

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE SUPREME KNIGHT

10/1/2014

Supreme Knight Carl A. Anderson



Supreme Knight Carl A. Anderson delivers an address at the 2014 Charlotte Catholic Men's Conference March 1 at St. Mark Catholic Church in Huntersville, N.C. (Jason E. Miczek)

Florida is a fitting place for us to remember the great Catholic contribution to our hemisphere.

Even this state's name speaks to its Catholic heritage. Florida was not named for its beautiful flowers. Ponce de León named it for *Pascua Florida* —the Spanish term for Easter —when he discovered this beautiful land during the Easter season more than 500 years ago.

Catholics have been a part of the very fabric of North America from the beginning. And nowhere is this more true than in Florida.

Before the colonies of Jamestown and Plymouth, the first permanent European settlement was here, and it was Catholic. Known then and now as St. Augustine, we meet today just 100 miles from that place where Christianity first took root in this country.

It was in 1565 that Pedro Menéndez de Avilés landed in St. Augustine. Standing on the shore to greet him was Father Francisco López, one of the priests who had accompanied him from Spain.

Father López wrote of the landing: "On Saturday, the 8th, the general landed with many banners, to the sound of trumpets and salutes of artillery. As I had gone ashore the evening before, I took a cross and went to meet him, singing the hymn, *Te Deum*. The

general, followed by all who accompanied him, marched up to the cross, knelt, and kissed it.”

Here, Father López and his fellow priests would establish the first parish in what is now the continental United States. As a result, in the early 1600s, Florida would also be home to our country’s first Marian shrine, dedicated to Our Lady of la Leche.

The evangelization that occurred in St. Augustine was a precursor of what would take place throughout the United States. In the past five centuries much has changed, but there has also been one constant: the importance of the faith. Millions of Americans continue to embrace the cross.

Throughout our hemisphere, Catholicism took root early. The Catholic history of Canada, Latin America and the Caribbean is well-known. Florida was first, but is by no means alone in having a long-standing Catholic presence in what we now know as the United States. From Florida, the faith was carried by missionaries to locations as far away as Texas and Virginia.

In the Northeast, there were the Catholic Acadians. In Florida and throughout the Southwest, there were the Spanish missionaries. In the Midwest, there were the French missionaries. And Maryland—one of the original 13 colonies that formed the United States—was founded by Catholics.

The fact is that the majority of this country—including all of Florida and Maryland, much of Maine, and nearly everything west of the Mississippi River—was Catholic even before there was a United States. This was already a land under God before it was one nation.

From Florida to California the missionaries worked tirelessly—and many gave their lives—to bring the faith to this land and to its people. No hardship or sacrifice was too much for these men of God. They formed a fraternal bond with each other and with those they served. And those who planted the faith here left a great legacy that continues to inspire us today.

This lesson of service was not lost on Father Michael J. McGivney. Like those missionaries, he created fraternal bonds with parishioners. Like those missionaries, he exemplified the power of service. Like them, he dedicated himself to charity. When he founded this Order and named it for Columbus, he did so to recall this land’s Catholic roots.

Father McGivney chose men who knew what it meant to be a band of brothers. Many of those first Knights had served in the Civil War, an experience of fraternity and unity that they carried forward into the Knights of Columbus.

From the very beginning, the Knights of Columbus responded to the needs of a country still recovering from the effects of the long and bitter Civil War. The mission of the Knights of Columbus was not unfamiliar to those who had heard the words of President Lincoln: “With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation’s wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations.”

We could say that the Knights of Columbus provided an inspired way for Catholic men to help rebuild a nation by living their Catholic heritage and values. Those first Knights knew the fraternity that came from being part of a tight-knit immigrant community. Many

of them also knew the fraternity purified by the crucible of war. Moreover, all of them shared a fraternal unity through their Catholic faith.

With Father McGivney's leadership, they began something that would change the world. They understood that the fraternity to which Father McGivney was calling them had a missionary spirit that could not be limited by national borders. As a result, in a few short years, there were brother Knights active in Canada, Mexico and the Philippines. Today, as their successors, we are doubly blessed: as heirs to the great legacy of Catholicism in North America and as spiritual sons of Father McGivney.

And so, my brother Knights, I am pleased to present to you the theme of this year's convention —a theme drawn from the message of our Holy Father for the World Day of Peace this year: "You will all be brothers: our vocation to fraternity."

KNIGHTS OF CHARITY



Project Medishare employee Emmanuel Kernand stands with two wheelchair recipients during a Global Wheelchair Mission distribution at a special needs school outside of Port-au-Prince, Haiti. (Randy Hale)

In his message for the World Day of Peace, titled "Fraternity: the Foundation and Pathway to Peace," Pope Francis reminded us that "without fraternity it is impossible to build a just society."

Pope Francis called upon Catholics to cast aside the growing "globalization of indifference" and to instead build "a community composed of brothers and sisters who accept and care for one another." This, he said, is our "vocation to fraternity." Now I say to you today, who better to respond to this call than the world's greatest Catholic fraternal organization?

To better understand our vocation to fraternity, Pope Francis quoted the Gospel of John: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you" (13:34). In this regard, we see the extraordinary witness of Pope Francis in

his love for the sick, the suffering and the poor. It is a witness that has captured the imagination of the world.

As Knights of Columbus, we are well-positioned to respond to the challenges of our day. Our charitable activity is renowned worldwide and is all the stronger because it is supported by our fraternal brotherhood.

Nearly a decade before Pope Leo XIII's great encyclical *Rerum Novarum* launched the Social Doctrine of the Church, Father McGivney founded a lay Catholic organization dedicated to both the spiritual and temporal well-being of working families. It would reach out in charity to those on the margins. It would not only evangelize its members, but also society. It would be a Catholic fraternity, drawing men together to do good. It would show clearly to everyone in 19th-century America that Catholics could be good and loyal citizens.

Father McGivney's vision prepared the Knights of Columbus for the laity's role in the life of the Church proposed by the Second Vatican Council nearly a century later.

Last fall, in a private audience with the Supreme Officers and directors, Pope Francis recognized the Order's commitment to charity. At that time, the Holy Father praised the "quiet strength, integrity and fidelity" of the Knights of Columbus. He thanked us for our commitment to charity, and he urged us to continue in our mission.

Encouraged by Pope Francis in our charitable endeavors, and true to the vision of Father McGivney, we worked harder than ever before. For the 14th consecutive year, we set a new record in charitable giving. Our Order's charitable contributions increased last year by more than \$2.5 million to a record \$170,135,754.

For the fifth year in a row, Québec led all jurisdictions with charitable donations of \$11,147,599. Ontario was second, with \$7.7 million, followed by Texas, California, Illinois, Michigan, Florida, New Jersey, Missouri and New York.

The number of hours volunteered by Knights also climbed to a new record high of 70,534,278 hours. Independent Sector values each hour donated in 2014 at \$22.55. That means that the time donated by Knights to charity last year was worth more than \$1.59 billion, and the value of the more than 682,950,911 hours donated in the past decade totals more than \$15.4 billion.

Our jurisdictions in the Philippines continued to lead the way in volunteering their time. Luzon and Mindanao took first and second place among all jurisdictions, with 5,828,879 and 4,574,746 hours, respectively. Texas, Florida, California, Ontario, Illinois, Visayas, Pennsylvania and Missouri round out the top 10.

When it comes to the amount of time volunteered per member, four Canadian jurisdictions were in the top 10, and Prince Edward Island was number one with 135.6 hours donated per member. British Columbia was number two with 113.9 hours per member, followed by Alaska, Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia, Hawaii, Nevada, Delaware, Utah and Washington.

Last year, overall, each Knight donated an average of \$91.80 and 38 hours of his time to charity with our Order.

Perhaps one of the most inspiring examples of our commitment to serving those in need is our service to people with intellectual disabilities. Beginning with our support for the very first Special Olympics games in 1968, our efforts in this area have steadily grown. Last year, not only did our councils donate \$3,599,196 to Special Olympics, but more

than 133,000 individual Knights collectively donated more than 250,000 hours of their time at more than 20,000 Special Olympics events.

This past February, as NFL coaches and the nation's best college football players gathered in Indianapolis for the annual Scouting Combine, the Indiana Knights of Columbus helped Special Olympics athletes demonstrate their own impressive set of skills. Thanks to a partnership between the Indiana State Council, Special Olympics and Catholic Athletes for Christ, the first-ever "Football Clinic" for Special Olympics athletes was held at the Indianapolis Colts training complex.

Similarly, the Knights of Columbus announced on July 14 a \$1.4 million sponsorship of the Special Olympics World Games to be held in July 2015 in Los Angeles. Our sponsorship will cover the costs of food, transportation and medical services for every athlete from the United States and Canada during their time in Los Angeles. We have also asked each state jurisdiction to increase the number of volunteer hours donated to Special Olympics this year.

In addition to our work with Special Olympics, Knights of Columbus councils last year donated an additional \$13.5 million to other projects benefiting people with intellectual disabilities.

Councils also donated more than \$3.8 million to benefit those with physical disabilities. One of our most important projects in this area involves our decade-long partnership with the Global Wheelchair Mission.

During the past year alone, we distributed nearly 5,000 wheelchairs worldwide. Knights worked with Caritas Vietnam to distribute 1,000 wheelchairs in that country. These wheelchairs were purchased by Knights throughout the United States and Canada, with representatives from Florida and Texas joining distributions earlier this year.

Additionally, Knights of Columbus councils in California, Texas and Florida began fundraising to send wheelchairs and other mobility devices to the Holy Land. His Beatitude Fouad Twal, Latin patriarch of Jerusalem and president of Caritas Jerusalem, enthusiastically welcomed the Knights and their mission of charity. [In August 2013], sponsored by the Knights of Columbus, the Global Wheelchair Mission went on its fourth trip to the Holy Land and brought with it 280 wheelchairs.

Finally, Knights in 13 states provided more than 1,600 wheelchairs to veterans this past year.

In all, Knights have given the gift of mobility to more than 45,000 people around the world over the past decade through this partnership with the Global Wheelchair Mission.

Knights have assisted with mobility in other ways as well. The "Knights of Columbus Stand With Boston Program" has provided assistance to three individuals who lost limbs in the Boston Marathon bombings last year. When insurance didn't cover an upgraded prosthetic device or necessary additional device, the Knights of Columbus provided funding.

To date, we have spent more than \$33,000 assisting those injured in the Boston bombing. Our program will help them regain as much mobility as possible and ensure that evil does not have the last word.

College Knights pitched in as well, with members of Notre Dame Council 1477 donating proceeds from the steaks they sold before last season's Notre Dame-USC game to those who lost a limb in the bombing.

Knights also gave \$2.3 million to benefit the elderly, \$5 million to hospitals and other health care facilities, and \$7.6 million for community projects.

Knights likewise helped to provide housing for those who need it most. Last year, brother Knights donated more than \$870,000 and 1.5 million volunteer hours to Habitat for Humanity projects.

In New Haven, Conn., Supreme Council staff members helped build a home for the Tavaréz family. The Order donated \$75,000 toward the construction of the home, and more than 20 employees —many of them brother Knights —contributed more than 150 hours to help complete the project.

A great deal of planning goes into programs such as these, but not every charitable activity can be planned in advance. And when disasters strike, Knights answer the call for help.

Typhoon Haiyan, considered to be one of the strongest recorded storms ever to make landfall, struck the Philippines with devastating results in November 2013. The typhoon killed more than 6,000 people and displaced millions more.

Various councils in the Philippines delivered food, water, clothing and other necessities. Knights from Iloilo City traveled about 50 miles north with 788 sacks filled with rice, canned goods and bottled water, while Knights from Cebu City traveled to northern Cebu to distribute sacks of rice and canned goods.

In the wake of the storm, the Supreme Council authorized an immediate grant of \$250,000 for relief efforts. An additional \$600,000 was donated by K of C councils and individuals from throughout North America, bringing our total commitment to relief efforts in the Philippines to more than \$850,000.

Some of these funds were initially spent to set up food distribution centers and assist the affected dioceses in their charitable outreach.

At the beginning of this year the Knights of Columbus launched a new initiative —what we call the Livelihood Project. It helps fishermen and farmers who lost everything get back to work. The project employs carpenters who lost their businesses to build boats for fishermen who also lost their source of income. In early June, 40 newly crafted boats were delivered to the same number of fishermen in a seaside ceremony in Western Samar. The Livelihood Project is helping the recovery of two industries devastated by the typhoon. Today, the work continues, and a total of 100 boats are planned.

In addition, many farms were also destroyed by the storm, so the Knights of Columbus has bought thousands of coconut seeds to distribute in an area where nearly all the trees have been uprooted by wind and storm surges.

In sum, both of these programs are an investment in tomorrow, and they will help make a better future for many families in the Philippines.

When tornadoes struck Mississippi in late April, local Knights set up three volunteer response center teams. Brother Knights worked with Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Jackson to help with damage assessment teams and also assisted with clean-up efforts and emergency repairs. In the Winston County and Louisville area, approximately 1,125 Knights put in nearly 6,640 volunteer hours to help more than 120 families. Council 13471 in Philadelphia, Miss., delivered more than half a ton of canned food and water that they collected during their 40 Cans for Lent program, in addition to

clothes and other items. Knights from Councils 802 in Meridian, 6765 in Starkville and 7974 in Columbus volunteered to help in the relief efforts as well.

When floodwaters left more than 16,000 families homeless or with property damage in Colorado, Knights were on the front lines. Working with the American Red Cross, Knights from Colorado and the surrounding states helped provide the basic necessities of food and shelter.

In Mexico, members of Council 15531 in Iztacalco provided a truckload of food and other relief supplies to victims of recent hurricanes in the state of Guerrero.

Even if a disaster isn't caused by nature, responding is natural for the Knights of Columbus.

On Jan. 9, a chemical spill in the Elk River contaminated the water supply for more than 300,000 residents of West Virginia. The spill was so toxic that the water was unusable for days. Before the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) could arrive on site with water, the West Virginia State Council had already purchased, delivered and distributed more than 6,000 bottles of water.

Overall, our councils donated over \$4.2 million to help victims of disasters last year, and Knights donated more than 19 million hours of their time to these and many other community service efforts.

But even when disaster strikes a single family, the Knights of Columbus responds.

When Jeff Robocker of South Dakota was killed in an auto accident, his brother Knights from Marquette Council 815 began raising funds and completing repairs and renovations to the Robocker home to ensure that his wife, who was six months pregnant at the time, and their five young children had a comfortable and safe environment in which to rebuild their lives. The council provided a total of \$20,000 in cash, materials and labor donations.

Disasters are, by their nature, unpredictable. However, the cold of winter is predictable. Thanks to the good work of brother Knights, the number of lower income children who didn't have a warm winter coat was reduced by nearly 52,000 last year. The Supreme Council and 1,195 local councils purchased and distributed 51,924 coats—an increase of nearly 10,000 coats from the previous year. And since 2009, we have distributed more than 167,000 new coats to children throughout the United States and Canada.

Last year, Connecticut Knights began the Christmas season by distributing new coats to approximately 2,000 children in six cities the day after Thanksgiving. While many people were shopping on Black Friday, these brother Knights were giving. I encourage every jurisdiction where the chill of winter is felt to follow Connecticut's lead. On Black Friday, the most famous shopping day of the year, let us as Knights give witness to the power of charity.

Distributing coats for kids can help an entire community become involved in charitable work. Last October, Colorado Knights teamed up with the Denver Broncos to provide coats to students from an inner city Catholic school. Broncos defensive coordinator Jack Del Rio and his wife, Linda, helped organize the event in collaboration with Catholic Athletes for Christ.

The Broncos also played a role in a second coats distribution held in New Jersey just before the team played in the Super Bowl. I joined the Del Rios and a number of other

coaches and players to distribute coats to the children of Sacred Heart School in Jersey City.

Especially inspiring was the presence of Broncos defensive end Robert Ayers, who had been a student at that school. Also joining us were retired Mets All-Star catcher Mike Piazza and Ray McKenna, president of Catholic Athletes for Christ.

Cold weather comes each winter, but hunger affects many people year-round. Brother Knights throughout the Order helped make a real difference last year by providing people in need with food through our Food for Families initiative.

Councils throughout our jurisdictions help the hungry. Some, like Council 2171 in Tillamook, Ore., grow food—in this case, approximately 7.5 tons, annually. Many other councils hold food drives or cook and serve meals.

In Colorado, Thanksgiving was brighter for hundreds of families thanks to the efforts of Council 10937 in Highlands Ranch. There, Knights organized a parish Thanksgiving dinner drive to provide dinner for 400 families.

Council 15045 in Markham, Ontario, took the Food for Families program to an international level. Through its foodforsyria.org initiative, it provided a “Free Meal of Love” for 500 children in Syria, many of whom were Syrian Christian refugees.

In Marshall, Texas, Council 1422’s main purpose with their “Remembering the Needy on Christmas Day” program is to feed the homebound, the needy, prisoners, emergency workers and the downtrodden on Christmas Day each year. For the eighth year, St. Joseph Parish and Council worked together to feed 797 people with a Christmas dinner, and then on Christmas day, they delivered 283 meals to inmates of the Harrison County Jail.

For many who are ill, life depends on donations of blood. We have continued to provide this service ever since our sponsorship of the first national blood drive in the United States, in 1938. During the last fraternal year, we helped provide a vital lifeline to those undergoing medical treatment by enlisting the support of more than 410,000 blood donors.

While we are most active in our own jurisdictions, our charity often reaches beyond national borders. Over the years we have helped people in need in Haiti, Pakistan, Japan, Sri Lanka and Chile, to name just a few.

Finally, the Knights of Columbus, working with the Apostles of Jesus, continues to provide care and shelter for children in Uganda and Kenya who are orphaned because of AIDS. Last year, more than \$300,000 was committed to build a new girls dormitory and purchase a new school bus, and to bring electricity to a school and other buildings for these children—many of whom have tested positive for HIV.

Whether at home or abroad, charity is our Order’s first principle and the basis for all we do as brother Knights.

It is the tangible way that we live out that spirit of fraternity and “missionary discipleship” to which Pope Francis has called us.

MEMBERSHIP GROWTH

One of the most important tasks facing every brother Knight is to ensure that all of our councils are open to new members.

Our ability to do good in countless communities around the world is directly related to the growth and vitality of our membership. Inviting men to join us not only helps each man who joins, it also helps those in need.

It gives me great pleasure to report to you that during the fraternal year ending June 30, membership in our Order grew for the 42nd consecutive year, to a record 1,862,774 brother Knights.

During this same period we added 270 new councils, including 10 in Mexico, 12 in Poland, 16 in Canada, 81 in the Philippines and 151 in the United States, bringing the total number of councils to 14,871.

Our Order is also growing in Ukraine and Lithuania.

By percentage, membership grew the most in Poland, where 769 new Knights increased membership there by more than 23 percent in just one year.

I had the opportunity to experience firsthand the enthusiasm of Polish Knights while attending their 4th state convention at Gniew Castle in northern Poland. While there, I was pleased to meet with the state officers to plan for our future growth and charitable work in Poland.

I am also pleased to announce the establishment of our first council in South Korea, St. Andrew Kim Taegon Council 16000. There are nearly 5.5 million Catholics in South Korea today. It is among the fastest-growing Catholic communities in the world. Pope Francis [acknowledged] this during his visit there [in mid-August], and I am sure that South Korea, like the Philippines, will play a significant role in the future of the Knights of Columbus.

Other jurisdictions added substantially to their ranks as well. Mexico Northwest grew by more than 9 percent and Mexico Northeast by 8.6 percent. The Philippines grew by 5 percent.

In the United States, New Mexico grew its membership by 4.6 percent, Georgia by 3.9 percent and South Dakota by 3 percent. Virginia grew by 2.5 percent, Oklahoma by 2.1 percent and Florida by 2 percent. Texas also grew by 2 percent, becoming the only jurisdiction in North America to reach the milestone of 100,000 members.

As our continued growth makes clear, the idea of a brotherhood of Catholic men committed to charity continues to be as relevant and vital today as it was in Father McGivney's time.

But we must do more.

The good that we can do grows with each new member of our fraternity. Today, we number more than 1.8 million, but there are tens of millions of Catholic men who could have their lives transformed, and help transform the lives of others, through membership in the Knights of Columbus. We have a great responsibility.

If a man is interested in helping those in need, or in serving his parish or community, or in strengthening his faith, or in protecting his family's financial future, he should join us. No matter what his reason is for joining, he will gain much from the many benefits of membership.

Councils should also continue to follow the effective membership program of "One Member, Per Council, Per Month." If each council grew by 12 new members this

fraternal year, we would grow by more than 175,000 members, and the service we could provide to church and community would grow tremendously.

And every council should also strive to earn the designation of Star Council. This is a clear path for sustained membership growth.

When he founded the Knights of Columbus, Father McGivney understood the need to protect the spiritual and financial well-being of Catholic families. As Knights, we help alleviate the effects of material poverty for millions. However, this coming year, I ask you to renew your focus on alleviating spiritual poverty as well, by offering men the opportunity to grow in faith within our fraternity. This is what it means to have a vocation to fraternity.

In keeping with our founding mission of protecting Catholic families, I am pleased to announce a new fraternal program. In October, we will launch “Building the Domestic Church: The Family Fully Alive.” This program will help our families and parishes grow in the faith. It will also help us prepare for the 8th World Meeting of Families, which will be held September 22-27, 2015, in Philadelphia. This program will offer opportunities for prayer, catechesis, Scripture reading, charitable projects and social activities that can be done together as a family.

Our Catholic Information Service (CIS) remains an important part of our work. Since our Supreme Convention last year, five new publications have become available in the New Evangelization Series. These booklets on the topics of prayer, the Eucharist, St. John Paul II’s theology of the body, marriage and consecrated life are vitally important for our efforts to strengthen Catholic family life, and they are available in print and online.

YOUTH

Our youth are not just the future of our society —they are the future of the Knights of Columbus. When we involve young people in the Knights of Columbus, they benefit from our experience in charity and our commitment to faith, and they witness our vocation to fraternity.

Our programs highlight for youth the transformative power of charitable service. Participating in Knights of Columbus charitable activities can be the catalyst for a lifetime of service.

A powerful example of charity in action can be seen in the work done by Council 9195 in Anaheim, Calif. Brother Knights donated televisions, iPads and a video game system — at a combined cost of over \$3,000 —for children to use while undergoing dialysis at St. Joseph Hospital.

When Virginia’s Roanoke Council 562 learned that more than 600 schoolchildren in the area belonged to homeless or low-income families, they organized the “Hunger Is Not a Game” project to provide after-school snacks and clothing for underprivileged students. The council delivered clothing and over 6,000 packages of food and drinks, totaling \$4,300 in value, to students throughout the area.

Along with individual service programs like these, over the past year more than 104,000 young people between the ages of 9 and 14 participated at 4,357 Knights of Columbus Free Throw competitions. Our Soccer Challenge program was also successful, drawing more than 15,834 participants at 1,152 events.

Knights also showed their support for young people by sponsoring 28,547 Scouts in 1,173 Scouting units in the United States and an additional 943 Scouts in 153 Scouting

units in Canada. Local councils should work with the National Catholic Committee on Scouting and the local diocese to determine the best ways to collaborate with Scouts.

Our Columbian Squires were also very active in charity this past year. Squires concluded the fraternal year with 20,241 members in 1,785 active Squires circles, donating more than \$13,000 and in excess of 313,000 volunteer hours to a variety of initiatives.

Our College Council program continues to expand as well. College is a rite of passage for many young people, and our college councils provide students with a proper understanding of charity, unity in the faith, and the vocation to fraternity. College councils give young men the opportunity for authentic brotherhood and fraternity based on Christian values, and they also give them the chance to evangelize their campuses by their commitment to faith and charity. Over the past year, we added 15 new college councils, including seven in the United States, one in Canada and seven in the Philippines. We now have 27,532 college Knights who are members of councils at 302 colleges and universities.

During the 2013-2014 academic year, the Supreme Council funded 552 scholarships worth more than \$1.2 million for students at institutions of higher education. One hundred and sixteen scholarships went to seminarians through the Father Michael J. McGivney and Bishop Thomas V. Daily Vocations Scholarship programs. Of the 44 who are new awardees, 39 are members of the Order. Each scholarship provides \$2,500 for tuition, room and board at major schools of theology. Since the two scholarship programs began in 1992 and 1999, respectively, they have distributed more than \$6.3 million in scholarship aid to a total of 1,102 seminarians, 758 of whom have been ordained to the priesthood.

Among our other scholarship programs, seven scholarships totaling more than \$153,000 were provided through the Matthews and Swift Educational Trust. Likewise, 153 scholarships worth more than \$225,000 were provided through the Fourth Degree Pro Deo and Pro Patria scholarship programs.

By far, the Order's greatest support for vocations comes from our local councils, assemblies and Squires circles participating in the Refund Support Vocations Program (RSVP). Last year alone, 3,224 local units provided direct financial support totaling \$6,187,284 to 6,356 seminarians through RSVP.

Since 1981, RSVP has provided more than \$60 million in aid to more than 98,000 men and women pursuing their vocations to the priesthood or religious life.

In addition to providing scholarship money, Knights of Columbus councils support vocations in many creative ways. Knights in the Diocese of Lansing, Mich., annually show their support for young people pursuing a vocation to the priesthood or religious life by inviting them to attend a minor league baseball game free of charge. This year, priests, deacons, women religious and seminarians were all in attendance, and Bishop Earl Boyea and Michigan Past State Deputy Michael Malinowski were among the dignitaries to throw out ceremonial first pitches. A Fourth Degree honor guard also presented the colors before a sellout crowd of 11,166 —which included 2,200 Knights and their families. Father McGivney, a baseball fan himself, surely would have approved.

Local councils and assemblies together provided \$6.6 million in scholarships and other forms of educational assistance, and another \$1.6 million for youth athletic programs.

All together, local councils and assemblies contributed more than \$18 million to youth programs last year.

FOURTH DEGREE & THE ARMED FORCES



Fourth Degree Knights take part in Columbus Day celebrations at the Columbus Memorial in front of Union Station in Washington, D.C. (CNS photo/Bob Roller)

When Father McGivney founded the Knights, it was no accident that he turned to many veterans to be the first leaders of the organization.

These men understood the vocation to fraternity, the importance of unity and the virtue of self-sacrifice. Today, the Knights of Columbus continues to reach out and offer support to veterans and members of the armed services, some of whom are brother Knights. All of them deserve, and have, our respect for their service to our country.

One hundred years ago, World War I began. A few years later, when the United States entered that war, the Knights of Columbus offered enormous charitable support for those who were currently serving or had previously served with the armed forces. Service to the military and veterans has continued ever since.

Leading the Order in support of our troops and in our commitment to patriotism are Fourth Degree Knights. They provide a visible and dignified presence through their service as honor guards at patriotic ceremonies and liturgical events.

Third Degree Knights can now immediately proceed to the Patriotic Degree, and I am happy to report that during the past year, 5,828 Knights did so, bringing Fourth Degree membership to an all-time high of 340,960. We have also added 60 new Fourth Degree assemblies, bringing the total to 3,169.

In addition to their excellent work in honor guards, Sir Knights have become an important presence in VA hospitals around the United States. They make up the vast majority of the thousands of Knights who are part of the Veterans Affairs Voluntary Services program.

Led by the Fourth Degree, Knights now provide volunteer manpower at nearly all of the nation's veterans medical centers. We are the largest single volunteer service partner for the Veterans Administration.

In 2011, the Gary Sinise Foundation began raising funds to build computer-equipped custom "smart homes" for America's severely wounded heroes. That same year, while stationed in Afghanistan, Cpl. Kyle Hockenberry was a victim of a roadside bomb. At only 19 years old, he lost both legs and his left arm in the blast. In June, we partnered with the Gary Sinise Foundation by providing \$200,000 to help complete the construction of Cpl. Hockenberry's home in Marietta, Ohio, helping to restore independence and support him and his wife, Ashley.

It has long been the byword of America's military that no one is left behind —everybody comes home. Now, working with the Gary Sinise Foundation, we can help make sure that the homes our heroes come back to are worthy of their sacrifice.

The Fourth Degree has also been in the vanguard of the Order's initiative to support vocations for the military chaplaincy.

We have pledged \$1 million over five years in support of the Co-Sponsored Seminarian Program with the Archdiocese for the Military Services, USA. The fundraising is being led by the Fourth Degree, and thus far, assemblies have raised \$780,609 for this vital project.

In addition to our work with military chaplains, we also sponsored the annual AMS pilgrimage to Lourdes this May. This pilgrimage coincided with the 56th International Military Pilgrimage, which included delegations from more than 40 countries. On this pilgrimage, some 125 wounded or disabled troops and veterans, family members, chaplains and support staff joined other pilgrims at the Marian shrine of Lourdes in France.

Auxiliary Bishop F. Richard Spencer of the military archdiocese, who serves as the episcopal vicar for Europe and Asia, joined us for the pilgrimage.

The Knights of Columbus has a long history in Lourdes, having run an Army hospitality center there at the end of the First World War. Under the banner of "Everybody Welcome, Everything Free," Knights provided for the needs of members of the armed forces. During our recent pilgrimage, military personnel were given the same guidebook to the shrine at Lourdes that the Knights of Columbus developed for our troops in 1919.

Our support continued even after the Great War. We provided job training for veterans of the conflict. It continues today in our current support for both active duty troops and veterans.

Following the pilgrimage to Lourdes, I visited the Musée de l'Armée in Paris, where the museum's director arranged for us to have a special viewing of Field Marshal Foch's ceremonial baton, given to him by Supreme Knight James Flaherty in 1920 during a Knights of Columbus pilgrimage to France.

On March 15, I was pleased to travel to Fort Bragg, N.C., for an exemplification of the Fourth Degree and the charter presentation for Chaplain (Maj.) Charles J. Watters Assembly 3459. The event was held in the Watters Family Life Center, named in honor of the council's namesake, a proud Knight and a Medal of Honor recipient who was killed while serving as an army chaplain in Vietnam.

Then in May, I was at Fort Campbell, Ky., home of the 101st Airborne Division, to present a charter to Father Francis L. Sampson Council 15914. Gen. Sampson served at Normandy during the D-Day invasion as well as in Korea and in Vietnam. A brother Knight of 55 years, he was named Army chief of chaplains.

INSURANCE & INVESTMENTS

This past year, each of Father McGivney's goals for the Knights of Columbus soared to new heights.

We provided more charity than ever before. More men than ever before are members of our fraternity. Our service to the Church and for evangelization has never been stronger.

Our insurance program has finished another record year, with \$8.2 billion in new insurance issued—a reflection of the hard work and integrity of our brother Knights who serve as our insurance agents.

On the topic of integrity, I am pleased to announce that this year the Knights of Columbus has been recognized by the Ethisphere Institute, an independent center promoting best practices in corporate ethics and governance, as a 2014 World's Most Ethical Company®. We were one of only two such companies in the life insurance category, and the Knights of Columbus was one of only 144 honorees worldwide.

For more than 130 years, we have fulfilled Father McGivney's goal of protecting the financial future of Catholic families in the event of the tragic death of a breadwinner. Today, we have a successful, sustainable business model precisely because we have remained committed to Father McGivney's vision. Our Catholic values affect every aspect of our business, from our professional agency force of brother Knights, to our investments, to our corporate governance and code of ethics.

For the 39th consecutive year, the Knights of Columbus earned A.M. Best's highest rating of A++ (Superior). This rating is reserved only for a select number of companies that have "a superior ability to meet their ongoing insurance obligations."

A.M. Best noted that its top rating reflects our "strong fraternal and insurance presence within the Catholic communities," our "strong risk-adjusted capitalizations" and "consistently positive statutory operating results." It added that the Knights of Columbus "has a strong affinity with its large membership base through its charitable programs and competitive portfolio of life insurance and annuity products."

We also continue to rank among America's largest companies, ranking number 935 on this year's *Fortune* 1,000 list.

Our assets grew 5.8 percent last year and now total more than \$20.5 billion. Our surplus ratio is at 11.7 percent, which is higher than the industry average. And A.M. Best says our surplus provides us with "an exceptional level of risk-adjusted capitalization" which "affords the Order considerable financial strength."

Our insurance in force reached \$94.7 billion, nearly double the amount just 10 years ago. Last year alone, our insurance in force grew by \$4.27 billion. We issued nearly 78,000 life certificates last year—30,000 more than our closest fraternal benefit society competitor.

We now have more than 1,571,000 life certificates in force. And our five-year sales growth of more than 22 percent stands in marked contrast to the industry as a whole which, during this same time, saw sales decline by nearly 13 percent.

Our professional agency force of nearly 1,500 brother Knights are the band of brothers responsible for this growth. They serve only Knights and their families. They share our commitment to charity, unity, fraternity and patriotism. Through their dedicated service, brother Knights and their families can be confident that their financial future is secure.

In order to provide financial security for young families, we launched the new Young Adult Insurance Program this spring. This new product provides annual renewable term insurance to Knights and their spouses ages 18-29. This insurance not only offers protection for their families, but also gives them the opportunity to start building financial stability at a time in their lives when it is extremely affordable to do so.

Also, through this program, for the first time Knights will be able to obtain a personalized quote and request additional information online by visiting kofc.org/youngadultins.

Our very low lapse rate is the best measurement of customer satisfaction among our members. That lapse rate of 3.6 percent is among the lowest in the industry and well below the industry average of 5.8 percent. Put another way, 96.4 percent of our insurance members keep their policies. This represents an outstanding level of confidence and customer satisfaction.

Although much of the insurance sector finds itself either stagnant or in a weak recovery, our insurance program continued to outpace the industry. Insurance premiums reached nearly \$1.14 billion in 2013. Our 3.6 percent decrease in insurance premiums is less than one-third the industry rate of decrease, which is 11.4 percent. In addition, our annuity deposits were at \$594 million.

Our members stay with our insurance products because they offer the protection they promise when it's needed most. That is why we say our insurance is by brother Knights, for brother Knights.

Last year, we paid more than \$314 million in death benefits. Over the course of our history, death benefits to our Knights of Columbus families have totaled more than \$4.1 billion.

Also important, last year we paid more than \$276 million in dividends to our life insurance contract holders. Since the inception of our program, we have paid out more than \$12.7 billion in living benefits to our insurance members.

The quality test for any insurance company is the strength of its financial platform —that is to say, the degree to which its assets exceed its liabilities and what is necessary for it to reserve in order to make future payments on death claims. Once again, our \$1.9 billion surplus is the foundation of our capitalization. In this regard, Standard & Poor's says that the Knights of Columbus is "extremely strong ... at the AAA level." And they praise our "very strong competitive position."

The good work of our investment department helps make these benefits possible. Despite the low interest rate environment, our investment department has found reliable, sustainable ways to maintain healthy yields. While the yield on 10-year treasury bonds last year averaged 2.3 percent, our new purchase rate was 4.23 percent.

During 2013, we invested more than \$10 million each day. Our new investments during the year totaled \$3.5 billion. Our investment income last year totaled \$919,968,424, an increase of 1.54 percent over 2012. That is an exceptional result in today's economy.

We believe that how and where we invest our money must reflect our Catholic values. That is why we screen our investments according to Catholic moral principles. That is

also why we are committed to helping parishes through our ChurchLoan program. Our loans provide financing to Catholic parishes and schools, enabling them to undertake important projects at very competitive rates. With this program, we invest our members' money to help build the future of our Church.

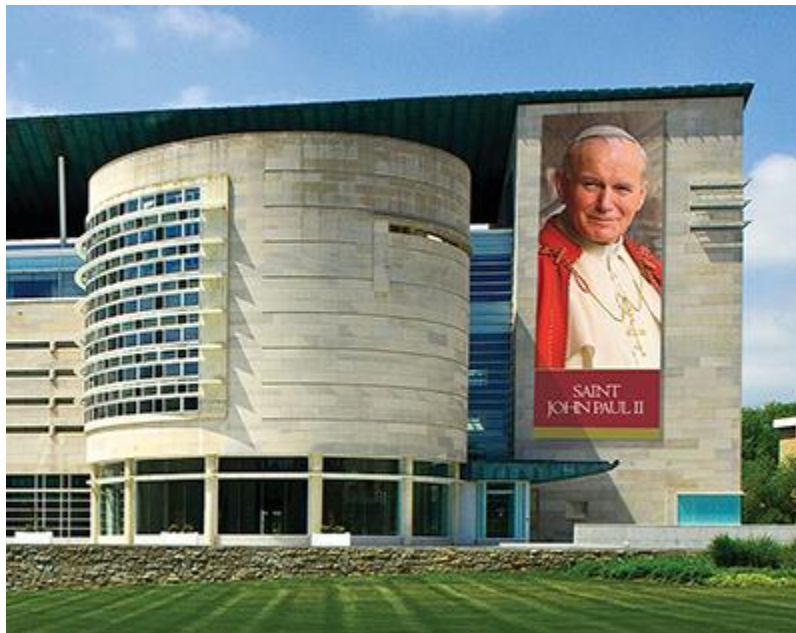
Our insurance is both ethical and faithful to Father McGivney's vision. It is insurance by brother Knights, for brother Knights. Our investments reflect our Catholic values. This is the Knights of Columbus difference.

This is also why a brother Knight can choose no better company for the protection of his family. In choosing Knights of Columbus Insurance, a brother Knight is making a commitment to his family's future; he is making a commitment to ethical investment and corporate governance; and he is making a commitment that benefits his Church and community.

Pope Francis has called for a "rediscovery" of fraternity in our economic activity. He has called on people everywhere "to rediscover the fraternal bonds, which join us to one another, as the key to economic development." He has urged us to rediscover the virtues of prudence, temperance, justice and fortitude.

My brother Knights, you can be proud that the Knights of Columbus is today a model throughout the world for these values of fraternity in economic enterprise.

KNIGHTS & THE CHURCH



The Saint John Paul II National Shrine is the home to relics of the newly canonized saint. In addition to liturgical and prayer life, the shrine will soon offer a world-class exhibit on the life and papacy of St. John Paul II.

Our vocation to fraternity is an expression of our Catholic faith. In unity with our Church, Knights around the world not only engage in acts of charity that evangelize, but that also directly promote the new evangelization.

We were honored when your supreme directors were privileged to be received by Pope Francis in a private audience in Rome last October. During that audience, Pope Francis expressed his gratitude to the Knights of Columbus for our "unfailing support" of the Holy See and for "the daily prayers, sacrifices and apostolic works of so many Knights in their local councils, their parishes and their communities."

From the time of our founding by Father McGivney, our vocation to fraternity has meant a special solidarity with our priests, bishops and pope. Our support for the latter takes many forms. Since 1981, the Order has annually supported the pope's personal initiatives through our Vicarius Christi Fund. In a private audience with Pope Francis this past year, I presented him with a \$1.6 million check for his personal charitable endeavors. Since 1981, our gifts to the Holy Father through the Vicarius Christi Fund have totaled more than \$52,815,000.

To help people better know our new pope, the Knights of Columbus produced a documentary titled *Francis: The Pope from the New World*. This documentary has helped bring his life story to the world and has been broadcast on television in the United States, Mexico, Canada, Europe, South Korea and throughout the Middle East.

This past year was also a special one for the papacy.

Divine Mercy Sunday was the occasion of the canonization of two great popes. St. John XXIII led the Church into the Second Vatican Council and knew the Knights of Columbus well, visiting one of our playgrounds in Rome in 1959 and meeting with our supreme directors in 1961. Canonized with him was St. John Paul II, who led the Church into the third millennium and had a special connection to the Knights of Columbus, calling on us to work with him on many projects during his 26-year papacy.

Throughout the days surrounding the canonization, our Saint John Paul II National Shrine served as a major center for devotion in the United States. Through this shrine, the Knights of Columbus has a central role in preserving and promoting the legacy of one of history's greatest popes. I encourage all of you to visit this shrine and to organize parish and council pilgrimages to it.

We also provided assistance for the canonization in Rome, including nearly \$100,000 in financial support to Vatican Television's broadcast of the canonization ceremony and hosting hundreds of Polish pilgrims at two of our sports centers in Rome.

On May 11, a National Mass of Thanksgiving for the canonizations of St. John XXIII and St. John Paul II concluded with a procession of hundreds of people from the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C., to the Saint John Paul II National Shrine. An honor guard of more than 100 Fourth Degree Knights led the procession, while Cardinal Donald Wuerl, archbishop of Washington, carried the relic of St. John Paul II.

We express our gratitude to Cardinal Wuerl, through whose leadership the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops designated this site as a "national" shrine in time for the canonization ceremony in April.

This summer, work will be completed on the shrine's 16,000-square-foot exhibit, titled "A Gift of Love: The Life of St. John Paul II." Here, pilgrims will walk in the footsteps of this courageous pope in a major exhibit that explores the events of his life and the themes of his papacy. St. John Paul II once said, "People try to understand me from the outside, but I can only be understood from within." Our shrine has precisely this mission: to help pilgrims understand this great saint "from within."

Soon construction will begin on the new "Redeemer of Man" chapel, which will be able to accommodate more than 500 pilgrims. It will be named after St. John Paul II's first encyclical, *Redemptor Hominis*. The chapel will be adorned on four sides with beautiful mosaics created by Jesuit Father Marko Rupnik, who previously renovated the Holy Family Chapel at the Supreme Council headquarters in New Haven, Conn.

This past summer, we also made available the first-class relics of St. John Paul II for veneration in the Cathedral of the Holy Cross in Boston, the National Shrine of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Baltimore, St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York and the Cathedral-Basilica of Sts. Peter and Paul in Philadelphia. More than 20,000 pilgrims were able to seek St. John Paul II's intercession during this relic tour. We take this opportunity to again express our appreciation to Cardinal Seán O'Malley, Cardinal Timothy Dolan, Archbishop Charles Chaput and Archbishop William Lori for hosting these pilgrimage events in cooperation with the Saint John Paul II National Shrine.

At the canonization of St. John Paul II, Pope Francis said: "In his own service to the people of God, St. John Paul II was the pope of the family. He himself once said that he wanted to be remembered as the pope of the family. I am particularly happy to point this out as we are in the process of journeying with families toward the Synod on the Family. It is surely a journey which, from his place in heaven, he guides and sustains."

As an organization dedicated to Catholic families, and following the example of Pope Francis, I would ask that brother Knights everywhere pray that St. John Paul II may guide the Synod on the Family, which will take place this [month].

One of the projects closest to the heart of this "pope of the family" was his establishment in 1981 of an international graduate school of theology dedicated to the study of marriage and family at the Pontifical Lateran University in Rome. It would be named the John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family after its founder. I had the privilege of teaching there as a visiting professor beginning in 1983 and of personally discussing with Pope John Paul II the work of the Institute on many occasions.

In 1988, the Knights of Columbus made possible the establishment of a session of the Institute in Washington, D.C. Now located in McGivney Hall at The Catholic University of America, approximately 500 students have graduated from the Institute and gone on to serve the Church in a variety of ministries and teaching vocations. Three of those students are now bishops in the United States.

Last March in Rome, we co-sponsored an international conference with the Institute, titled "John Paul II: The Pope of the Family." It was held under the special patronage of the Council of European Bishops' Conferences.

Even as we give thanks for our Church's newly canonized saints, we also pray for the beatification of our founder. I ask for your continued prayers in this regard. A possible miracle through Father McGivney's intercession is under consideration at the Vatican, and our devotion to our beloved founder should prompt all Knights of Columbus to pray for his intercession and cause for canonization.

Father McGivney continues to capture the imagination not only of Knights, but of people everywhere. The Father Michael J. McGivney Guild continues to grow and now has 155,000 members.

A play about Father McGivney that was commissioned by the Supreme Council was published in July 2013. Written by Dominican Father Peter John Cameron, *He Was Our Father* was first performed at the 2005 Supreme Convention in Chicago, and then the following year in New York and New Haven.

Furthermore, our documentary on the life of Father McGivney, which has aired on PBS stations throughout the United States, is now available on DVD. And a little more than a month ago, the Vatican published a new Italian translation of Father McGivney's

biography — *The New York Times* bestseller *Parish Priest* by Douglas Brinkley and Julie Fenster.

The example of Father McGivney continues to inspire people around the world, precisely because his vision for Catholic families and his example as a parish priest remain so relevant. Father McGivney left us an example of living our faith every day. For this reason, the Knights of Columbus embraced the Year of Faith celebrated last year. More than 4,500 Knights and their family members participated in a Year of Faith pilgrimage to the Basilica of the of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C., on September 8, 2013.

Archbishop Lori of Baltimore presided over the pilgrimage to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Knights Tower Carillon and to reconsecrate the Order to the Blessed Virgin Mary. Archbishop (now Cardinal) Gérald C. Lacroix of Québec, primate of Canada, concelebrated the Mass with our supreme chaplain and delivered a Marian reflection. The 329-foot Knights Tower was funded by a \$1 million grant from the Order. Its 56-bell carillon was dedicated September 8, 1963.

Also during the Year of Faith, the Knights of Columbus was pleased to support an initiative to refurbish the preeminent icon of Our Lady in St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, the *Madonna del Soccorso* (Our Lady of Help). The painstaking project involved extensive preliminary research and testing that allowed the restorers to reconstruct for the first time with scientific precision the centuries-long history of this poignant image.

Marian devotion has long been a hallmark of the Knights of Columbus. With members throughout North and Central America, we have given a high priority to promoting St. John Paul II's vision of a hemisphere united under the mantle of the Blessed Mother through her title, Our Lady of Guadalupe.

To help promote greater solidarity and the new evangelization among Catholics of this hemisphere, the Knights of Columbus co-sponsored a conference with the Vatican's Commission for Latin America on the New Evangelization in America. Held November 2013 at the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City, this meeting, titled "Our Lady of Guadalupe: Star of the New Evangelization on the American Continent," brought together hundreds of Catholics from around the hemisphere—including nearly 80 bishops and cardinals from Canada, the United States and Mexico, as well as Central and South America. I was honored to be among speakers such as Cardinals Seán O'Malley and Marc Ouellet, and Archbishop Charles Chaput.

Shortly before that meeting, I also had the opportunity to address the Mexican Bishops Conference and to make a presentation about the history of the Knights of Columbus in that nation and the Order's plans for future development in Mexico.

What we do at the national and international levels as Knights of Columbus is reflected at the local level as well. Throughout our jurisdictions, councils and assemblies have provided extraordinary levels of support to their local churches during the past year. True to our commitment to parish priests since the time of Father McGivney, Knights have stepped up to help with parish projects large and small, proving again and again that they are the strong right arm of the local parish.

Overall, Church donations from local and state councils totaled \$48 million, of which \$19.7 million went to church facilities, \$6.3 million to Catholic schools, and \$6.2 million to direct assistance for seminarians. Another \$2 million went directly to seminaries.

We also continue to assist our council chaplains. Led by our supreme chaplain and assisted by Dominican Father Jonathan Kalisch, our support of council chaplains has never been stronger. Father McGivney left us a model of cooperation between priests and the Knights of Columbus. Our priests —especially our council chaplains—can help form our vocation to charity and fraternity, and they can help identify needs within the parish and community where our councils can help. Working closely with our council chaplains, we can truly be the strong right arm of our parish priests.

At last year's Supreme Convention in San Antonio, we inaugurated a new Marian Prayer Program featuring an image of Mary as the Immaculate Conception from the Cathedral-Basilica of Notre-Dame de Québec. Each state deputy was given a copy of the image to bring to his home jurisdiction, where it has traveled among councils as the focus of prayer programs. To date, 411,192 devotees have attended 2,255 services.

This prayer program also coincides with the 350th anniversary of Notre-Dame de Québec. During the combined state chaplain and state deputy midyear meeting, held last November in Québec, the Order's leadership made a pilgrimage to Notre-Dame de Québec for the celebration of Mass with Archbishop Lacroix, on the threshold of the Jubilee Year.

In addition, the Knights of Columbus Supreme Council, the Québec State Council and Canadian Association teamed up to underwrite the creation of the Holy Door that was installed in a side chapel of the Cathedral-Basilica—the first Vatican-sanctioned Holy Door in North America. The massive bronze door bears the emblem of the Knights of Columbus in recognition of the Order's support for its creation.

This has been a special year for the commemoration of the evangelization of Canada, with this anniversary and also the canonization of St. François de Laval and St. Marie of the Incarnation. Last spring, our board of directors made a special pilgrimage to pray at the tomb of St. André Bessette. And our Marian Prayer Program has helped carry forward their work of evangelization into parishes worldwide.

In addition to our programs of evangelization, we have also helped Catholics stay informed about important events. Last year we began sponsoring *EWTN News Nightly*. This new program provides in-depth coverage of the news of the day from a Catholic perspective. To keep up with what is really going on in the world around us, I encourage brother Knights, and all Catholics, to tune into this excellent news show each evening.

Quality Catholic programming isn't just important in the United States—it is important worldwide. For this reason, we've also continued our support for Salt and Light Television, bringing quality Catholic programming to Canada. We encourage councils in Canada and throughout the Order to promote Salt and Light Television's new series *The Church Alive* on the new evangelization.

FAITHFUL CITIZENSHIP



Hundreds pack the streets with K of C pro-life signs during a pro-life march organized by Santo Domingo de Guzmán Council 14383 in Yauco, Puerto Rico. The march was held under the theme “Seamos la Voz de los que No Tienen Voz” (“Let’s Be the Voice of Those Who Have No Voice”).

Our vocation to fraternity takes many forms. We are called to charity, to unity, and we are called to our patriotic duty. As it was in the time of Father McGivney, the best citizenship is faithful citizenship.

In our role as faithful citizens, we need not compromise our values or our charity. For us, faithful citizenship means keeping faith with both. What we do, we do to help. And even if some people disagree with our positions on moral issues, let no one doubt that what we do is inspired by Christian concern and love of neighbor.

In *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis observed: “Religion [cannot] be relegated to the inner sanctum of personal life, without influence on societal and national life.”

Bringing key values into the public square can help make a real difference. Sixty years ago, the Knights of Columbus was successful in having the words “under God” added to the U.S. Pledge of Allegiance. This year, we successfully defended these words before the Massachusetts Supreme Court.

Now, someone might ask what this has to do with love of neighbor, and the answer is: everything. When we speak of the United States as a nation “under God,” we recall the Declaration of Independence and its principle that we are “endowed by our Creator” with “unalienable rights.”

Brother Knight John F. Kennedy recognized this same founding principle in his inaugural address when he said: “Our rights come not from the generosity of the state, but from the hand of God.”

As Pope Francis reminded us in his message for this year’s World Day of Peace on Jan. 1: “True brotherhood among people presupposes and demands a transcendent Fatherhood. Based on a recognition of this fatherhood, human fraternity is consolidated: each person becomes a ‘neighbor’ who cares for others.”

Pope Francis also recently reminded us that religious freedom must mean the freedom to live out our faith on behalf of our neighbor. He said: “Religious freedom is not only that of private thought or worship. It is the liberty to live, both privately and publicly, according to the ethical principles resulting from found truth. This is a great challenge in the globalized world, where weak thought—which is like a disease—also lowers the

general ethical level, and in the name of a false concept of tolerance, it ends in persecuting those who defend the truth about man and its ethical consequences.”

The Knights of Columbus again supported the Fortnight for Freedom campaign, which took as its theme this year: “Freedom to Serve.” Is it not natural for us, as an organization that each year donates millions of dollars and volunteer hours of service to our neighbors in need, to insist that the free exercise of religion remain free?

We are proud of the leadership of Supreme Chaplain Archbishop William E. Lori, who has been a champion in defense of our first freedom as chairman of the USCCB Ad Hoc Committee for Religious Liberty.

One area that has become a flashpoint for religious liberty in the United States is the government’s so-called HHS contraceptive mandate. This mandate requires even religious employers to provide not only contraceptives and sterilization procedures, but also abortion-inducing drugs and devices.

The government has offered what it calls an accommodation for religious organizations. The government now says that religious organizations need not worry, because the government will require health care plans to provide these items at no charge.

However, anyone who provides health care coverage for their employees knows that the cost of a company’s plan is negotiated annually with the health plan provider. The cost of a plan is flexible, based upon the range of services offered and the extent to which they are used. Each year health insurance premiums increase, but somehow the government is insisting that when a health insurer is forced to provide more services, the costs somehow won’t be passed on to us when our rates go up the following year.

And if we agree today that abortifacient drugs and devices are morally acceptable because they are provided for free, then what will we say should the government insist tomorrow that abortion also be provided?

Of course, our bishops were right when they unanimously said that the government’s “accommodation” is morally unacceptable.

Others have said it is nothing more than a sleight of hand. The United States Supreme Court rejected the government’s arguments for the HHS mandate in its *Hobby Lobby* decision earlier this summer. And we are hopeful that it will do so again to protect the religious liberties of entities such as the Little Sisters of the Poor.

In 1993, St. John Paul II came to the United States to celebrate World Youth Day in Denver’s Mile High Stadium. During his visit he said: “Do not stifle your conscience! Conscience is the most secret core and sanctuary of a person. Only by listening to the voice of God will you obtain the freedom you yearn for.”

And so, my brother Knights, what are we to say today? Are we to say that this is no longer true in America? Do we say that in our country the government has become the final arbiter of conscience? That the voice of government must always have the last word?

Some may be tempted to think that this is only a Catholic issue. In reality, this issue reaches far beyond one religious group.

Should any of you visit Washington, D.C., in the near future, I would ask you to visit the Jefferson Memorial. There you will read the words of one of our greatest presidents: “I have sworn upon the altar of God, eternal hostility against every form of tyranny over the mind of man.”

Then ask yourself, "What would Mr. Jefferson think about all this?"

It has been said that in such national policy debates our real choice is not between left and right, but between up and down. Is not our choice today to choose to move up to a society that respects conscience, to a culture that defends life and to a civilization based on the principle of love of neighbor? Or else to choose to move down to where government has ever greater power to control how we must act and what we must think?

CULTURE OF LIFE

Today, faithful citizenship demands that we defend the truth about man. It is a truth that we have received not from the generosity of the state, but from the hand of God.

St. John Paul II taught us that only a civilization of love is worthy of human dignity and the truth about the human person. Building a civilization of love is the goal toward which our fraternal love of neighbor leads us.

At the center of the civilization of love is the culture of life. Each is inseparable from the other because each calls us to value and accept every human life.

Some in politics seem obsessed with publically opposing our Church's teaching on human life. But we must differ with them. Our position is that every child should be loved, every child should be respected, and every child should be helped.

The cold child in need of a coat, the hungry child in need of food, the poor child in need of education, and the unborn child waiting to be born. All are on the margins of society, and all deserve to be supported and protected.

In good conscience we cannot abandon some and help others. We will help all that we can.

While some politicians try to divide the American people on social issues, we seek to overcome division, to bring people together and to help everyone. Even on abortion, an issue often considered the most divisive, our polling has found great unity among Americans. Our recent Knights of Columbus/Marist Poll revealed that, more than four decades after the Supreme Court's decision in *Roe v. Wade*, the vast majority of Americans do not accept abortion on demand. Eighty-four percent of Americans would limit abortion to, at most, the first three months of pregnancy, and so would nearly 6 in 10 Americans who identify themselves as strongly pro-choice.

A majority of Americans believe life begins at conception, and more than 6 in 10 think abortion is morally wrong. And, perhaps most importantly, more than 8 in 10 Americans say that laws can protect both the well-being of a woman and the life of her unborn child.

This principle is the basis of our Ultrasound Initiative, which I am pleased to report continues to grow. The Knights of Columbus has donated nearly 500 ultrasound machines to pregnancy resource centers in Canada, Jamaica and all 50 of the United States. Each of these machines can save hundreds and even thousands of lives.

Knights in Texas and Missouri are leading the way, with 39 and 33 ultrasound machines, respectively, followed by California with 30, and Michigan and Florida with 29 each.

By providing ultrasound machines to pregnancy centers, the Knights of Columbus is helping turn the tide in favor of life by saving one child at a time.

Another way we are helping to promote life is through our support of marches for life around the globe. The annual March for Life in Washington, D.C., the largest human rights demonstration in the world, this year saw hundreds of thousands brave record low temperatures to make their voices heard.

In Canada, we support the March for Life in Ottawa, and brother Knights are active in marches for life throughout the Philippines, as well as in Mexico and Poland.

What continues to be remarkable about these demonstrations is that the overwhelming majority of participants are young —and getting younger each year.

In all, we supported the cause of life last year with more than \$10.5 million to pro-life projects.

CONCLUSION

My brother Knights, at no time in the history of this continent has so much good been done by a single Catholic fraternity. But what we have accomplished in the past must be the prologue to future action.

So let us resolve to continue the great work which Father McGivney began, to live our vocation to fraternity as did he: with malice toward none and charity toward all. Let us continue to bind up the wounds of those who are suffering, to do right as God gives us to see the right.

Let us continue our dedication to our principles of charity, unity, fraternity and patriotism with the quiet strength and determination for which we have become known, so that by our example and through our service the world may better know the truth spoken by Pope Francis —that fraternity is truly the foundation and the pathway to peace.

Vivat Jesus!