

and support the Catholic Church, from the United States to the Philippines. Knights have lived for their faith in Canada, and died for their faith in Mexico. Throughout the history of the Order, in these and many other ways, Knights of Columbus have provided immeasurable support to their families and communities, to their countries and the Church. The Knights of Columbus has enabled its members to strengthen and protect their loved ones—spiritually, by developing their faith, and financially, with the highest quality life insurance available, a product that has brought security and prosperity to millions of Knights and their families.

Through their dedication to the ideals of the Order—Charity, Unity, Fraternity, Patriotism—and through their fidelity to Christ's Church and his Vicar, the Knights of Columbus continue to be what they were called long ago: "The Strong Right Arm of the Church."

### **Membership in the Knights**

Membership in the Knights of Columbus is open to practical Catholic men in union with the Holy See, who are at least 18 years old. A practical Catholic is one who lives up to the Commandments of God and the precepts of the Church. Application blanks are available from any member of the Knights of Columbus.

All priests and religious brothers having duly made application for membership and participated in the ceremonials become honorary life members of the Order and are exempt from payment of dues.

Candidates join local units, called "councils," most of which are based in one Catholic parish, or in the community at large. The candidate takes part in initiation degrees that explain the Knights of Columbus' four principles: Charity, Unity, Fraternity and Patriotism.

A candidate is considered a "Knight" after taking his First Degree, but he is encouraged to advance through the Second and Third Degrees and on to the Fourth Degree, whose members promote the virtue of patriotism by serving in honor guards, color corps and promoting respect for country and the flag.

Knights of Columbus have a proud heritage. The qualified Catholic man can share in this heritage and build for an even greater future by affiliating himself with this forceful, effective fraternal organization.

For more information about the Knights of Columbus go to:

<http://www.kofc.org/un/index.cfm>

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Pamphlet 189

## **The Knights of Columbus**

### **What the Knights are all about**

The Knights of Columbus is a lay Catholic family fraternal service organization. Membership in the Knights of Columbus is open to all practical Catholic men in communion with the Holy See, age eighteen and above. The term practical Catholic implies that a person accepts and abides by the Commandments of God and the precepts and tenets of the Catholic church.

On October 2, 1881, Father Michael J. McGivney, 29-year-old assistant pastor at St. Mary's Church in New Haven, Connecticut, brought together a group of laymen with whom he discussed his dream for a Catholic fraternal benefit society. It not only would assist widows and orphans of deceased members through its life insurance program, but also would boost members' sense of pride in their Catholic religion, then frequently challenged in the anti-Catholic climate of 19th-century America. Father McGivney and his associates met several more times over the next several months to continue planning, and the new organization -- the Knights of Columbus -- was formally launched in early February, 1882.

The officers of the new Catholic organization chose the name Knights of Columbus to honor Christopher Columbus, the Catholic discoverer of America. The word knights is also significant. We are ever mindful of the knightly qualities of spirituality and service to church that is embodied in the Knights of Columbus. The Order has evolved into a service organization with a strong family orientation.

By the end of 1897 the Order was thoroughly rooted in New England, along the upper Atlantic seaboard and into Canada. Within

the next eight years it branched out from Quebec to California, and from Florida to Washington.

The Knights of Columbus remains headquartered in New Haven, but is now present with nearly 13000 Councils in the United States, Canada, the Philippines, Mexico, and several other countries.

One of the primary missions of the Knights of Columbus is to support local charities. We also support other fund raising drives to aid local parishes and charities.

The Knights of Columbus promotes family values by providing numerous activities throughout the year that the entire family can participate in. Additionally, the organization provides an opportunity to ensure that a knight's family is provided for in the event of his death.

Here is short list of reasons you may want to join the Knights of Columbus:

- An opportunity to become part of the world's largest Catholic fraternal organization
- A great way to make a personal contribution to the Church and community through charity and fraternity
- Active participation in Council activities serves as a "school of leadership" which will enable you to develop qualities that enhance your strengths and abilities
- A sense of "belonging" in an organization that shares your religious beliefs and brings to together like-minded men joined in a common cause
- Concerns for your family and your retirement years can be addressed by the Orders optional, low-cost life insurance
- A sense of pride, knowing that the Knights of Columbus is second to none in support of our Holy Father, our Bishops and Priests, and our fellow man

### **Hierarchical Structure of the Knights of Columbus**

All members of the Knights of Columbus belong to a particular Council, and any group of at least thirty men may apply to found a new Council in their area. The highest elected officer of each Council is the Grand Knight, who, with the other Council Officers, is elected by the membership each year. The Grand Knight appoints various Program Directors and Chairmen to run the Council's activities for the year. All Council activities except Membership activities, fall into one of five Program Areas, each with a Director. The five Directors of Church Activities, Community Activities, Council Activities, Family Activities and Youth Activities report to a General Programs Director, who in turn reports to the Grand Knight.

Several Councils within the same geographic area are grouped together in a District under the guidance of the District Deputy and his assistant, the District Warden. There are currently about 129 Councils organized into 27 Districts in the state of Maryland.

The District Officers are appointed by the State Deputy, the highest elected officer of the State Council. State Officers and Program Chairmen are analogous to those at the Council level and coordinate the activities of all the Councils throughout the State. Each Spring, the State Deputy hosts a Convention to elect officers and conduct other State business. Every Grand Knight and one elected Delegate represent every Council in the state at this Convention.

The highest level within the Knights of Columbus is the Supreme Council, headed by the Supreme Knight. At the Supreme Convention each summer, State Deputies and Representatives from each State, Territory, or Country meet to conduct business concerning the international operation of the Order.

### **Ceremonials of the Order**

There are four "Degrees" of Knighthood within the Knights of Columbus. The initiation ceremonies into each of these Degrees (the ceremonies themselves are also called "Degrees") are the only facets of the Order which are not made known to non-members. Each of the Degrees is designed to exemplify one of the four Principals of the Order: Charity, Unity, Fraternity and Patriotism. The Degrees must be taken in order.

Every applicant must take the First, or Membership, Degree before he can be considered a Member of the Knights of Columbus. Once he has taken his First Degree, he becomes a member in good standing in the Order. To reach full Knighthood, members must also take the Second and Third Degrees, and all members are strongly encouraged to do so. Members must have taken the Third degree to be elected to Council offices or to enter into the Fourth Degree.

Once a man has been a member of the Knights of Columbus for a year and has taken his Third Degree, he is eligible to join a Fourth Degree Assembly. The Fourth Degree has its own structure separate from that of the Council. Fourth Degree Assemblies gain their membership from Third Degree members of several Councils within a larger geographic area. The most visible members of the Order are often the Fourth Degree Color Corps, with their colorful capes, chapeaux and sabers.

### **Love of Church and Country**

Charity, unity, fraternity and patriotism—these are the watchwords of the Knights of Columbus. And, since 1882, Knights of Columbus have backed up these words with actions.

Knights of Columbus have helped to build