



A LETTER FROM THE SERRA US PRESIDENT

On our Call to Holiness

I want to talk to you about the Serra Call to Holiness.

It is the one of the three planks in our Serra Mission. There's more to it than you might think! Its importance is too often underestimated by Serrans. Really and truly, it is the beginning point to creating a culture of vocations—a culture of vocations within ourselves.

So, the Serra Call to Holiness...

Holiness is about being more like God. Too many Catholics today think holiness is just keeping the 10 Commandments and going to Mass on Sunday. This "minimalistic" view is not what holiness is. There's more to holiness than just "not being bad." Jesus tells us this in the parable of the sheep and the goats.

At the end of time he gathers all the people together and separates them into those on his right and those on his left. Those on his right he welcomes into the kingdom of heaven because of the good things they have done; feeding the poor, clothing the naked, visiting those in prison, and so forth. Those on his left he casts into eternal damnation—for failing to do good things for others.

What is easy to overlook is that everyone Jesus was talking to was a sinner. All had done bad things in their lives—those on the right and those on the left. Yet Jesus does not focus on this. For Jesus was not only God, he was also man and he knows the weaknesses and temptations of all men. He knows that we all sin. So what does he focus on? Not on our sins, but on how much good we have done during our lives. There is a line in the Catholic funeral rite I love which says that when we die, God will first thank us for all the good things we have done in our lives, then he will forgive our sins—in that order. The affirmative act of doing good is what holiness is really all about.



Mike Downey
Serra US President

So how do we achieve the Serra Call to Holiness? Merely being a “minimalist” Catholic doesn’t do it. There are three steps we must take.

First, we must make God the Lord of our lives. We must put God first! Not just an occasional, random thought. Not just for an hour on Sunday. But a total commitment to God. Bishop Robert Barron asks us, “Is Christ the Lord of your life? Is Christ commanding your life in every detail? Is he the Lord of your family life? Of your recreational life? Of your professional life? Is he Lord of every room in your house, including the bedroom? Are you totally given over to him, under his lordship?” If God is first in our lives, we should be able to answer “yes” to these questions.

Second, we must understand and believe that God created each of us for some special, unique purpose in his great plan. And since we have put God first in our lives, we must seek out God’s will for us—the special purpose for which he created us. Each day we arise from sleep, we need to ask what the special, unique purpose is he has for us this day, for this season in our life and for all our life. To know the special good that he asks of us is a critical step to growing in holiness.

But how are we to know God’s purpose for us? I teach catechism to a class of sixth grade boys and they always ask me this question. I tell them that regular prayer is important. Prayer is a conversation with God, but for it to be a true conversation, it must not just be us talking, but us listening carefully to God. Prayer must involve silent time so we can hear God speak to us. I also tell them to look at the talents and abilities God has given them, for these often point to his purpose for us. But most of all I tell them to follow their heart. God speaks to us most clearly through our hearts, not our minds.

Then, once you know God’s purpose for your life, you must action it! Commit your whole self to achieving this purpose. This is the third and final step to growing in holiness—to do good and be more like God by following God’s will.

What is it that made you join Serra? For most of us, it is the special place we have in our hearts for priests and religious. That’s a sure sign that at least part of the reason God created us is to help accomplish the Serra Mission. Serra is not a hobby. It is not a social club. It is a ministry. To be part of a Serra Club is a special vocational calling in itself. St. John Henry Neuman said: “God has created me to do him some definite service. He has committed some work to me which he has not committed to another. I have my mission.” And so do all of you. It is not an accident that you are a member of a Serra Club. There are no accidents in God’s great plan. God has put this ministry in your heart. This is the work God has committed to you. Recognize it as at least part of the purpose for which God created you.

Acting on God’s purpose for your life will require sacrifice of time, talents, and treasure, and of ego by putting God’s will first. It will require us to put the good of others before our own good. It may require you to step outside your comfort zone. It will likely involve moments of discouragement. You will get tired! You may even get ridiculed or rejected by others. The

challenges may seem enormous, almost hopeless—like a mountain too tall to climb. But remember, God does not ask us to do a task without giving us the resources and his help to do it.

And against all of these challenges, realize that you will know the incomparable joy of doing God's will—the only real joy there is to experience in life. And you will grow in holiness.

For Serrans, who put God first and are purposed by the Mission of Serra, the path to holiness is graced. Our prayers are the very best prayers! Prayers for others, not ourselves. Prayers turning our souls outward towards others rather than inward on ourselves.

And while prayer is the foundation of all we do, true prayer almost always calls us to some kind of action—especially prayers for vocations. A Serra Club provides opportunities for that action not available to an individual. Like appreciation events to honor our bishop, priests, sisters, religious and seminarians. Like spiritually adopting a seminarian. Like organizing Holy Hours for vocations and monthly rosaries in parishes. Like passing out prayer cards for seminarians during Catholic Schools week. Like organizing traveling crucifix and traveling chalice programs in schools and parishes. And many others.

A Serra Club is really the only effective way for an individual to put vocation prayers into action. It helps us to act on this God-given purpose in our life.

Does the Serra Call to Holiness sound familiar to you? It should. Think about it. Putting God first, discerning his will for our lives and acting on it with courage. Isn't this exactly what we ask young people to do who may be discerning a priestly or religious vocation!

How can we ask them to do this if we are not willing to answer the call to holiness in our own lives. This is what our Call to Holiness is all about and why it is a critical element of our Serra Mission.

Remember what St. Paul said: Christ is the Head and we—the Church—are the body of Christ. Serra is an important part of the Body of Christ. There is no more noble purpose for our lives than the Serra Mission. Serra Mission. So, make Christ the Lord of your life, find the purpose for which he created you and commit you're all to doing it. Don't be a minimalist Catholic. Do good with your lives. And there is no better way to do that than to engage fully in the Serra Mission. In so doing you will grow in holiness and know God's joy. God bless you and all that you do for Serra and for Vocations in our Church! ☒