

KNIGHTS OF LIBERTY, KNIGHTS OF CHARITY

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ANNUAL REPORT OF THE SUPREME KNIGHT SHOWCASES IMPRESSIVE YEAR

As Supreme Knight Carl A. Anderson took to the podium at the 130th Supreme Convention in Anaheim, Calif. to deliver his annual report, the good works and deep faith of the more than 1.8 million Knights of Columbus were on display.

Underscoring first the recent challenges to religious liberty in the United States and highlighting the role that the Knights of Columbus have taken whenever religious freedoms have been threatened, the supreme knight called on his brother Knights to take to heart the theme of this year's convention and echo the words of America's founding fathers, matching their dedication and their resolve to "*Proclaim Liberty Throughout All the Land.*"

"The history of the Catholics in the United States is a history of working for religious freedom," Anderson said. "And the work of the Knights of Columbus on behalf of religious freedom is a key part of that history."

Religious liberty was also a topic of Pope Benedict XVI's letter of greeting to the convention, signed by Cardinal Secretary of State Tarcisio Bertone. The letter offered the Pope's encouragement of Knights' work for religious liberty and expressed confidence that the Order will continue to lead the laity "to counter reductive secularism which would delegitimize the Church's participation in public debate about issues which are determining the future of American society."

Knights' defense of religious liberty is a natural outgrowth of their charitable activities. Their work for religious freedom "has always been motivated by and inseparable from our commitment to charity," Anderson said.

That commitment was particularly on display this year as the Knights of Columbus – once again – shattered records, donating more than \$158 million to charity and 70 million hours of their time to charitable work. According to Independent Sector, which calculates the value of volunteer time each year, those 70 million hours are valued at \$1.5 billion.

The Order's Healing Haiti's Children, Food for Families and Coats for Kids programs continued to grow and reach more of those in need, and jurisdictions Orderwide continued to innovate and create programs to address their communities' needs.

Also growing in the past year was the Knights of Columbus' insurance program, adding \$5 billion of insurance in force, bringing the total to \$86 billion and yielding a 6.9 percent increase in total assets.

Speaking on the recent U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' health insurance mandate, which would require Catholic employers like the Knights of Columbus to pay for or be complicit with contraception, sterilization, and abortifacients, Supreme Knight Anderson noted. "Catholic voters have the power to transform our politics."

“Is it not time,” he asked, “for Catholic voters to say ‘no’ – no to every candidate of every political party who supports such intrinsic evil?”

But saying “no” is not the only way Catholics can transform politics, Anderson said. Toward the end of his remarks, he discussed the latest initiative of the Knights of Columbus, a nationwide Campaign for Civility in America, which insists in an online petition drive that will “give the American people a voice in speaking up for a respectful public discourse.” More than 16,000 people have already signed the petition at www.civilityinamerica.org.

Reflecting on the Order’s founder, Venerable Michael McGivney, and the first men who became Knights of Columbus, the supreme knight closed with an inspirational message for the future.

“[Father McGivney] knew their faith and he knew their aspirations,” Anderson said. “He knew what they were capable of. I also believe our saintly founder sees into the hearts of his brother Knights today and there he finds those same qualities. One hundred years from now, he will not be surprised by what his brother Knights continue to accomplish.”