

FR. MATTHEW J. O'KEEFE ASSEMBLY # 1162



“RELIGIOUSLY DEVOTED. PATRIOTICALLY PROUD”



FR. MATTHEW J. O'KEEFE

ASSEMBLY 1162

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4th Degree Knights of Columbus
Norfolk, Virginia-Assembly 1162

Fr. Matthew J. O'Keefe Assembly No. 1162

Faithful Navigator's Message

Worthy Sir Knights, Families, and Friends,

The Right to Life and Patriotism

This past month, Knight of Columbus participated in two hugely significant human rights demonstrations: the National March for Life in Washington, D. C. and the Virginia March for Life in Richmond. Both were focused on the right to life, and each was well attended by peaceful participants from around the country for the former and mainly Virginians for the latter. While both events were primarily dedicated to espousing anti-abortion rights for the unborn, there were also warnings from several guest speakers about the sanctity of the end of life. Moreover, there were prognostications from some futurists that all “unworthy” lives may eventually be measured for their value to exist. The bottom line is that, in the future, the right to life of every kind might be subjectively authenticated by someone depending on the morals of society at that time. In such a dystopian world, God will not be the one in charge of our lives. Man will be.

What does the right to life and marches about it have to do with patriotism? Why is it important for Knights of Columbus and others to demonstrate their commitment to the concept? Where did the idea that the right to life was so important that it would be enshrined in the Declaration of Independence of the United States of America and how did it come to be there? What is the significance of protecting the right to life and why is it critical for the Fourth Degree of the Knights of Columbus to be involved in it? All are interesting questions that have at their root very deeply convicted religious beliefs. Fundamental to those convictions is God.

The seemingly abstract concept of a “right to life” comes from God. In Genesis 2:7 we read, “The Lord God formed man out of the clay of the ground ... and so man became a living being.” Later in the same chapter we read that God formed woman from the man and she too became a living being. From Adam and Eve, the concept of a right to life was born. Not only did God create the right to life for humans, he also did so for all living creatures.

This new right to life concept was so important and expansive that it is one of the first things written about in the Bible. Genesis contains the story of God's omniscience to include bestowing life on everything under the sun. After showcasing His divine powers by creating the earth in seven days, God next brought to life man and woman. He graced them with life. From that grace comes the modern concept of a right to life.

The words "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" are perhaps the most iconic ones contained in the Declaration of Independence. Their inclusion in the final text of the Declaration was Thomas Jefferson's inspiration based on his understanding of natural law. Because he believed that God, nature, and reason constituted the fundamental rationale for order in the world, Jefferson wanted to codify the concept in the opening statement of the Declaration to provide emphasis to his ideas. He derived his thinking about the right to life from the writings of both Locke and Aquinas. While Locke had deduced that happiness was based on the protection of life, liberty, and property, he recognized that the fundamental mandate of government was to minimize legislative impacts which restricted man's exercise of his rights to that happiness. Meanwhile, Aquinas equated natural law with divine law and thought that all laws should be measured by their moral worth and conformity. Jefferson synthesized the thoughts of both men to derive his thoughts on the right to life. They were prescient and powerful.

The concept of divine law is predicated on the idea that a higher power or God is the basis for all man-made laws. Since divine law is inspired by God, laws derived from that concept are superior to all other ones. Thomas Jefferson incorporated ideas based on divine law in his drafting of the Virginia Statue on Religious Freedom and the Declaration of Independence. The powerful statement regarding the "right" to religious freedom and life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness are predicated on the idea that God gave them to man. By including the words in the Declaration, Jefferson was essentially controlling the discussion about the eminence of God-given rights and thus elevating the idea to one on which the entire government was in fact predicated. It was a bold concept to equate rights given by God to man and then to the form of government that would ultimately protect them. Jefferson himself appears to have been divinely inspired.

Those who are inclined to adhere to the precepts of divine law often do so rigorously and even to the point of disregarding reason. Therein lies the conflict between those who approach the right to life from a divine law perspective as opposed to those who come from a more secular viewpoint which espouses natural law and man's ability to reason his way to a verdict or solution. Inherent in that conflict is who controls life and death: God or man. Pope Pius XII may have been the first to advocate for the right to life from a divine law standpoint in a speech in October 1951 when he declared, "Every human being, even the child in the womb, has the right to life directly from God and not from his parents, not from any society or human authority." According to him, there could be no answer other than God as the one in control of life and that He had graced humans with that right.

That perspective is fundamental to the current pro-life movement which believes that life begins at conception, to take away any life (human or otherwise) at any time is immoral, and that only God can control that decision. This powerful concept excites those who are deeply invested in the movement.

Inherent in the codification of the concept of the right to life into the founding documents of the United States is that it defines what the country is. By establishing that divine law is fundamental to the form of government, then all laws emanating from it should be moral and God driven. Law abiding citizens should then obey those laws and endeavor to live within their mandates. As Catholics, us Knights of Columbus are law abiding. Moreover, laws predicated on the idea that God authenticated them means that they become proscribed as the basis for patriotic behavior. The Fourth Degree of the Knights of Columbus, being the patriotic arm of the Order, means that we should be intimately involved in demonstrations which support public engagement with laws which support the right to life. Hence the National March for Life and the Virginia March for Life. Strong participation and enthusiastic presence is fundamental to patriotism. That's what we should be doing.

The right to life necessitates patriotism to preserve it. Only patriotically inclined individuals will go the distance to preserve those laws which protect the right to life. More importantly, such people are required to lend their presence to those efforts which demonstrate our faith in action. By doing so, we are living the principles of the Order and of the Fourth Degree. Since patriotism is defined as "love of country," it dictates that we act in ways to protect God-given laws such as the right to life. Patriotically demonstrating our love of country means that we do all that we can to protect the right to life in all its forms. Let's do it. Thanks.

Vivat Jesus,
Dan Doyle
Faithful Navigator

Faithful Comptroller's Message

Worthy Sir Knights,

We are down to just over 40 Brothers that still need to pay their dues. Thank you to those that have already paid. Please consider paying as soon as possible. You can send me an email at FC1162@VAKOFC.ORG or text me at 757 383 2585 if you need to make arrangements for payment. I hope to see you at our next meeting in March.

Vivat Jesus,
Larry

Purpose and Mission of the Fourth Degree

Purpose

Promote and strengthen patriotic spirit and civic responsibility within the community.

Educate members and others in the teachings of the Church and the history of the USA.

Promote through example and with programs the highest type of citizenship which is necessary for the preservation and perpetuation of the republic form of government and its democratic institutions.

Oppose the dissemination and spread of doctrine dangerous and contrary to the United States government and to the divine law of the Catholic faith and morality in general.

Support by word and deed the duly constituted authorities of local, state, and national government, and recognize excellence in public life.

Promote Catholic citizenship through programs, events, and activities in parishes and schools.

Mission

Demonstrate through individual action as a Sir Knight and collective action as an Assembly support for all religious, civic, and charitable causes using programs, activities, and events to engage Knights, parishioners, children, and citizens in every way possible to enhance faith, nurture patriotism, demonstrate admiration for the military services and veterans, increase civic responsibility, and spearhead recruiting of new Fourth Degree members.

The Emblem of the Fourth Degree Order

The Triad Emblem of the Fourth Degree features the Dove, the Cross, and the Globe.



The Triad Emblem of the Fourth Degree features the Dove, the Cross, and the Globe. The Dove – classic symbol of the Holy Spirit and Peace is shown hovering over the orb of the earth (Globe). Both which are mounted on a variation of the Crusader's Cross – that which was found on the tunics and capes of Crusading Knights, who battled to regain the Holy Land from the pagans.

Our Honored Order cherishes as its patron Christopher Columbus. Christopher (Christ Bearer) Columbus (Dove of Peace), symbolizing the Paraclete spiritually; the sacred symbols on the emblem typify the Union of the Three Divine Persons in one God – the most Blessed Trinity.

The Orb or Globe represents God the Father the Creator of the Universe. The Cross God the Son the Redeemer of Mankind. The Dove the God the Holy Spirit and Sanctifier.

These symbols along with the red, white, & blue colors are used to stress the basic principle of the Fourth Degree

PATRIOTISM

Patriot of the Month for March 2024

Major Charles Joseph Watters (US Army)

The Patriot of the Month for March is a Catholic priest who earned the Medal of Honor for conspicuous gallantry during the Vietnam War. He is one of only nine Chaplains and five Catholic priests to have earned the Nation's highest military honor. Even more interesting, he is one of three priests who earned the Medal of Honor during the Vietnam War. The story of his priesthood, selfless devotion to his fellow soldiers, heroism in battle, and service to country are noteworthy. Moreover, he exemplified attributes which are in keeping with the principles of the Order. That makes his story a compelling one that I am honored to tell and one which other Sir Knights should know.

Charles Joseph Watters was born January 17, 1927, in Jersey City, New Jersey to devout Irish Catholic parents. His early childhood was unremarkable. By all accounts, Watters was a model student who did well in school. He attended both Seton Hall Preparatory School and Seton Hall University in South Orange, New Jersey. After graduation in 1953, he was ordained a Roman Catholic priest at the age of 26 in the Archdiocese of Newark. Watters spent the next 10 years faithfully serving in a variety of parishes in the northern New Jersey area. His priesthood was off to a strong start leading the flocks in four different parishes. Soon, however, he would be serving another flock in the military.

Interestingly, Watters was an avid small aircraft pilot, having learned to fly during his college days. He pursued his passion while flying throughout the country. In fact, he flew a single engine airplane all the way to Argentina one time on a whim. His skill as a small aircraft pilot grew intensely and it became the driving factor in his entry into the New Jersey Air National Guard as a chaplain in 1962. His connection to the military had begun while he was serving as a parish priest and simultaneously as a chaplain in a military unit. Watters had now begun the journey to his ultimate military service which would lead to fame for his heroic action a world away in Vietnam.

Charles Joseph Watters was commissioned as a chaplain in the United States Army in 1964 at Fort Dix, New Jersey. After completing initial training, Captain Watters was assigned to his first active-duty unit in the Republic of Vietnam. He reported to Company A, 173 Support Battalion, 173 Airborne Brigade in July 1966. Despite being officially assigned to a support position, Captain Watters often joined the front-line combat units on missions throughout the Brigade's area of responsibility. In February 1967, he participated in Operation Junction City. It was the first combat airborne operation since the Korean War and one of the largest airmobile assaults of the Vietnam War. As part of the operation, Captain Watters parachuted into combat with Company A. The three-month long air and ground assault was designed to ferret out Vietcong combat units which were thought to be directing operations throughout South Vietnam. Amazingly, Captain Watters earned both an Air Medal and a Bronze Star for valor during intense combat as part of Operation Junction City. In his short time in theater, he had established himself as a combat chaplain who was always on the front lines with the troops. However, Captain Watters had yet to prove his ultimate mettle in combat. That would soon come in another iconic battle later that year.

In July 1967, Captain Watters' first tour of duty was about to expire. Instead of transferring out of South Vietnam and rotating back to CONUS, he volunteered to extend on station for another 6 months. Little did he know what a fateful decision that would be. In November 1967, Captain Watters was reassigned to 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry. The unit was engaged in fierce combat engagements on Hill 875 in the Dak To region. Vietcong forces had laid siege to the hill and US forces were heavily

involved. Intense fire fights were the norm as Captain Watters moved throughout the battlefield to tend to the wounded and distraught troops. He relentlessly moved forward into the heat of the battle to rescue injured and trapped paratroopers. With total disregard for his own safety, Captain Watters administered first aid to the wounded, gave last rites to dying soldiers, and brought supplies to those trapped beyond the perimeter area. When 2nd Battalion forces pulled back to reinforced positions higher on Hill 875, Watters noted that several soldiers were unable to retreat with the others. Despite pleas to be mindful of his own personal safety, he exposed himself to intense enemy automatic weapons fire while moving towards their position and rescuing them. Captain Watters had braved heavy small arms fire to do what he was called to do: serve his fellow man. His heroic day was not done though.

During subsequent enemy engagements in the days long battle at Dak To, Chaplain Watters continued to succor the wounded, perform his priestly duties by rendering spiritual help, and even direct troops in action. Despite efforts by superiors to restrain him and keep him out of danger, Chaplain Watters continued to move freely throughout the battlefield. He tirelessly administered the sacraments, assisted medics, and carried supplies forward to troops engaged in battle. It was during one of his forays into the heat of the battle to aid wounded troops that Chaplain Watters was mortally wounded when he encountered withering direct enemy fire. He died on Hill 875 in Dak To, Republic of South Vietnam on November 19, 1967. Captain Watters was only 40 years old. He had proven his devotion to his fellow soldiers by giving his life in the ultimate act of self-sacrifice. His bravery and total disregard for his own life were conspicuous and deserving of the Nation's highest honor.

Chaplain Watters was posthumously promoted to Major. The Medal of Honor was presented to his family by Vice President Spiro Agnew in the White House on November 4, 1969. Major Watters lived a life of quiet and humble service to others. He is a patriotic and religious inspiration for us Sir Knights of the Fourth Degree. His valor, faith, duty to country, and devotion to his fellow service members are worthy of emulation by all of us. We should all aspire to be like Major Charles Joseph Watters. Thanks.



RENEWAL OF OBLIGATIONS 2/5/24



OUR RENEWAL OF OBLIGATION WENT VERY WELL AND MANY OF OUR SIR KNIGHTS WERE PRESENT FOR THE CEREMONY AND TOOK THE PLEDGE FOR THEIR RENEWAL OF OBLIGATIONS. VIVAT JESUS SIR KNIGHTS & GOD BLESS AMERICA!



Fr. Matthew J. O'Keefe Assembly 1162

Schedule of Upcoming Events

(March – July 2024)

Date	Day	Time	Place	Event
Mar 4	Monday	Dinner 6 PM Meeting 7 PM	Council 367	Monthly Membership Meeting
Mar 4	Monday	NA	Catholic Schools	Patriotic Essay Contest Kick Off
Mar 16	Saturday	9 AM	Oceanview, Norfolk	Saint Patrick's Day Parade
Mar 23	Saturday	9 AM	Palmyra	Biennial Meeting
Apr 1	Monday	Dinner 6 PM Meeting 7 PM	Council 367	Monthly Membership Meeting
Apr 13	Saturday	9 AM	Richmond	Fourth Degree Exemplification
Apr 13	Saturday	6 AM	Dismal Swamp Canal Trail	13 th Annual Bataan Death March Trail
Apr TBD	TBD	TBD	Council 367	Flag Retirement Ceremony
May 6	Monday	Dinner 6 PM Meeting 7 PM	Council 367	Monthly Membership Meeting
May 6	Monday	7 PM	Council 367	Assembly 1162 Officer Elections
May 10	Friday	NA	Catholic Schools	Patriotic Essay Contest Deadline
May 27	Monday	10 AM	Tidewater Veterans Memorial, VB	Memorial Day Ceremony and Wreath Laying Ceremony
May 31	Friday	7 AM	Rudee Inlet, VB	ASYMCA Hearts 4 Heroes Fishing Trip
Jun 3	Monday	Dinner 6 PM Meeting 7 PM	Council 367	Monthly Membership Meeting
Jun TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	Installation of New Officers
Jun 30	Sunday	NA	NA	End of Fraternal Year
Jul 1	Monday	Dinner 6 PM Meeting 7 PM	Council 367	Monthly Membership Meeting Installation of Assembly Officers
Jul 4	Thursday	9 AM	Council 367	Flag Raising Ceremony



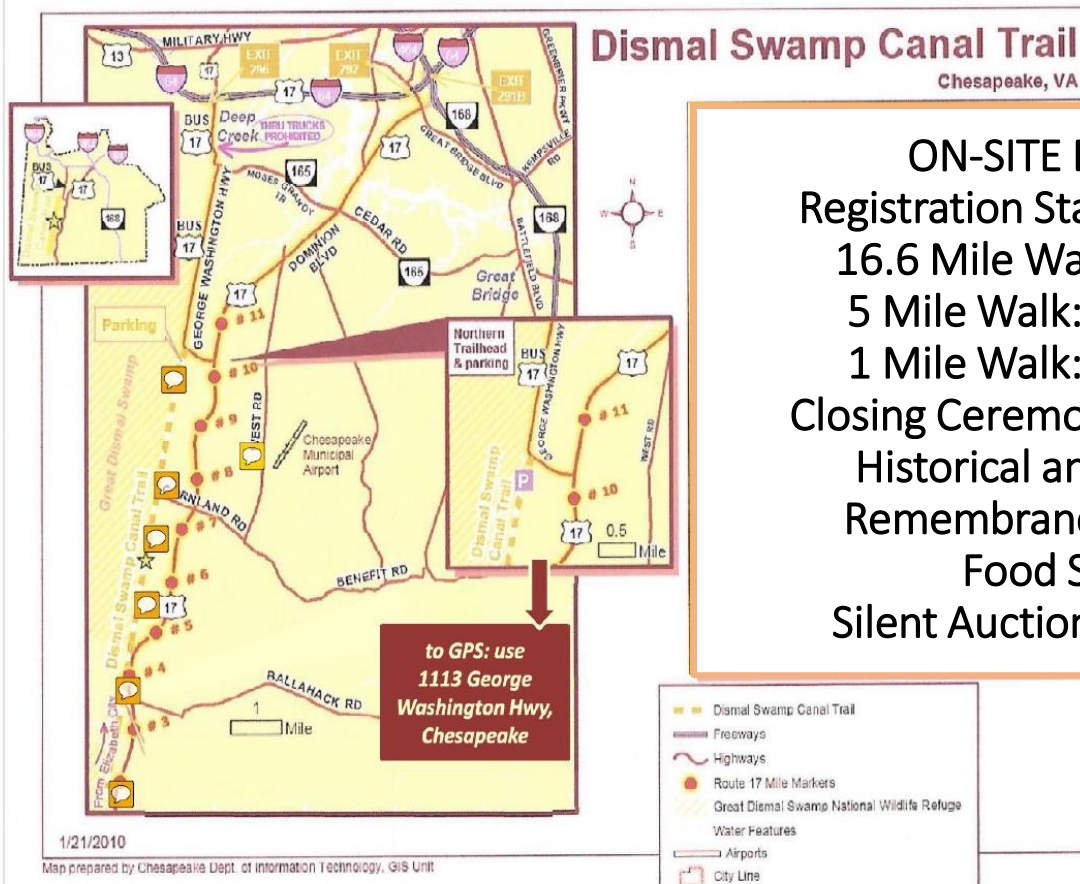
VFW Post 2894 - Chesapeake, VA



13th Annual Bataan Death March Memorial Walk April 13, 2024



In memory of 2,500 American and 6,500 Filipino prisoners who died on the 1942, 66 mile, force march during WW II.



ON-SITE EVENTS
Registration Starts: 6:00 AM
16.6 Mile Walk: 7:00 AM
5 Mile Walk: 10:00 AM
1 Mile Walk: 11:00 AM
Closing Ceremony: 12:00 PM
Historical and Veteran
Remembrance Displays
Food Sales
Silent Auction and Raffle

(Last year's
registration page)

Registration: www.vfw2894.org
\$5 Walk Only / With T-shirt: 16 and under \$16,
17 and older \$30, Group discounts





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4th Degree Knights of Columbus
Norfolk, Virginia-Assembly 1162

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Be sure to like Father Matthew J. O'Keefe Assembly No. 1162 - 4th Degree, KOC on Facebook and website, kofcassemblby1162.org to keep updated on Assembly events and news.