for men interested in the permanent diaconate, click [here](#).

To read some of the articles in the monthly “The Deacon” magazine, click [here](#).

For a ministry to deacons and those they serve, click [here](#).

For general intercessions during a Mass for Deacon Sunday, click [here](#).

For a bulletin blurb regarding Deacon Sunday, click [here](#).

For the CARA May 2026 report on Deacons, prepared for the USCCB, click [here](#).

Consider having the Mass celebrant on Deacon Sunday give a blessing to your parish’s deacons and their wives. You might use the following for the wording:

O Christ, You are the source of all ministries in the Church. In response to the needs of the People of God, through the laying on of hands and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, You have called forth and ordained deacons as servants for our Church. You have blessed these two men with loving and supportive wives.

Continue to sustain those You have called to this ministry, so they remain ardent servants with gentle hearts, proclaiming the Gospel and serving at Your Holy table.

Help them reflect the real and true presence of Christ to the needy among us.

We also give thanks for all those who accompany these men in their journey of service – their wives and families, their parish communities, and all those who call them to respond in faith, hope, and love.

Loving Savior, continue to help your Church affirm our deacons and their wives in their service. Together as one family of faith, may all that we say and do give honor and glory to You and draw others ever closer to Your Sacred Heart.

Amen.

PRAYER FOR OUR DEACONS AND THEIR WIVES

Lord Jesus Christ, Servant of all,
Send your Spirit upon our deacons and their wives as they serve your Church.

Give them eyes to see the needs of your people.

Give them a discerning mind to know your truth.

Give them a generous spirit when they are tired but needed.

Give them a humble heart when their work goes unnoticed.

Give them peace of mind in obedience and service.

Give them health of body so they may serve with strength.

Make them fertile ground for your inspiration and love. Comfort them when they question themselves and their ministry.

Grant them grace as they age so they may share your wisdom.

Make their hearts like yours so they may love your people.

Amen.

– Prayer by Amy Ekeh

PRIESTS CELEBRATING ORDINATION ANNIVERSARIES

Congratulations to one of our priests celebrating anniversary of ordination this month. We always include here any priests, from religious orders and other dioceses, who are working or living in our archdiocese.

**REV. CHARLES C. MUNGAI, F.M.H.,
10/20/17, 9 yrs**

A list of all our diocesan priests can be found [here](#).
A list of other priests working in our diocese, from other dioceses and various religious orders, can be found [here](#).

DEACONS CELEBRATING ORDINATION ANNIVERSARIES

Congratulations to one of our Deacons celebrating an ordination anniversary this month. Wives’ names are in parentheses. The asterisk (*) indicates “Retired.”

**DEACON STEPHEN W. MARKS, * (MARCIA)
10/14/2000, 26 yrs**

A list of all our deacons, their wives, ordination anniversaries and parishes can be found [here](#).

SEMINARIAN BIRTHDAYS THIS MONTH

Happy Birthday to our seminarians celebrating birthdays this month:

**CONOR MCCLURE – October 8
DONAL WHITWORTH – October 26**

You can get more details on all our seminarians, as well as where they’re going to school, hometown, and other information by clicking [here](#). (Then click the pictures to get more background.)



PIONEERS FOR OUR TIMES:

*Living Humbly,
Praying Courageously*

A Discernment Retreat for Catholic Women

Un Retiro de Discernimiento para Mujeres Católicas

Khóa Tĩnh Tâm Phân Định Ôn Gọi dành cho Phụ Nữ Công Giáo



Date

Friday, October 2 -
Sunday, October 4, 2026



Location

St. Catharine Motherhouse,
2645 Bardstown Rd.
St. Catharine, KY 40061



Details

Free event,
travel assistance available



About the Retreat

Welcome the grace of fall with a weekend of prayer, reflection, and fellowship.

Single Catholic women, ages 18–45, are invited to a peaceful retreat at the historic Motherhouse in St. Catharine, Kentucky, to pause, reconnect with God, and explore the Dominican Sisters of Peace way of life.



Scan to register

For more information or to register, please contact Sister Ana Gonzalez, OP, at ana.gonzalez@oppeace.org.



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 [here](#).

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

REQUEST FROM THE VOCATION OFFICE AND THE ST. SERRA CLUB OF LOUISVILLE

The Vocation Office is trying to create a list of women and men currently in formation for religious life that are originally from the Archdiocese of Louisville. We are reaching out to religious orders locally and nationally; however, we would like any input from you. If you know of a woman or man that meets these criteria, please let us know.

This will give us the ability to support these people through the St. Serra Club of Louisville and throughout the Archdiocese of Louisville.

If you know of any of these people, please contact Todd Popson in the Vocation Office, at (502) 636-0296 ext. 1270. See more details [here](#).

OCTOBER 16, 2026 – DAY OF PRAYER FOR HEALTH AND WELLNESS OF CLERGY AND MEN AND WOMEN RELIGIOUS

All Serrans are being asked through prayer this day to provide spiritual support to those who tirelessly serve the Church and the people of God. The day is being hosted by St. John Vianney Center, a behavioral health and addictions treatment and resource center providing holistic care and support exclusively for clergy and religious worldwide. Mass will be live streamed at 11 am Eastern time. For the link to the livestream, click [here](#).

NATIONAL VOCATION AWARENESS WEEK BEGINS SUNDAY NOV 1 THIS YEAR

This is an annual week-long celebration of the Catholic Church in the U.S. dedicated to promoting vocations to the priesthood, diaconate and consecrated life

through prayer and education, and to renew our prayers and support for those who are considering a religious vocation.

Click [here](#) for prayers and homily ideas; info for DREs, teachers, catechists, parents and youth ministers; fact sheets; vocation terms; things to do; parish resources; answers to questions; find your spirituality type; and more.

Click [here](#) for Holy Hour ideas (with and without a priest). Click [here](#) for some great infographics, particularly valuable in the classroom.

ANNUAL VOCATION POSTER AND ESSAY CONTESTS

Schools, parishes, home-schoolers and youth leaders are being notified in October and November of the annual Vocation Essay and Poster Contests sponsored by the Vocation Office and the Saint Serra Club of Louisville.

The Contest starts with the National Vocation Awareness Week (the week beginning November 1 this year); and entries must be received in the Vocation Office by a date in January, yet to be determined.

The Saint Serra Club will provide cash prizes to 1st, 2nd and 3rd place winners in each contest – the Essay Contest (grades 7 & 8) and the Poster Contest (grades 4 through 6).

VOCATIONS IN THE NEWS

New Seminarian Joseph Paterson was written up in The News-Enterprise. Read the article [here](#).

Woman originally from Louisville professes vows with the Sisters of Life. Read the article [here](#).

Ursuline Sisters of Louisville celebrate milestone anniversaries - Read the article [here](#).

Fr. Clyde Crews to receive an award from Bellarmine - Fr. Clyde F. Crews (Bellarmine class of '66)

will be the recipient of the Monsignor Alfred F. Horri-gan Distinguished Service Award at the 2026 Knight of Excellence! Fr. Clyde Crews is a beloved Bellarmine alumnus, priest, educator, and historian with decades of service to the university. A longtime Theology professor, he also served as academic dean, department chair, director of the Thomas Merton Center, university historian, and archival coordinator. Fr. Crews has preserved Bellarmine's story through his authorship of

Are you being
called to be a Sister?



Come & See

SPIRITUAL WEEKEND RETREAT

October 23-25, 2026

at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Indiana

Free and open to single,
Catholic women ages 18-42.

SistersofProvidence.org/ComeandSee

Register



today!

Contact Sister Joni Luna
at 361.500.9505 or
jluna@spsmw.org

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Breaking boundaries, creating hope.®



"In Veritatis Amore," a concise history of the university. We look forward to honoring Fr. Clyde for his extraordinary professional achievements, leadership, and lasting impact at Knight of Excellence.

The 2026 CARA report on the Ordination Class of 2026 can be viewed [here](#).

Catholic vocation report finds more US dioceses gained seminarians than lost them – Read the article [here](#).

Hey, priests, thank you! Especially for this! – Read the article [here](#).

VOTING SEASON IS HERE!

The US bishops have released guidelines for clergy in forming faithful citizenship. See details [here](#).

The USCCB's 2023 "Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship" can be found [here](#).

FOR AND ABOUT OUR CATHOLIC YOUTH

Inaugural Louisville Catholic Youth Conference set for February 26-28 of 2027 – Read the article [here](#). Register online [here](#).

Class of 2026: Catholic Commencements Offer a More Demanding Call. Read the article [here](#).

Gen Z Catholics fill pews in New York, San Francisco amid renewed interest in faith. - Read the article [here](#).

BOOK BY OUR CHAPLAIN, FR. PAT DOLAN

Fr. Pat Dolan, the Senior Chaplain for the St. Serra Club of Louisville, has written a book called "Vigil Light Echoes." That book has recently received the Catholic Writer's Guild seal of approval. The book can be downloaded for free [here](#) or purchased [here](#) (where you can also purchase his other books).

SEEKING SPONSORS FOR OUR DECEMBER CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON FOR WOMEN RELIGIOUS

The St. Serra Club of Louisville will host a special

Christmas Luncheon for the Women Religious of our archdiocese on Monday, Dec. 7. We are seeking sponsors, of at least \$200 per table, for that event. And our sponsors will get recognition at the luncheon, as well as in our newsletter. If interested in being a sponsor, please contact Chuck Lynch at (502) 442-9302 or ChuckLynch4782@gmail.com.

SHOPPING FOR CHRISTMAS

Shop for Christmas and support our local seminarians and religious orders.

St. Meinrad Archabbey - click [here](#).

Franciscans - click [here](#).

Sisters of St. Benedict (Ferdinand, IN) - click [here](#).

Trappists in Gethsemani - click [here](#).

Ursulines (Mt. St. Joseph) - click [here](#).

VARIOUS ITEMS OF INTEREST

Serran and Vocation Office Birthdays this month:

Bob Smith, Oct 5

Todd Popson, Oct 8

Melody Denson, Oct 21

Archbishop Shelton J. Fabre, Oct 25

Pope's Prayer Intention for the month of October – For Mental Health Ministry - Let us pray that the mental health ministry be established throughout the Church, helping to overcome the stigma and discrimination of persons with mental illnesses.

Club Officer Training - YouTube recordings for each of these sessions given last year, can be accessed through the link [here](#).

New Member Orientation Recording is available for viewing [here](#).

Conventions and Meetings Upcoming -

Serra Leadership Rally / January 28-30, 2027 / Scottsdale, AZ. See details [here](#).

Serra International / 92nd Annual Convention / June 24-26, 2027 / Rome, Italy. Details later but save the dates!

Thanks to **Lynn Haner** and **Charlie Francesconi** for proofing our newsletters.

Newsletter comments, questions, or submissions?
Contact Chuck Lynch writer/editor at
(502) 442-9302 or ChuckLynch4782@gmail.com