

A Brief History of the 4th Degree



Brothers All,

Each 'degree' of the Knights of Columbus is associated with a particular virtue, the fourth being "Patriotism". Consequently, the 4th Degree is often known as 'The Patriotic Degree'. It was established in New York on 22 February 1900. The requirements for joining the 4th are that a brother Knight must be a third-degree member in good standing, be an exemplary Catholic, and be of sound citizenship of his country.

The Fourth Degree is frequently regarded as an honorary title but should rather be thought of in terms of service to church and country, and the goals of the Fourth Degree may be summarized as the promotion of the ideals of Catholicism and Patriotism side by side.

In more detail, these goals may be stated as:

- To promote and strengthen the patriotic spirit of the civic community.
- To educate its members, and others, both in the teachings of Holy Mother Church, and the history of our nation.
- To promote by example the highest type of citizenship so necessary for the preservation and perpetuation of republican form of government, and its democratic institutions.
- To oppose dissemination and spread of doctrine dangerous to our form of government, and to the Divine law of faith and morality.
- To support by word and deed, the duly constituted authorities of local, state, and national government, and to recognize excellence in public life.

Therefore, it is not unusual to find Fourth Degree Knights participating visibly in church events, such as Eucharistic processions, and others, and in the community, standing up for the unborn and the elderly at Pro-Life events, and commemorating the sacrifices of previous generations.

The primary purpose of the Fourth Degree is to foster the spirit of patriotism by promoting responsible citizenship and a love of and loyalty to the Knights' respective countries through active membership in local Fourth Degree groups called assemblies.

Please take the time during both Council and Assembly meetings to promote the Fourth Degree Exemplification and encourage Third Degree or lower members to attain the title of Sir Knight. Make sure a candidate receives the *full packet* of information which includes valuable instructions on what is needed for registration.

At this time when our way of life is being challenged both locally and globally, we ask that all men rise-up to answer the call of becoming a Fourth Degree member to show that we will publicly defend both our rights and religious responsibilities.

WHO ARE THE 4TH DEGREE KNIGHTS?

The Patriotic Degree reminds us of
our duty to God and country.

They are the Knights on Main Street, the men you probably envision when someone says Knights of Columbus to you. They're present in their distinct regalia at civic and Church events, acting as honor guards and color corps, or standing in respect at the funerals of members or during adoration of the Eucharist.

But there is more to being a Fourth Degree member of the Knights of Columbus than a uniform. They are the men who have chosen to embrace the Order's fourth principle of patriotism, the men who lead the efforts to reach out to veterans and active military and to embody the fact that one can be a faithful Catholic and be a faithful citizen.



When the Knights of Columbus was founded in 1882, three principles united its members: charity, unity, and fraternity. At that time people feared that members of the Catholic faith owed their entire allegiance to the Church and could not be trusted as citizens of their country. Patriotism was added to the Order's principles in 1900, based on the idea that Knights are loyal to both God and country.

Members who wish to live out patriotism together can join "the Fourth Degree." Members of this degree have the special honor of holding the title "Sir Knight," participating in color and honor guards and organizing programs that promote Catholic citizenship. They also become part of a Fourth Degree Assembly in their area. There are more than 3,500 Fourth Degree assemblies around the world.

"It is important, particularly in this day and age, that our Fourth Degree Assemblies encourage active Catholic citizenship and foster the spirit of patriotism in our members and the community at large," Supreme Master Dennis Stoddard said.

The Serving Those Who Served program is a major initiative of the Fourth Degree supporting Veterans Affairs facilities. The Knights of Columbus has representatives at almost every Veterans Affairs medical clinic in the United States, where they recruit and manage K of C volunteers in developing activities and programs that aid patients' most essential needs.

The Fourth Degree has also supported priests, in particular those who go on to serve as military chaplains. Through a special scholarship program, the Knights helped fund the education of seminarians preparing to become Catholic chaplains in the U.S. Armed Forces.

Stoddard said Fourth Degree assemblies help Knights to put their faith, and their love of country, into action.

"The fourth principle 'Patriotism,' commits our members to the preservation of our Church, our Order and to the many nations where Knights serve," Stoddard said.

Check out how Knights of Columbus assemblies are putting their faith in action for God and country around the world:

- St. Francis of Assisi Assembly 2058 in Sierra Vista, Ariz., teamed up with nearby councils to host a K of C Silver Rose at two local parishes. They organized Masses, rosary prayer services, as well as a procession with a Silver Rose and a statue of the Virgin Mary to mark the feast of Our Lady of Fatima.
- Assemblies from Michigan collected clothing, cleaning products and personal care items to donate to homeless veterans in southwest Michigan through the Battle Creek VA Medical Center.
- Holy Spirit Assembly 2890 in Simpsonville, S.C., honored the military service of 13 Knights from St. Mary Magdalene Catholic Church by presenting each veteran with a certificate and memorial quilt provided by Quilts of Valor Foundation, a nonprofit that crafts patriotic quilts for U.S. service members and veterans.
- In the Philippines, Kalayaan Assembly 2749 in Muntinlupa City cleaned Our Lady of the Holy Rosary Chapel and painted the stairways leading to its entrance in preparation for the feast of Our Lady of the Rosary.
- Members of Bishop Fenwick Assembly 100 in Norwalk, Conn., provided an honor guard at a Mass remembering the victims of the Sept. 11 attacks. The Mass was celebrated by the assembly's chaplain at Notre Dame Health and Rehabilitation Center.
- Members of SSG. Joseph F. Fuerst III Assembly 3036 in Tampa, Fla., and family members prepared roast beef sandwiches at a local residence where families of patients at a veterans' hospital can stay for free. They also organize a monthly dinner at the Fisher House Foundation, which helps military families stay together during a medical crisis.
- Members of Father O'Donnell Assembly 393 in Methuen, Mass., provided an honor guard at a bilingual prayer service at St. Mary's Cemetery in Lawrence on the annual National Day of Remembrance for Aborted Children. More than 80 people gathered to pray at a statue installed by the assembly commemorating the unborn.
- Mgr. Louis Joseph Arthur Melanson Assembly 1994 in Moncton, New Brunswick, hosted a day of reflection where Archbishop Valéry Vienneau of Moncton spoke on the Church's teachings on medical assistance for the dying.

The world needs Knights who will stand up for God and country.

4TH DEGREE STRUCTURE

Supreme Board of Directors

The power and control over the Fourth Degree, including making, amending, and changing laws, rules and regulations, is vested in the Board of Directors.

The Board of Directors appoints the Supreme Master and all Vice Supreme Masters and approves the creation of new provinces, districts and assemblies.

Supreme Master

The Supreme Master exercises Fourth Degree administrative authority and supervises all its offers and assemblies. He makes detailed reports and recommendations to each Board of Directors meeting. He approves District Masters.

Supreme Assembly

The Supreme Assembly is composed of the Supreme Knight, Supreme Secretary, Supreme Master and Vice Supreme Masters. It meets annually to consider matters concerning Fourth Degree welfare. The Supreme Master presides at all meetings. He recommends to the Board amendments to the *Laws and Rules Governing the Fourth Degree*.

Provinces and Provincial Assembly

The Fourth Degree is divided into 21 provinces.

The provincial assembly is composed of the Vice Supreme Master and all Masters in his Province. Once a year, a request is made to the Board for a Provincial Meeting. The Vice Supreme Master presides at all meetings and exercises administrative authority over all the Masters in his Province.

Districts and District Assembly

Subject to approval by the Board of Directors, each Province is divided into Districts, there are presently 133 Districts. When necessary, the Supreme Master may increase or decrease these Districts.

The district assembly is composed of the Faithful Navigator of each assembly and one delegate for each 100 members of major fraction thereof. It meets during March or April. The Master presides over all meetings. It considers matters pertaining to the Fourth Degree and selects three members to recommend to the Supreme Master for his consideration in appointing a Master.

Relationship of Fourth Degree to Third Degree

All Fourth Degree members must be in good standing in the Third Degree. When a member is terminated from his council, he is automatically terminated from the Fourth Degree.

The State Deputy is the chief executive officer in his jurisdiction. Although he does not exercise administrative authority over the Fourth Degree officers and assemblies, he should nevertheless be concerned with the welfare of the Fourth Degree because its members are members of the Order under his jurisdiction. He may make recommendations to the Supreme Master and the Board regarding Vice Supreme Master and Master appointments as well as the creation of new districts.

In order not to conflict with State Council programs, all Vice Supreme Masters and Masters are instructed to clear dates of Fourth Degree activities with the State Deputy. The State Deputy is always kept informed, by the Supreme Master, of all Fourth Degree programs. He should support and help promote these programs.

The State Deputy should allow space in his state news bulletin for publishing Fourth Degree news and encourage local councils to do likewise. He should include a list of Fourth Degree officers and assemblies in his state directory.

Vice Supreme Masters and Masters should be recognized when they attend state council meetings and functions. The State Deputy and state offices should be recognized when they attend Fourth Degree functions.

The District Deputy should have enough training to report Fourth Degree matters to the councils.

The Fourth Degree contributes to the solidarity of the Order.

- The Fourth Degree has a low suspension rate.
- To retain Fourth Degree membership, you must be in good standing in the Third Degree.
- A Fourth Degree assembly should be advised when a member is in danger of suspension so they can assist in retention efforts.

The Fourth Degree gives visibility to the Order.

- When the Holy Father visited Philadelphia in September 2015. The TV cameras followed his every step, and a Fourth Degree Honor Guard and Color Corps were visible everywhere he went. Members of the Third Degree were present as marshals, ushers, and in other capacities, however, they were not visible or identified.
- When the Fourth Degree Color Corps appears in their uniform at ceremonies in churches and other functions, everyone knows the Knights of Columbus are present and assisting.

Fourth Degree Programs

Assemblies should not participate in programs in competition or conflict with local councils.

Patriotic Programs

- Flag Day Ceremony/Pledge Program
- Flags for Schools