



Office of the Bishop

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These men they call Knights

I just returned from the Supreme Convention of the Knights of Columbus, held this year in St. Louis. I joined our Nebraska delegation for this annual meeting of Knights in leadership from every state in the U.S.A., as well as delegates from Canada, Mexico, Poland, Lithuania, Ukraine, the Philippines and Korea. It was an impressive gathering!

What is even more impressive, however, is the faith and virtue for which this premier group of men in the Catholic Church stands. The Knights of Columbus was founded in 1882 by a young priest in Connecticut, Father Michael J. McGivney, during the time of the industrial revolution in our nation's history. He saw the great need for a fraternal organization of men to provide material and spiritual support to women and children whose husbands and fathers died in an untimely manner or were seriously injured in the line of work. Today the Knights still provide financial support to Catholic families through their insurance program and other financial resources for their members. However, the Knights now do so much more for the Church and for other humanitarian efforts throughout the world.

You may think of the Knights of Columbus as "those guys with colorful capes, swords and hats with plumes" whom you see at Mass from time to time. (Those are members of the 4th Degree who wear full regalia for liturgies and other events. But that, too, will soon be changing as the 4th Degree have now adopted a more simple uniform.) What the Knights of Columbus really stand for are the virtues of charity, unity and fraternity. These ideals are the founding principles of the Knights of Columbus, to which in more recent years has been added the ideal of patriotism. These ideals are present in all that this fraternal order of men seeks to carry out. The spiritual foundation of this fraternal order of Catholic men is what most impresses me as a bishop!

Additionally, members of the Knights of Columbus have been at the forefront of the Church's mission to carry out the works of mercy. With a great emphasis on the dignity of the human person, the Knights have been a direct source of the Church's care for people from the earliest stages of life until natural death. The gospel teaching to love our neighbor is being done in a most generous way by the Knights of Columbus, not only on the national level but in so many parishes, including right here in our own diocese. Certainly the Knights of Columbus sponsor fish fries and pancake breakfasts by which they are able to fund so many worthy projects. They also support, however, disaster relief, Special Olympics, refugee relief, pro-life activities, seminary formation, parish maintenance projects in our parishes and other family oriented activities. I, myself, have been a member of the Knights of Columbus for nearly 30 years. I have greatly appreciated the leadership of brother Knights as well as the manual service they have provided for various projects in every parish to which I have been assigned.

While I have always been pleased with the charity, unity, fraternity and patriotism I have experienced among the members of the Knights of Columbus, I returned from their Supreme Convention with a new sense of what might be possible in the Church if every member of the Knights of Columbus would become more active and if all Catholic men would espouse the virtues of charity, unity, fraternity and patriotism as members of the Knights of Columbus.

In a world that often seems to have little time for others, the family focus of the Knights of Columbus is an organized way that we as individuals—Catholic men of faith and action—can serve the needs of the human person locally, nationally, and throughout the world.

So here's my challenge: First, if you are currently a member of the Knights of Columbus, that you would renew your commitment and get involved in some activity of your Council this fall. Secondly, if you are a man who is not a member, that you would visit with the Grand Knight of your local Council to learn more about the largest fraternal men's organization in the world. Thirdly, if you are or if you know a former member of the Knights of Columbus, that you would again embrace or encourage this former Knight to renew his membership and embrace this singular way of being a Catholic gentleman. Lastly, if you are unable to be a member of this Catholic men's fraternal organization, that you would pray for the Lord's blessings upon their efforts and support their activities in any way that you can.

I look forward to having the Knights of Columbus as partners in the work that we will undertake to promote the Church's mission and teaching in our diocese. Let me offer each of you, my dear brother Knights, my heartfelt gratitude for your good works to support the Gospel of Life. May you always be proud to number among the Knights of Columbus and strive always to live and model the ideals of charity, unity, fraternity and patriotism in our Church.

In Christ,

Most Reverend Joseph G. Hanefeldt