



Serra Club News

Meetings are held the first and third Friday of each month at noon at the Wheeling Civic Center

A publication of the Wheeling Serra Club

July 2008

July Calendar

July 18 – **Sister Martha Gomez**, pastoral Associate, St. Michael Parish
PRAYER LEADER: **Robert Miller**

Congrats to Serra's New Officers

Thanks to all who have agreed to serve our club as officers: Chaplain-Fr. **Gene Ostrowski**; President-**Dr. David Singer**; President-Elect-**Gary Mulhern**; Past President-**Larry Bandi**; VP Membership- **Gene Fahey**; VP Vocations-**Joe Pangilinan**; VP Programs-**Bernie Coyne & John Faini**; VP Communications- **Janet Boyle**; Treasurer - **Dr. Frank Carenbauer III**; Trustees- **Dr. Hank Drews, Chris Freeman, John Anderson & Renee Anderson**; Foundation Rep.-**Lou Costanzo**

Diocese Plans Pilgrimage to Rome

Serra received a letter from **the Most Reverend Michael J. Bransfield** announcing that our Diocesan Pilgrimage to the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, Washington, D.C., will take place on Saturday, September 6, 2008. Each Pastor has been asked to appoint a Parish Pilgrimage Coordinator so check with your parish soon if you are interested in making the trip.

Convention Update

Although it doesn't seem possible, our super regional convention is right around the corner. If you haven't yet registered, **President Dave Singer** asks that you do it as soon as possible. You can even download the registration form from our website: http://www.wheelingserra.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=7&Itemid=7
Dave also asks that when you pray for vocations, you offer a little prayer for the success of our convention.

Meet the Seminarians: Deacon James DeViese

My name is **Deacon James DeViese**, and I am from Ss. Peter & Paul Parish in Oak Hill, WV. I'm the oldest of three boys. I'm a graduate of Charleston Catholic High School, and I earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Fine Arts (concentrations in Music and Theatre) from Hampden-Sydney College in Virginia prior to entering



seminary. After graduating from Hampden-Sydney, I worked at my Alma Mater as a Media Technologist, overseeing the day-to-day operations of the library's Media Center. I finally entered seminary in the fall of 2003, matriculating for the 2-year Pre-Theology program at the Pontifical College Josephinum in Columbus, OH.

In 2005, I completed a Bachelor of Philosophy degree at the Josephinum, and began my formation in major seminary that fall at the Pontifical North American College in Rome. I am currently completing my third year of priestly formation at the NAC (as it is commonly known), as well as my Bachelor of Sacred Theology (STB) at the Pontifical Gregorian University. Next year I will begin a License in Canon Law (JCL) from the same university, though currently it is expected that I will return to the diocese to serve as a parish priest for a few years before finishing the JCL.

I was ordained a deacon on May 17, 2008, at Sacred Heart Co-Cathedral in Charleston, and (as far as I'm aware) I expect to be ordained a priest at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Wheeling in June 2009.

Life as a seminarian has proven far different from what I envisioned when I first made application to the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston in 2002. Most people on the "outside" have strange perceptions of what seminary must be like--young men in long robes spending hour upon hour in the chapel looking very solemn and pious. I think that stereotype is what even keeps some men from pursuing a vocation. The reality of seminary life is a bit different. In many ways, it reminded me of my time in college. Aside from the expectations of prayers, chapel attendance, not showing up to class in one's pajamas, etc., the modern seminary environment is a lot like a college environment--at least as I have experienced it. There is time for socialization with peers, going to movies, etc. The classes are structured very much like typical college courses, although they are geared towards philosophical and theological topics. Although, being in Rome adds a certain flavor to all of that which is rather difficult to explain. To save time and ink, imagine everything that I've said, but put the seminarians in Roman collars, watching movies that have subtitles, hearing lectures in Italian, and walking a few miles round-trip to get from the North American College to their respective universities.

Having had two very different seminary experiences (one on either side of the Atlantic), there are many aspects of seminary life that I have enjoyed. Of course living in Rome has its challenges, but that, in and of itself, is what I have enjoyed most. It's all very hard to describe, but there is something so profoundly unique about being formed as a priest in Rome that I really cannot put my finger on it. It could be the fact that right now, as I'm writing this, I'm also looking out my window at the dome of St. Peter's Basilica. Or the fact that just this morning I was walking through the Scavi of St.

Peter's (the ancient necropolis under the basilica, and the tomb of St. Peter) with a reporter from Vatican Radio. It could be that I can go to see the Pope every Sunday as he prays the Angelus with the people in St. Peter's Square. Or maybe it's the fact that every day on my way to school I pass by more historical sites than I could even list here. In a nutshell, being in Rome, being so close to the Holy Father, the Apostles and martyrs, and having access to so many of Christendom's holiest sites as I prepare for priestly ordination is what I have liked most about seminary.

Now I know that not everyone has the opportunity to study in Rome. I've been very blessed to have been given that opportunity. And people expect that life as a Roman seminarian is all fun and games. But the downside to all that I've mentioned above is that when it's time to work, we work very hard--both for our formation, but also for the thousands of pilgrims from the US who come to Rome. Being in Rome, we're not just seminarians...we're also ambassadors, hosts, guest-masters, tour-guides, waiters, etc. The biggest challenge is being able to smile every day, to keep going even in the face of utter exhaustion, and to keep each experience of Rome as new for each new pilgrim as it was for us the first day we set foot in Italy. But in the face of those challenges, there's always that renewed sense of service to which we are called. And we do it not for paychecks, not for public recognition, nor for any other sort of accolade. We work out of a sincere love for Christ, for His Church, and out of a profound desire to lead others to Christ and His Church through all that Rome has to offer.

Seminary life poses other challenges as well. In many ways, it's a bit of a pressure-cooker. In a short period of time, men are formed and turned out into the parishes of the United States and the world. And when your times comes, you've got to be ready. It isn't a place to waste time or dwell on issues. In a fast-paced world, and in a forward-moving Church, seminarians run the gauntlet to make certain that they can face the day-to-day difficulties of parish life, and of life as a priest--a life that is so counter-cultural and so in the face of all that society elevates as acceptable and right that it really is no wonder that more men don't answer the call. I know that sounds pessimistic, but the men who make it are on fire with a love for Christ and His Church that is not easily extinguished, and they're capable of rising to the challenges of life in the real world.

When I'm not doing any of the above activities, I try to sleep! Not really! Seriously, though, I enjoy traveling. Being in Europe has provided me with some excellent opportunities to make friends in various countries and to visit with them. My travels have taken me from Ireland to Norway to the Czech Republic and many places in between. I love to read (I especially love studying about the Liturgy); I enjoy cooking and watching movies; I love the theatre, opera and ballet. So, really, what little "spare" time I get is pretty well-filled with various activities in and around the city.

I first realized I had a vocation to priestly life when I was about 8 years old. Though it took me another 14 to answer the call! I first became aware of my vocation serving on the altar. Through college, I didn't think much about the priesthood. College had far too many other distractions for

me to think about priestly life! But as I neared the end of my time in college, I began to feel a call to do more than what I had planned for my life. I was getting a degree in Fine Arts and was planning on continuing studies with a degree in Arts Administration. But that fell through, and I was consigned to returning to my parents' home in Oak Hill, waiting tables (I realize how ironic that is for a trained musician and actor!), when I got a call from the library at Hampden-Sydney, asking me to come and work for them. So, I went. During the next few months, though, I began thinking more and more about where my life was heading. It was also during this period that one of the great spiritual influences in my life, **Fr. Harold Moore**, my pastor of 12 years, passed away, having lost his battle with cancer. I won't say that his death was instrumental in my applying to seminary, but it certainly made me more mindful of his life and his influence on my own life. And somewhere in the midst of processing all of that, I found the vocation that I thought I had left behind with the little cassock and surplice I wore on the altar. I contacted the diocesan Office of Vocations, they sent me an application, and the rest, as they say, is history! Now, of course, it wasn't as easy as what I've just described, but hopefully that gives an idea of how I came to find my vocation.

The influences on my vocation are many. I keep meeting more and more people who tell me how they always knew I'd be a priest someday. My fellow parishioners still talk about seeing me serve on the altar and saying how they just knew! But there's something to that...because true vocations are sometimes very easy to spot. I remember very clearly--and I love telling this story--how at the celebrations for Fr. Moore's 50th anniversary of priestly ordination, his classmate, **Fr. Leo Lydon**, walked up to me, introduced himself, saying, "Jamie, I'm Fr. Leo, and one day you're going to be a priest!" I was dumbfounded (and so was my girlfriend standing beside me!) But sometimes people just know these things! Obviously Fr. Moore and Fr. Lydon were influential in my vocation. I also owe a great deal to **Fr. Leo Werner** and **Fr. Jeremiah McSweeney**, both wonderfully holy priests who either explicitly or implicitly affirmed my vocation and set for me very concrete examples of what a priest should be like. Of course, these aren't the only priests to have influenced my vocation. And priests aren't the only people to have influenced my vocation. But I think it bears mentioning just how crucial good priests are to vocations.

We're very blessed in our diocese to have some excellent priests who have inspired a good many men to follow the call of Christ to care for the souls of the People of God in our diocese. It's very apparent that we need more. And we need more people to pray for vocations. As I said to someone just the other day, there are plenty of vocations out there...we just have to see to it that the seeds are properly cultivated...and that is how we will bear much fruit!