



**Serra Club of Arlington**  
*Minutes for Tuesday 06 January 2026 | Luncheon Meeting*  
*The Portofino Restaurant | Arlington, Virginia*



**GUEST SPEAKER – Reverend Father Christopher Christensen**

Fr. Christopher Christensen grew up in a Navy family, and after spending time with his family in Washington, Florida, California, and Japan, he finally moved to Northern Virginia, where his family still resides. Father attended St. Thomas Aquinas Regional School in Woodbridge for middle school and went on to Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology in Alexandria. In 2006, Father graduated from the University of Notre Dame in with majors in Philosophy and Japanese language, and was commissioned as a Naval Officer through the NROTC Program.

From 2006 to 2008, Father served on the USS Blue Ridge (LCC-19) in Yokosuka, Japan as a Surface Warfare Officer. In 2008, Father entered seminary for the Diocese of Arlington and spent six years at St. Charles Borromeo Seminary in Philadelphia. Since his priestly ordination in June 2014, Father Christensen has served in three parishes as Parochial Vicar – Saint John the Apostle, Leesburg (June 2014 – Nov 2015); the Cathedral of Saint Thomas More, Arlington (Nov 2015 – June 2020); and Saint Leo the Great, Fairfax (June 2020 – June 2021). In June 2021, Father arrived at Saint Rita of Cascia Catholic Church. It is his first assignment as Pastor, and he is loving every minute of it!

Father Christensen recounted when he and his family were in California they traveled to Monterrey, CA to visit the Mission where St. Junipero Serra, the namesake of our Club, is buried, however, the day they visited the Mission was, unfortunately, closed.

Father Christensen noted today is the Feast of the Epiphany and his talk was inspired by the Gospel from last Sunday on the Epiphany (Matthew Chapter 2). He noted the word “Epiphany” is not anywhere in the Gospel.

Father began by reading the Gospel from last Sunday. He observed that the Wisemen were not Jews and this shows that God offers salvation for all. Father Christensen noted three Epiphanies.

The first Epiphany was one of your vocations, whether it was the priesthood or marriage. He noted priests often are asked when they knew they were destined for the priesthood. For him, the first inkling was when he went to a 3-day discernment retreat in Seoul, Korea. His thoughts were “Lord, you have a need for priests. You might be calling me.”

Father explained that the seminary is one of years of discernment. He said it wasn’t until the Bishop laid hands on him during his ordination that he realized he was meant to be a priest.

He recalled being discouraged one time coming back to his ship and thought there was no way he would be a priest. However, he remembered the passage in John 15:16 – “You did not choose me, but I chose you ...” God invited him to his vocation and gave him the grace to follow through. He remembered a holy hour the night before his ordination during which the priest quoted once again John 15:16. The message is God knows best.

He encouraged Serra Club members to pray for these moments, these “epiphanies” of vocation for the men considering or discerning the priesthood. Be the light, the star with our prayers for them.

The second Epiphany was that of the epiphany in vocation. He talked about the vocation of marriage.

He talked of counseling engaged couples. One thing he tells such couples is that at some point the honeymoon will end and there will be challenges. It is about clarification of expectations. His challenge came relatively soon after becoming a priest. He had only been at his parish in Leesburg 17 months and really enjoyed being a priest there when he got the proverbial tap on the shoulder “The Bishop wants to see you, but you are not in trouble.” The Bishop reassigned him to the Cathedral of St. Thomas More. He learned to accept it as coming from God. And he spent more than four years with then Father Rippy! Monsignor Rippy did remind him that prior to that he had served as a deacon at the Cathedral as well.

As an aside, Father noted that on some issues husbands can only talk to other husbands. Similarly, he has found that the same is true with priests. There are some issues that priests can only talk or share with other priests. And priests need to be priests. If a priest gets close to a family, he cannot be their priest. The family needs to be ministered to by other priests. After all the priest’s number one consideration is your spiritual welfare!

The final Epiphany is to bring the light of the Gospel to all nations. He mentioned St. Frances Xavier who traveled all the way to Japan to do so. Diocesan priests, of course, are limited geographically but they do bring the light. He likened the priest’s job as a fire: Christ is the fire, the light, the laity are the logs and the priest is the one who tends the fire.

His final admonition is to stay close to Jesus. Daily prayer keeps us close. The sacraments are a grace from God; take advantage of them. And carry your cross well.