



The Catholic Patriot

Supreme Master
Michael McCusker

suprememaster@kofc.org

Supporting our Country, Community, and Church
With Respect and Honor
Knights of Columbus Fourth Degree

May 2026

 Share This Email

 Share This Email

Supreme Master's Message

Once in confession my priest, who was also my friend, told me, "Michael, you are your own worst enemy."

He said this in the context of my drive for perfection, which he noted is impossible. He added, "There was only one perfect man in the history of the world, and he was hung on a cross."

Last Saturday, I contemplated this as I walked the Way of the Cross on the hills above the Lourdes Grotto, during the Knights of Columbus Warriors to Lourdes program, which is always held in conjunction with the International Military Pilgrimage to Lourdes, France. During the walk, Father Brian Reedy, S.J., a Navy chaplain, spoke on this point, commenting, "We always attempt perfection and when we fail, we become our worst critics. How can we come to be more like Christ?"

"Christ fell three times under the weight of the cross that bore our sins. If Christ, who was perfect, struggled to carry his cross, then why do we condemn ourselves when we fall under the weight of our own crosses?"

Two days later, I stood in the basilica at Lourdes, carefully studying a replica of Arnolfo di Cambio's famous statue of St. Peter which sits in the nave of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. It shows Peter sitting on the papal throne, holding the keys to the kingdom of God. For the first time, I did not simply see him as St. Peter, but as a man who failed and failed often, ultimately denying Jesus three times. And yet, there he sits – our first Pope. Entrusted by God to lead the Church, despite his personal failures.

Worthy Sir Knights, none of us are perfect. We will all, time and again, fall under the weight of our individual crosses. We will encounter disappointment, frustration, and oftentimes pain not only as Christians but as Knights, and especially in leadership roles. As this fraternal year nears its end, I urge you to take an accounting of your accomplishments as Sir Knights, assembly officers, district masters, and even Vice Supreme Masters. (I will do the same.) Also consider your failures or shortcomings this past fraternal year with a determination to grow and learn from where you failed or struggled.

And then, once contemplated, forgive yourself, determined to pick up the cross again, willing to accept the help of the Simons among your brother knights. Keep going! Keep faith!



For God, just like St. Peter, has a plan for each of us despite our imperfections.

Vivat Jesus!

Michael McCusker
Supreme Master

Celebrate America's 250th Birthday

American Knights are invited to celebrate the United States' 250th anniversary this year with devotion, prayer and service.

Supreme Knight Patrick Kelly is encouraging councils and assemblies to help answer the U.S. bishops' call for parishes and individuals to complete **250 Hours of Adoration and 250 Works of Mercy**.

Additionally, inspired by the U.S. bishops' forthcoming consecration of the United States to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, **Knights and their families are invited to dedicate themselves, their homes and their councils to the Sacred Heart of Jesus**. A special Novena to the Sacred Heart of Jesus begins next Thursday, June 3rd and will conclude on June 11th.

To sign up to receive daily emails with the Novena prayers and find more information about marking this occasion visit the dedicated resources page!

[Sign Up for the Novena](#)

[Plan an Event](#)

Message from Fourth Degree Director of Programs

Civic Award Application Reminder: Just Under Two Months Left in the Fraternal Year

With just one month remaining in the fraternal year, now is the time to finalize and submit your **Civic Award Application**.

If your assembly has already completed the following:

- Submitted **Form #186 (Report of Officers)**
- Submitted **Form #1728 (Annual Survey of Fraternal Activity)**
- Submitted **Form #1315 (Annual Assembly Audit Report)**
- Achieved your **7% new member goal**
- Entered the **"To Be A Patriot"** competition
- Communicated **monthly with your Assembly's Sir Knights**



Then you're in great shape to submit your Civic Award Application. Before sending your completed application to the **Department of Fraternal Mission** at fraternalmission@kofc.org, please **double-check** that each of your four listed events truly reflects the **spirit of patriotism and national pride**.

What Qualifies as a Patriotic Civic Award Event?

1. Events That Emphasize National Values and Principles:

- Celebrate American, Canadian, Mexican, Filipino, French, Polish, Korean, etc., values such as **liberty, justice, equality, democracy, and civic duty**
- Honor the **U.S. Constitution, Bill of Rights**, or similar founding documents of your country

2. Events Demonstrating Patriotism and National Pride:

- Ceremonies showing respect for the **national flag, anthem, or symbols**
- Activities honoring **veterans, active-duty military, and first responders**
- Observances of **national holidays** such as **Independence Day, Memorial Day, Veterans Day, and Flag Day**

3. Educational Components:

- Programs teaching national **history, government, or civic responsibility**
 - Presentations promoting understanding of **civic duties**
 - Events explaining the importance of the **Constitution and national founding principles**
-

Examples of Qualifying Events:

- Memorial Day or Veterans Day ceremonies
 - Flag retirement ceremonies
 - Service projects benefiting veterans or active-duty military
 - Educational programs about national history or the Constitution
 - Events honoring police, firefighters, or EMTs
 - Participation in patriotic parades (e.g., July 4th parades)
 - Presenting the flag at schools or civic institutions
 - Youth outreach promoting patriotism
-

What Does NOT Qualify:

- **Social or recreational events** without a clear patriotic focus
 - **Fundraisers or commercial events** not directly tied to civic or patriotic goals
 - **Attendance** at public festivals or events with no meaningful civic contribution
-

Key Reminders:

- **Intent & Impact:** The event must be focused on **patriotism or civic engagement** and positively impact the community
 - **Documentation:** Provide **clear event descriptions, dates, and participation numbers**
 - **Clarity:** If unsure, **contact your District Master** for guidance
 - **National Focus:** **Each event must reflect the values and spirit of your country**
-

Deadline: June 30, 2026

If your assembly has completed its four qualifying events, you may submit the application **now**. Be sure to **cc your District Master and Vice Supreme Master** on your submission.

Ron Boyce, PSD
Fourth Degree Director of Programs

Message From Fourth Degree Director of Membership

Membership Musings

Worthy Sir Brother Knights,

The End is Near!

We all have heard this saying over our lifetimes. Some more, some less. I would say we all associate this with the end of time.

Let's reconsider this for the end of our Fraternal year. Have you completed everything you need to for year-end? If you are short on your membership goal your window for completing it is indeed fleeting. Please do not expect an Exemplification after the 15th of June to be reflected on this year's number.

What can be done is planning to not be in the same position next year. Do you have your Exemplification planned for next year and if not, why not? Not planning for a successful year ahead can be considered planning for failure. Get your Exemplification dates on your State calendar, correspond with hierarchy, and get your 3 month preparation timeline to your Assembly and supporting Councils. Then, Just do It!

Great Job to all Assemblies, Districts and Provinces that have achieved or will achieve their goals this Fraternal year.

Fraternally,

Bret Ladenburger, PSD Wyoming
Fourth Degree Director of Membership



Message From Fourth Degree Director of Training

Grow Your Uniform Numbers

This past Tuesday our associate Pastor celebrated his 25th Anniversary as a Priest. Before coming to our Parish, he was the chaplain at two V.A. hospitals in our area. So, when he was planning his anniversary celebration, he wanted an Honor Guard for his special mass.

We were 17 strong in the honor guard on a Tuesday night. How proud was he when visiting Priests that concelebrated the mass remarked about the Knights' presence.

Our Support of our Bishops and Priests is ongoing, and we should be ready with as much support as possible when we are asked to be part of the Mass or other liturgical situations like Eucharistic Adoration, or the blessing of a new statue of Mary (which we did two weeks ago). We are and should continue to be the visible arm of the Order.





How are you growing your uniform numbers in your Province, District, and Assembly? Are you reaching out to the new members and encouraging them to purchase a uniform? Are you offering training for all new members on how to participate in our honor guards? Are you performing regular training sessions after your meetings? What is your goal to replace the aging members of your assembly? We are mortal and we must replace ourselves constantly.

These questions should be asked all the time, and you should be prepared with a plan, especially for those Fourth Degree Knights in the United States attending 250th Anniversary celebrations on Memorial Day, the Fourth of July, Labor Day, and Veterans Day in 2026.

Fraternally,

Michael J. Porter, PSD,FM,FVSM
Fourth Degree Director of Training

Message from the Director of Ceremonials

For your convenience, the latest Drill Manual version now resides on the supreme web site! Please make sure that all who perform Color Corps duties are familiar with the Drill Manual contents, so that we can continue our work towards uniformity in our drill! Send me any questions or suggestions relative to the Drill Manual. I retain everything in order to refer to it for the next update and to determine what needs to be added, changed, or updated! As always, I recommend working through your chain of command.

A couple of items to be aware of:

- Before you hold a Color Guard event, please review the order of flags and make sure they are correct. We recently had one instance where the US flag was not on its own right as it should be in the Color Guard.
- Remember, the Fourth Degree Pin (PG-113) is the only pin that is worn on the Fourth Degree Uniform. It is placed in the lapel button hole to be centered across the lapel. If it cannot be centered, the cheat just out of the lapel toward the center to center it.



I continue to work to make the Fourth Degree Exemplification Schedule spreadsheet a very useful tool for our Supreme Master. We are gaining in making sure that all scheduled exemplifications are contained in it. All VSMs and DMs, please continue your work to identify the information from your districts and provinces that has not been reported and send those items and events to me so that I can add them to the spreadsheet. An entire list of scheduled exemplifications and results of those completed helps to make sure we have them all incorporated in the spreadsheet.

Going forward, please send me the information on all Exemplifications that you are planning, followed by the results of each exemplification shortly after it is held. All I need is the number of new sir knights and if there were any Priests in the class. Just cc'ing me when the report of exemplification is sent to supreme will do the trick, too! If you can do these things for me, then we will provide the Supreme Master with the useful tool that he needs and desires! Thanks!

Fraternally and Patriotically,

Mike Thumm, FVSM
Fourth Degree Director of Ceremonials

Message from the Director of Communications

Magnifica Humanitas

Like his predecessor and namesake, Pope Leo XIV has released a magnificent encyclical on the “fourth technological revolution” of Artificial Intelligence and the safeguarding of the human person. It is well worth [reading in full](#). In it, the Holy Father offers several profound insights that deserve careful reflection.

Pope Leo writes: “From the perspective of the Church’s Social Doctrine, the key issue is not the use of technology as such, but the vision that underlies it. If the human being is treated as something to be perfected or surpassed, it becomes easier to accept that some lives are less useful, less desirable or less worthy. In the name of progress, ‘necessary sacrifices’ may begin to be justified, placing the burden on the most vulnerable in pursuit of a supposed optimization of the species.” (117)



Since their founding, the Knights of Columbus have stood firmly against the idea that some human lives are worth less than others. From the challenges of the Second Industrial Revolution, to the civil rights era, and now into the 21st century, the Order has defended the dignity of every person. As Pope Paul VI warns: “Scientific and technological advances, when detached from moral and social progress, end up turning against humanity.”

The encyclical also speaks powerfully about the role of human limitation in personal and social flourishing. Pope Leo observes: “Everything that appears as a ‘limit’ — incapacity, illness, old age, suffering, vulnerability — tends to be seen primarily as a defect to be corrected, rather than as a reality through which our humanity matures and opens itself to relationship. And yet we must remember that humanity flourishes not despite limitations, but often through them....It is precisely within our limitations that the following find a place: compassion, as well as a sincere concern for the needs of others.” (118–119)

At a time when efficiency and optimization are often treated as ultimate goals, this reminder is especially important. Human dignity is not rooted in productivity or perfection, but in our shared humanity and our capacity for compassion, solidarity, and love.

Pope Leo XIV also emphasizes the dignity of work and the responsibility to ensure that technological progress serves the human person rather than diminishing him. He warns against reducing men and women to repetitive tasks performed in service to machines, calling such a vision inhuman. Instead, he urges leaders to shape technological change responsibly:

“At this time of transition, it is not enough to react only when jobs disappear; we must oversee the transformation in advance. One viable path is, first of all, to establish social criteria for innovation. Here, every introduction of automation and AI should be accompanied by verifiable measures to protect the employment, retraining and participation of workers. In this way, technology will be oriented toward freeing up human time and capabilities, rather than producing exclusion. Second, we need proactive policies that make continuous training and professional transitions accessible to all, ensuring that the cost of adaptation does not fall solely on individuals. Finally, there needs to be a corporate commitment to include quality and dignity of work among its indicators of success. When these conditions are present, innovation can serve as an ally of safer, more creative and dignified work; without them, innovation tends to become an accelerator of injustice.” (156)

These principles speak directly to the mission of the Knights of Columbus today. While the specific challenges facing workers and families may change across generations, the fundamental commitment remains the same: to defend the dignity of every human person and resist forces that dehumanize, exploit, or discard the vulnerable. Our works may differ according to the needs of the time, but our first principles endure. May Blessed Michael McGivney intercede for us! *Vivat Jesus!*

Sterling C. Roatch
Director of Fourth Degree Communications

Fourth Degree History

When Timothy Galvin resigned as Supreme Master of the Fourth Degree on January 31, 1945, William J. Mulligan was elected the following day as his successor. A longtime leader in charitable and wartime efforts for the Knights of Columbus, Mulligan had already distinguished himself through decades of service.

Mulligan was born on June 2, 1881, in Thompsonville, Connecticut, the son of William Mulligan Sr., an Irish immigrant businessman. He graduated from Yale University’s Law School in 1904 and began his legal career as prosecutor of the town court, eventually establishing a private practice in Hartford in 1918.

After law school, Mulligan became heavily involved with the Order, joining Washington Irving Council No. 50 in Thompsonville. He served as District Deputy from 1910 to 1916, and as Connecticut State Deputy on three separate occasions: 1910-1916, 1923-1927, and 1929-1935. He later became the first Supreme Director from Connecticut and gained national recognition for his efforts to expand the Order, traveling extensively for public speaking opportunities and advocating for the establishment of new councils and the growth of membership.



During the First World War, Mulligan assumed the role as chairman of the War Activities Committee and travelled to Europe to personally direct the war relief efforts across France, Germany, Belgium, and Great Britain. In 1919, Pope Benedict XV named Mulligan a Knight Commander of St. Gregory the Great, followed by his investiture as a Knight of St. Sylvester in 1920 for his service. On June 3, 1920, the Republic of France also awarded him the French Medal of Gratitude for his contributions. He continued to receive distinctions, including knighthood in the Order of Malta in 1950 and the Order of the Holy Sepulchre in 1951, both conferred by Pope Pius XII.

In the decades that followed the War, Mulligan remained active in charitable and fraternal work throughout Connecticut. He led numerous Connecticut State Council initiatives, raising substantial funds for Catholic colleges, seminaries, orphanages, and diocesan causes, at one point securing a total of \$40,000 to support these causes. On May 23, 1944, as Master of the District of Connecticut, he exemplified the Fourth Degree to a class of 775 candidates, the largest class since the Fourth Degree’s founding in 1900.

On February 1, 1945, Mulligan was formally elected Supreme Master, guiding the Fourth Degree through the postwar years. In May 1949, he was appointed Deputy Supreme Knight, a position he

held until 1960. He continued as Supreme Master until 1966, and passed away on September 15, 1967, in Hartford.

– Based on records from the Knights of Columbus Supreme Council Archives

Membership Minutes

Please view the District Quotas as of April 30th.

Keep up the good work!

Click the image to view at full size.

| Province | 0th Goal | Intake 3/31 | Intake 4/30 | Monthly Growth | YTDs |
|-----------|----------|-------------|-------------|----------------|--------|
| Magee | 2464 | 1198 | 1662 | 464 | 67.45% |
| DeSoto | 1553 | 636 | 933 | 297 | 60.08% |
| Cabert | 1509 | 520 | 698 | 178 | 46.26% |
| Serra | 1080 | 325 | 438 | 113 | 40.56% |
| Padilla | 1218 | 356 | 459 | 103 | 37.68% |
| Marguette | 1177 | 430 | 522 | 92 | 44.35% |
| Healy | 845 | 355 | 447 | 92 | 52.90% |
| Wilmann | 3811 | 2135 | 2210 | 75 | 57.99% |
| Jogues | 1322 | 374 | 442 | 68 | 33.43% |
| Brenelle | 860 | 390 | 457 | 67 | 54.40% |
| Reddin | 700 | 257 | 322 | 65 | 46.00% |
| Hennepin | 1043 | 375 | 429 | 54 | 41.13% |
| Fraser | 341 | 195 | 229 | 34 | 67.16% |
| Stanchet | 374 | 108 | 139 | 31 | 37.47% |
| DeSmet | 280 | 122 | 152 | 30 | 54.29% |
| Serin | 452 | 81 | 108 | 27 | 23.89% |
| McGowley | 203 | 73 | 98 | 25 | 48.29% |
| Guadalupe | 1232 | 612 | 628 | 16 | 50.97% |
| De Jesus | 148 | 23 | 36 | 13 | 24.32% |
| McGugan | 569 | 293 | 303 | 10 | 53.25% |
| Keley | 229 | 72 | 77 | 5 | 33.62% |
| Champlain | 415 | 81 | 85 | 4 | 20.48% |

Featured Assemblies

Honor Guard Training in Vermont



Assemblies from Burlington, Milton, Newport, St. Albans, and Swanton in Vermont participated in training focused on Honor Guard Mass processions and funeral etiquette. These sessions reinforced the dignity, discipline, and reverence expected of the Fourth Degree Color Corps in service to the Church and our communities.

Ongoing training and development are essential to maintaining the professionalism, unity, and traditions of the Fourth Degree. By continually practicing ceremonial procedures and proper

protocols, Sir Knights strengthen their ability to serve faithfully and represent the Knights of Columbus with honor and pride at liturgical celebrations, funerals, and special events.

Special Exemplification in Texas



Knights of the 4th District of Texas in Our Lady of Guadalupe Province held a special exemplification of Patriotism for a 100 year old veteran to join the Fourth degree on April 11.

Would you like to see your Assembly featured here?

Email photos and a brief write up of events to CatholicPatriot@kofc.org!

Director of Training
Michael Porter, PSD,FVSM
mjpknight9282@aol.com
615-308-6777

Director of Communications
Sterling Roatch
CatholicPatriot@kofc.org
203-752-4439

Director of Membership
Bret Ladenburger, PSD
ladenburgerkofc@gmail.com
307-760-1003

Director of Programs
Ron Boyce, PSD
rboyce4539@aol.com
503-730-1986

Director of Ceremonials
Micheal Thumm, FVSM
thummer75@md.metrocast.net
301-904-4373

Director of Assembly Development
Dale Hofer, PSD
dale.hofer@kofc.org
250-938-3253

Administrative Assistant
Justyna Padilla
justyna.padilla@kofc.org
203-752-4437

Special Projects and Associate Fourth Degree Specialist
Addie Roth
adella.roth@kofc.org
203-752-4009

Thank you for your service to the Order. If you have any story or event you might like to see featured, please email catholicpatriot@kofc.org
For any questions or suggestions during your term, please email suprememaster@kofc.org



Knights of Columbus | One Columbus Plaza | New Haven, CT 06510 US

[Unsubscribe](#) | [Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)