



The Serra Club of Arlington
Minutes for Tuesday 06 December 2022 | Luncheon Meeting
The Portofino Restaurant | Arlington, Virginia



GUEST SPEAKER – FR. ROBERT C. CILINSKI, PASTOR OF CHURCH OF THE NATIVITY, BURKE, VA

He was born June 25, 1953, in Alexandria, to Edward and Catherine Cilinski. One of six children, he attended St. Louis School in Alexandria, St. John Vianney High School in Richmond and graduated from St. Meinrad College in St. Meinrad, Indiana, in 1975, with a bachelor's degree in philosophy.

He attended Mount St. Mary's Seminary in Emmitsburg, Maryland, and was ordained by Arlington Bishop Thomas J. Welsh May 12, 1979. He earned a Master of Divinity from Mount St. Mary's.

He was Parochial Vicar of the Cathedral of St. Thomas More in Arlington, 1979-1982, and Holy Family Church in Dale City, 1982-1986 before moving to George Mason University in Fairfax as Chaplain in June 1986, where he served for 14 years. He served as Pastor of All Saints Church in Manassas from 2000-2014.

Father Cilinski serves as Episcopal Vicar for Charitable Works, on the Board of Catholic Charities and the Presbyteral Council. He also serves as President of the Gabriel Homes Board of Directors, which provides residential facilities for developmentally disabled in Northern Virginia and Spiritual Director for the Retreat for People Facing Serious Illness. Father Bob founded the priests' basketball team, "The Earthen Vessels" which has been playing for over 40 years.

Highlights from the talk, which primarily centered around Christmas, include:

- Fr Cilinski began with a quote from Karl Rahner (*German Jesuit priest and theologian who is considered to be one of the most influential Roman Catholic theologians of the 20th century*) as follows (*paraphrasing*): "Christmas fills you in your surroundings. You are not alone. Let go." Offered Virgin Mary and St Joseph as example: an unexpected life; trusted their surroundings; and, Jesus as the greatest gift ever given.
- Fr Cilinski reflected on his religious path noting: he comes from a family of religious and priests; he finished 8th grade at Saint Louis Catholic School; entered into high school at St John Vianney seminary; during an Easter break he did not want to return to St John Vianney but mother's unconditional love and father's support saved his vocation; and, God's grace wins.
- Other points of note included: the sacredness of life; genuine "goodness" in people; love shines through us; a request to please support Catholic Charities with the example of some 1200 Afghan refugees having been helped through Catholic Charities; and, Bishop Burbidge had one of his first meals at Christ House when he became bishop.