

INVOCATION

January 2026



We Can Make
This Happen

Jarrett Helm's Address to Officers



Here are some excerpts from Jarrett Helm's talk to the Florida State KofC Officers in December 2025 at the Midyear Meeting in Orlando.

Jarrett has competed in Basketball, Power Lifting, Relay, Pentathlon, shot put, high jump and cycling, and has won many medals.

As his Grand Knight, I admire Jarrett for his courage in athletics, but most of all, for the GREAT

man that he has become.

It is special notice of recognition that the parents of Special Olympic Athletes as they are the "real heroes" because they believe in their children, get things started and do what they do out of sheer love.

~ SK Dr. Ernie Jackson, Grand Knight, Council 8086, Our Lady of Hope Port Orange

My name is Jarrett Helm. I am a Fourth Degree Knight. So was my grandfather. I am a member of **Counsel 8086, a Sir Knight of Assembly 2794**, where I am VERY proud to serve as a member of our Color Corps.

I get to meet new friends on my own teams, but I have made great friends ALL over the state! We stay in touch and it is like we just saw each other when we compete again the next year. We cheer each other on; we help each other up when we fall. We celebrate each other's wins and are there for each other when we may not win, but we

were BRAVE in our attempt!

I started in Special Olympics in Alabama in 2016. I was 27 years old and never knew I could be an Athlete. It is one of the most amazing journeys in my life, so far. I have not been invited to compete at Nationals yet – but I hope to someday.

Last year, I was on the field at the State Games as a member of the Color Corps, to help raise the flag over the Opening Ceremonies. I was not only an Olympic Gold medal athlete – I was a Knight that day!

When I am not competing, I am working part time helping a fellow Knight in my paid job,

working at a local condo as a Maintenance Helper. My wages help support my love of sports that I compete in – and my passion for FISHING!

I love to fish. I fish on the beach, on the river, and sometimes, I go out fishing in a boat and pull in some REALLY big fish!

A fellow Knight encouraged me to join the local fishing club and compete with him. It has been a blast! And just two months ago, the Club elected me to be the WEIGH MASTER for the Club!

And what about Knights of Columbus in my life? My faith has always been my center. The Knights of Columbus offers me an opportunity to be with men of faith, who are good men. They provide me with a strong faith-focused group of true friends, whose mission is to do good for others. And they do. Especially for Special Olympics.

I live the Motto: “Let me Win, but if I cannot win, let me be BRAVE in the attempt.”

I know we can make this happen, fellow Knights!



*Bryant Perszyk, Grand Knight of **Notre Council 10514 in Flagler Beach**, recently presented Diocese of St. Augustine Seminarian Anthony Scott a check to support his seminarian studies.*

The Knights of Columbus stand in solidarity with our priests and religious. Through the Refund Support Vocations Program (RSVP) program, council and parish families raise funds to support seminarians and men and women religious postulants and novices in their area.

For every \$500 given to an individual, the Supreme Council will refund the council or assembly \$100. The maximum refund a council or assembly can receive is \$400 per individual supported. Though financial support is vitally important, it is not the only aspect of the RSVP. Councils are also called to provide their “adopted” seminarian, postulant or novice with moral support and prayers for their success.

More information on the RSVP Program can be found at:

<https://www.kofc.org/en/what-we-do/faith-in-action-programs/faith/rsvp.html>

This Is Our Time

My brother Knights of Columbus, now that we have entered the month of January and stand at the midpoint of our fraternal year, we are presented with a powerful and grace-filled opportunity. Six months remain—six months not to slow down, not to look back, but to move forward with renewed purpose and deeper conviction. This moment is not accidental. It is providential. It is a call from Christ Himself inviting us to labor once more in His vineyard and to bring souls closer to Him.

We know, from our own lived experience, what the Knights of Columbus has done for us. We know how it has shaped our faith, strengthened our families, deepened our commitment to service, and anchored us more firmly in Christ and His Church. But the gift we have received was never meant to be kept to ourselves. It was meant to be shared. The Knights of Columbus is not merely an organization; it is a journey of faith. It is a brotherhood rooted in the Gospel, sustained by charity, unity, fraternity, and patriotism, and directed always toward Christ.

When a man becomes a Knight, the transformation does not stop with him. It radiates outward. It touches his wife, his children, and his entire family. It strengthens marriages. It forms fathers. It raises children who see faith lived, not just spoken. The impact of one man saying “yes” to Christ through the Knights of Columbus can echo through generations. That is why our mission matters so deeply. That is why our work is so urgent.

Our task is simple in its meaning, though

profound in its execution: to bring our brothers to Christ through the Knights of Columbus. We do this not through pressure, but through invitation; not through words alone, but through witness. We do it by living our faith openly in our parishes, by serving faithfully in our communities, and by loving one another as

Christ has loved us. There are hungry souls all around us—men searching for purpose, families longing for stability, hearts yearning for truth. Christ is the answer, and the Knights of Columbus is one of the instruments He uses to reach them.

I am asking for your help. Not because the task

is too great for one man, but because it is perfectly suited for many men united in Christ. Together, as we have done in the past, we can accomplish extraordinary things. Through our parishes, through our councils, and through our communities, we can extend an open hand and a welcoming heart. We can walk alongside those who are just beginning

their journey, remembering that once, not so long ago, someone did the same for us.

As we reflect on the first six months of this fraternal year, we should do so with gratitude and humility. Together, we have already accomplished so much. Our charitable givings have made a real difference in the lives of those in need. Our



*State Deputy
Michael P. Gizewski*



programs have strengthened parishes, supported clergy, aided families, and served the vulnerable. Our commitment to membership has brought new brothers into our ranks, each one a blessing to the Order and to the Church. None of this happened by accident. It happened because you said yes—yes to service, yes to faith, yes to fraternity.

You, my brother Knights, are the heartbeat of Florida when it comes to the Knights of Columbus. The Florida State Council is alive and strong because of your dedication, your sacrifice, and your willingness to act. You have proven time and again that great things can happen when faithful men come together with a shared mission. And great things have already happened. Lives have been changed. Families have been strengthened. Christ has been glorified.

But this is not the time to rest. This is the time to press forward. This is our time. This is your time. And most importantly, this is Jesus Christ's time.

Christ is calling us now—calling us to go out once more, to cast our nets again, trusting not in our own strength but in His grace. He is asking us to be bold in our faith, generous in our charity, and unwavering in our commitment. He is asking us to

see each man not as a number, but as a soul; not as a task, but as a brother yet to be welcomed home.

With your help, we can do this. With your faith, your leadership, and your willingness to invite, we can bring new brother Knights into the Order this month and help them begin the same journey we began many years ago. A journey that has shaped who we are as men, as husbands, as fathers, and as disciples of Christ.

Let us move forward together, grounded in prayer and united in purpose. Let us trust that the Holy Spirit will guide our efforts and multiply our work. And let us never forget that everything we do is for the greater glory of God.

This is our mission. This is our moment. And with Christ at the center, there is nothing we cannot accomplish together.



Knights of Columbus® Programs



FAITH

Our goal is to strengthen men and their families in the Catholic faith. Formation in our faith goes beyond mere facts or religious practice to an authentic connection with a loving God and his son Jesus Christ. Programs in this category are designed to...

[Learn more](#)



FAMILY

Father McGivney sought to strengthen the familial bond of father to mother and children to parents. His vision for family life was not only financial and material aid but also spiritual strength. The majority of our time is easily spent in secular circles unless...

[Learn more](#)



COMMUNITY

Knights are called to serve others. Our first principle is Charity – at home with our families and in our communities. When Knights of Columbus members come together as one through their council and parish, they accomplish great things.

[Learn more](#)



LIFE

"Catholics must be committed to the defense of life in all its stages and in every condition" (St. John Paul II, 1995). The urgency of the threat to a culture of life in our world cannot be misunderstood. The Knights of Columbus vigorously defends...

[Learn more](#)

Treasure and Protect the Gift of Life

By State Chaplain Very Rev. Bob Kantor

“The first and most fundamental of all human rights is the right to life, and when this right is denied all other rights are threatened ... A society will be judged on the basis of how it treats its weakest members; and among the most vulnerable are surely the unborn and the dying.”

~ St. John Paul II (May, 2000).

From the time Blessed Michael McGivney stood up for the dignity of Irish immigrants and provided a practical means of supporting them spiritually and temporally, the Knights of Columbus have been a champion of the cause of life. The Supreme Court’s 2022 Dobbs vs. Jackson Women’s Health Organization decision, effectively overturning the 1973 Roe v. Wade decision legalizing abortion across the United States was a victory for the cause of life. But the mission of safeguarding human life from conception to its natural conclusion has not gotten any easier in the few years since.

As Knights of Columbus, we are challenged to address society’s failings in respect of human life with prayer and action.

On the action front, many Florida councils have funded ultrasound machines for maternity clinics in our state, allowing mothers to see the wonder of life developing in their wombs. Many women have decided against abortion as a result, saving countless lives. Runs and walks for life organized by our councils call attention to and raise funds for life causes. Our involvement in Special Olympics celebrates the intrinsic worth and dignity of

every human being. The “Polar Plunge” to benefit Special Olympics has become a signature event in our state, even if our polar experience does not rival those to our north. You can join the team or donate here: 2026 Polar Plunge - Orlando: Knights of Columbus - Special Olympics Florida.

Prayer is another way to unite in support of life. I encourage our Knights to pray the Rosary, individually or as a family for the intention of life. I also invite you to participate with our brother Knights in the Novena for Life,

March for Life, Aid and Support after Pregnancy (ASAP) and other Faith in Action programs. Our nation’s Bishops encourage us to pray for life January 16-24. For the USCCB’s 9 Days for Life Novena available in English and Spanish, click here: [_](#).

Whether done individually, in your families, in a group of brother Knights, or in your parishes, these prayers and programs communicate to God and neighbor our commitment to life. May our Lord bless your families with good health and much happiness, and a growing faith that brings you closer to our God this New Year!

Vivat Jesus!



*State Chaplain
Very Rev. Bob Kantor*



A Celebration of Life

Our Lady of Hope Council 8086 of Port Orange raised more than \$17,000 at its 10th annual Celebration of Life fundraiser, held on Saturday, Jan. 10 at the Father Raymond O’Leary Parish Hall.

Representatives from the Orlando Diocese, Resources for Women and Coastal Choices were on hand for the event, which had a full dinner for the first time with the theme, “Sunday at Grandma’s.”

“We chose this theme to show that every child we save has the potential to someday host Sunday dinners at Grandma’s for their children and grandchildren,” said SK Vito Benedetto, Council 8086 Deputy Grand Knight and Life Director. “Sunday dinners with all my relatives were a big part of my life when I was growing up in Long Island.”

Gail Ausdenmoore Ezell, a recently retired pediatric nurse practitioner, was the guest speaker. Our Lady of Hope Pastor Rev. Matthew Mello gave the invocation and was joined by Parochial Vicar Rev. Paul Dau for the final blessing. Among the guests attending were Diocesan Culture of Life Director Leidy Rivas, joined by Deacon Johnny Rivas; Paola Sanchez and Jamie Williams of Resources for Women; Coastal Choices’ Melanie Gettel and Courtney McDowell; Grand Knights Ernie Jackson (8086) and Nick Stuart (joined by nine Knights from Father Downey Council 4794 of New Smyrna Beach); and District 20 Deputy John O’Malley.

The Celebration continues a legacy dating back to 2016, when former Life Director SK Paul Gloeckler led a “Coastal Laps for Life” event at Father Lopez Catholic High School in Daytona Beach. Future years saw Father Lopez host both a track walk and 5K cross-country race. In 2024,



the council also hosted a cocktail reception in addition to Coastal Laps for Life at the high school. After concentrating on the reception last year, the council expanded to a dinner banquet this year. Former event directors included the late Jim Waggoner and Terry Cassidy.

Over the years, the council’s efforts have placed 14 ultrasound machines to regional faith-based women’s centers. In recent years, they have also embraced the KofC ASAP (Aid and Support After Pregnancy) initiative, supporting pregnant women, mothers and their new children by serving pregnancy resource centers and maternity homes.



Supreme Chaplain's Challenge

By Supreme Chaplain Archbishop William E. Lori

“Even now the ax lies at the root of the trees. Therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.” (Gospel for Dec. 7, Mt 3:10)

In these reflections over the past year, we have meditated on the importance of our faith bearing fruit in good works. In a way, this Gospel passage, quoting St. John the Baptist, might seem out of place during Advent. But throughout this season, we reflect not only on Christ’s coming in the incarnation, but also his second coming in judgment at the end of the

world. Let us pray and work to ensure we lead truly faithful and fruitful lives as disciples of Jesus.

Challenge by Supreme Chaplain Archbishop William E. Lori:

This month, I challenge you to spend some time reflecting on the four last things — death, judgment, heaven and hell — to better prepare yourself for eternity.

Questions for Reflection:

Do I live with my sights set on heaven? Am I aware of the reality of hell? Do I live my life so as to be prepared for my death and judgment?

Council Supports Toys for Tots



otherwise might not have received a gift from Santa this Christmas. It was estimated that about 9,000 families were served, with next year's goal of 10,000 well in sight.

Brother Knight Devin Akins spearheaded this effort by recruiting 18 volunteers to either wrap or escort the wrapped gifts to the waiting vehicles. This was done in shifts over a two-day span. All those that took

Council 7621 of Tarpon Springs took part in the annual U.S. Marine Corps Toys for Tots campaign for the first time, helping make the Pinellas County drive a success.

According to the event officials, the annual drive netted approximately 30,000 toys and about 800 bicycles for distribution to children who

part remarked how well it was run and how nice it was to see the children's faces as bags of presents were loaded in their parents' autos. Maybe next year we can get even more Knights to participate in this worthy program.

Council Distributes Coats for Kids



Our Lady Queen of Peace Council 11680 happily worked overtime in 2025 to distribute 1,008 coats to needy West Pasco children in early December – a new yearly record for the New Port Richey council.

They successfully raised enough money to purchase 504 coats which was matched by KofC Supreme for a total of 1,008 coats. Working with Grand Knight Tim Couzins were several Knights including Pat Burroughs, Jim Campbell, Vincent DeRosa, Tony Mortella, Tony Nalli, and Bill Shustowski, who sized, repackaged, and delivered these Coats to the following locations: Kiwanis Polar Express (Pasco County Foster Children), Marlowe Elementary, Sun Ray Elementary, Chasco K-8, Pasco County Guardian ad litem, PACE Center for Girls and Metropolitan Ministries-Pasco Center.

Chasco K-8 serves approximately 1,800 students, “the majority of which are low income and do not have the means to purchase necessities

such as jackets,” stated Dana Fedorchak, School Social Worker. “With the generosity of the Knights of Columbus we were able to provide 275 jackets to students who otherwise would have been cold,” she added.

Leona Wells, Managing Director of Development and Pasco Services noted, “Metropolitan Ministries houses 48 homeless or at-risk families on their journey to self-sufficiency and having coats for these children, to see them through the cold days is such a blessing to us... and... is so appreciated by these families and the kids and we are so grateful to have been a part of this outreach,” she added.

Council 11680 began its Coats for Kids Program in Fall 2020, donating 432 coats, and followed up with 643 coats in 2021, 528 coats in 2022; 504 coats in 2023, 504 coats in 2024 and 1,008 coats in 2025, resulting in a six-year total of 3,624 coats.

A unique aspect to this Coats for Kids Program has been the knitting of stocking caps by ladies of Our Lady Queen of Peace Parish and a lady

INVOCATION

“snow-bird” from Michigan. Beginning in 2021, these ladies have knitted/donated over 2,800 hats. These hats in turn have been donated to needy children along with the Coats. Additional recipients of Coats during this six-year period included: Richey, Mittye P. Locke and Calusa Elementary Schools, and Gulf Middle School.

GK Couzins stated “Only through the support of our parishioners, local businesses and individuals have we been able to successfully conduct this program for six straight years.”

For more information about the Knights of Columbus Coats for Kids program, contact Bill Shustowski at Knights of Columbus Council 11680, 5340 High Street, New Port Richey, FL 34652.



Since Veterans at the Emory L. Bennett VA Home in Daytona Beach get no holidays, Knights from two local assemblies spent New Year's Day playing bingo with the Veterans. Members of **Assembly 2901 of Ormond Beach** and **Our Lady of Hope Assembly 2974 of Port Orange** spent the first Thursday of January at the VA home. Both District 18 and 20 Deputies were joined by

16 Knights and family for a chance to spend time with men and women who have served our country. The two Assemblies meet on the first Thursday of every month at 10 a.m. The next scheduled activity is the biannual Veterans Picnic for the residents and staff, hosted by Assembly 2794 on Monday, Jan. 12.

Assemblies Assist My Warrior's Place



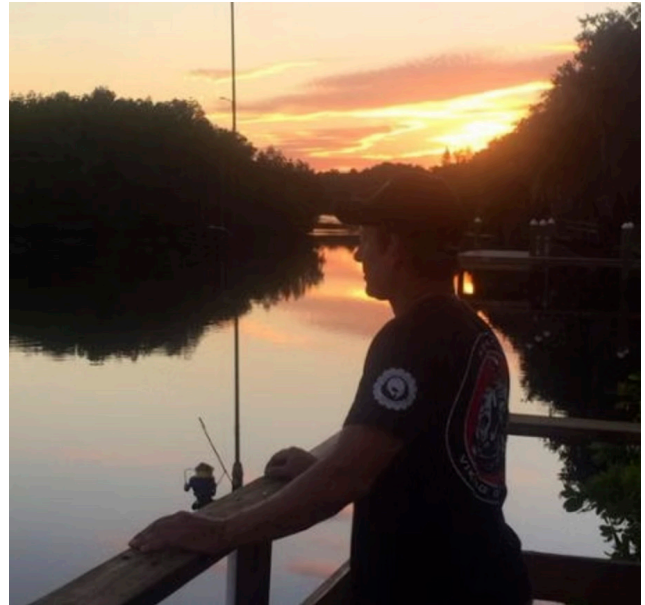
On November 1, 2025, The Knights of Columbus District 47 and 48 Assemblies comprised of **Bishop Charles B. McLaughlin Assembly 1850, Monsignor John F. Scully Assembly 3418, and St. Joachim Assembly 3881** – representing councils **6724 Nativity, 7210 St. Anne, 8095 St. Clement, 14084 St. Stephen, and 15675 Resurrection** – united to hold a fundraising social benefiting My Warrior's Place at Salty Shamrock in Apollo Beach.

There were 257 Knights, Vets, Friends and their Families who attended the event. As a result, the Knights raised over \$4,200 in support of My Warrior Place. Outstanding entertainment was provided by Sir Knight Dave Beaumont and the Dave Beaumont Bluegrass Band, Smack and Southern Creed.

My Warrior's Place was founded by Kelly Kowall, whose son Corey, like so many others, gave his life for our continued freedom.

My Warrior's Place is a Retreat Center for our Veterans, Military Service Members, Law Enforcement Officers, Fire Fighters, Gold Star, Blue Star, and Silver Star Families. This property provides a safe haven where healing can begin. My Warrior's Place offers several amazing programs for those who have put their life on the line for our safety and well being, endured the death of a Fallen Warrior, and/or experienced the horrors of war. My Warrior's Place offers a relaxed tropical setting nestled on the Little Manatee River in Ruskin.

MWP's Mission is to be the most desired refuge for all Veterans, Military Service Members, Law Enforcement Officers, Fire Fighters, Blue Star,



Silver Star & Gold Star Families. In the future, the plan is to have other “My Warrior’s Place” facilities and programs throughout the United States wherever there is a Military Base and a large population of Veterans.

The success of this effort is an example of Knights working together, and holding true to

the Knights of Columbus founding principles of Charity, Unity, Fraternity, and Patriotism.

Special Thanks to Sir Knights Jason O’Neill and Mark Lovejoy and Brother Knight James MacCarthy for spearheading this worthy fundraiser.



Catholic Church of the **Epiphany Council 12569** located in Port Orange recently held its seventh annual Truck, Jeep, and Car Show. There were 70 entries this year, the best turnout in recent years. The Council’s Ladies Auxiliary held a concurrent Indoor yard sale. The Knights also served breakfast and lunch; gave out door prizes; and held a 50/50 raffle. This year’s show netted more than \$8,000, benefiting the Knight’s Charities and Operations throughout the year.

SK Robert Guillery to be Honored

Florida Fourth Degree District Master Robert Urrutia announced that the late Robert Guillery will be the Honoree at the next Fourth Degree Exemplification for the Florida District of the De Soto Province, that will be held in Tampa on Saturday, Jan. 31. The ceremony will be held at St. Mark the Evangelist Church, 9724 Cross Creek Blvd., Tampa.

Guillery was the Florida State Council Life Director and a Former Region 5 Administrator and Former District Deputy. Guillery Cape Coral resident and served with the United States Air Force in Vietnam. He passed away on Dec. 28.

Registration for the Tampa Exemplification will open at 9 a.m., followed by the ceremony at 11 a.m. in the church. The Exemplification banquet will be held at 2 p.m. in the parish hall, followed by Vigil Mass at 4 p.m.

The candidate fee is \$90, including banquet, and the fee for a Priest is \$50. The banquet fee for family, friends and observers is \$50. The ladies' tea will be \$10.

Assemblies are required to send in a downloaded copy of the registration form (please do not write on the original), degree certificate, signed dress code letter, signed Form 4 (all four copies for each candidate), and check payable to the Master, Rob Urrutia. Forms are available on the Florida State website.

Assembly checks are to be made out to: Robert S. Urrutia, Master, and sent to Robert S. Urrutia, Master, 339 Whisper Ridge Loop, Davenport, FL 33897.



The deadline is Friday, January 16.

Assemblies and Councils are invited to support their Candidates by purchasing an ad in the Exemplification program. The cost of a full-page ad is only \$250, and will include your Assembly or Council name, number, current officers, and your message. We also have pre-made pages for your convenience. Half-page ads cost \$150. The deadline is Wednesday, January 14.



Master Robert Urrutia announced that the Florida District of the Degree De Soto Province will close the 125th anniversary year celebration of the KofC Fourth Degree with a unique outdoor Exemplification at the **National Shrine of Our Lady of La Leche in St. Augustine.**

The ceremony will take place at dusk on Saturday, Feb. 28, at the giant outdoor cross at Mission Nombre De Dios Mission, which was originally built in 1609.

The tentative schedule calls for registration beginning at 2 p.m., followed by a walking rosary at 3 p.m., Mass at 4 p.m. and the Degree Ceremony at 5:30 p.m.

Details will be posted shortly on www.floridakofc.org.

A Light in the Darkness

District Deputy 8 Michael Flowers serves as Director of Music for St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Live Oak, Florida. This year, he wanted to bring together musicians from different denominations to raise money for various causes over the Advent Season.

For three Advent Sundays, the DD performed on violin, piano and voice and was joined by a small group of musicians to help his community prepare their hearts for the birth of the Savior.

On the only Sunday without a concert, they took a trolley with a group of parishioners from the Catholic Church, Episcopal Church, Methodist Church, Baptist Church and Seventh-Day Adventist church to sing carols to residents at three different nursing homes.

"The theme for this Advent series was a light in the darkness from the Gospel of John," the DD Flowers explained. "We wanted to use music to show how Christ can shine His light into any darkness. Our community is still struggling to recover from the hurricanes that devastated this area over a year ago. By coming together as musicians across denominations, we have created a family of believers that can be lamps to the light of Christ and we can dispel many of the misconceptions that other believers have about our faith as Catholics."

With over \$5,000 raised for food distribution to the needy in their community, District Deputy Flowers and his friends feel that they succeeded in their mission of bringing light.

As he said, "knowing that there is a family that doesn't have to wonder if they can afford food tonight and that they were fed through someone's generosity as a result of our music-that is Christmas gift that money cannot buy. I am proud to be a member of the newly formed Light String Quartet and to be joined by so many other talented musicians that help promote Christ's love to those around them. It is not about denomination. It is about remembering the real reason for Christmas-the baby, Savior King, born over two thousand

years ago, who came to save each and every one of us. Music is a way towards that healing.

"I pray that in 2026 we will see the light shine ever more," Flowers continued. "That we, as Catholics, as Knights, will worry less about ourselves and a little more about our neighbors-regardless of color, creed or status-that is when the light shines brightest. I pray that just as 2025 was the year of hope, 2026 may be a year of light, where we, as Knights, stand in the breach and bring that light to the darkest corners of our cities, our communities our nation and our world. That is when we live up to the high ideal of our order. For now, I will keep making music, in the hope that it will continue to bring some of that light to the heart that needs it in that moment. That is how I can live my calling, as a Knight of Columbus. May His light touch all our hearts today and in the year to come."



How JFK Helped Fulfill Michael McGivney's Vision



Past Supreme Knight Carl Anderson speaks to delegates during the second business session of the 143rd Supreme Convention. (Photo by Matthew Barrick/KofC Supreme Facebook page)

Supreme Knight Emeritus Carl Anderson gave an inspirational address at the 143rd KofC Supreme Convention in Washington, D.C. The KofC Corporate Communications office

provided a link to Mr. Anderson's speech: <https://vimeo.com/reviews/586796b7-5588-4d8b-baad-3d8f0b9cfe65/videos/1136162648>

In 2020, my last year as serving you as Supreme Knight, the Supreme Convention was scheduled to convene here in Washington, D.C. But the COVID pandemic necessitated that we instead conduct our first-ever electronic convention.

So now, it is good to be back. This year marks several historic anniversaries, but I think

Washington DC is an ideal venue to reflect upon the election that happened 65 years ago of America's first Catholic President, our brother Knight John F. Kennedy

As a state officer of the District of Columbia Jurisdiction, I had the privilege for many years of participating in the annual Columbus Day ceremony at Union Station, in front of the National

Columbus Fountain. And each year, we recalled the remarks of President William Howard Taft at the monument's dedication in 1912.

On that occasion, President Taft said that although Columbus was a man with human defects, nonetheless, because of his never-failing determination, the supreme merit was his, to do first, that which until he did it, presented unknown terrors.

Well, President Taft's words about Columbus, I think, could apply very well to John F. Kennedy in 1960.

Kennedy was the first to successfully overcome the opposition to a Catholic becoming president, and because he succeeded, others were able to follow.

Now what were the unknown terrors that confronted Jack Kennedy?

You might say, they were the accumulated product of 300 years of anti-Catholic prejudice that existed from the very beginning of English-speaking America.

Perhaps, a few examples are in order.

A several hours drive north of where we meet today, the first Catholics landed in Maryland in 1634. They should have arrived a year earlier, but in 1633, as their ships – the Ark and the Dove – set sail, but they were called back to London to prove to the King's Privy Council that all the Catholics who were on board those ships had sworn the Oath of Allegiance to the King, and that they had also sworn a second oath, one denying obedience to the temporal authority of the Pope. Now when those Catholics had arrived in British America, they were not permitted to settle in the Colony of Virginia, because the Protestants controlling that colony since 1607 had added an additional requirement: all residents not only had to take those two previous oaths, but they also had to demonstrate that they had taken communion in the Anglican church.

In the Northeast, the Puritans had settled the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1630, and then they went on to found the New Haven Colony in 1638. Now, Americans are all familiar with the Puritans. But few American understand why they were called "Puritans." It was because they wanted to

purify the Church of England from the remnants of Catholicism in its theology, in its liturgy, or in its practices.

Following the signing of the Declaration of Independence, the Continental Congress sent Benjamin Franklin and the Catholic signer Charles Carroll to Quebec, to try and convince the French Canadians to join the American cause for independence. The Canadians refused, saying under the terms of the 1763 Treaty of Paris that ended the French and Indian War, Catholics had more religious freedom in Canada than they did in the 13 American colonies. The English-speaking colonies in America were established at a time when anti-Catholicism was at a high point – amazingly, at its highest point – in England. And the attitude in England at the time was to be English was to be Protestant. And that attitude carried over into most areas of the new United States, and remained that way throughout the 19th century, as waves of Catholic immigrants arrived on the East Coast.

The most symbolic example of that can be seen right here today in Washington D.C. If you visit the Washington Monument while you are here on a sunny day, you will see that the marble on the structure changes color. The tour guide will tell you this happened because during construction of the monument, construction was stopped, and by the time it was resumed, the marble from the original quarry had been depleted, and different marble had to be found – therefore, the different color. You might ask, why did the construction stop? Well, early in 1854, as the monument was under construction, Pope Pius IX sent a gift to the people of the United States. It was a stone from Rome's 2,000-year-old Temple of Concord. It was a gesture of peace, good will and a recognition that the American republic had its root stretching back to the republic of ancient Rome. But the Pope's gift was unwelcome in certain quarters. A rumor began that the stone was actually a signal. The day that the stone was to be placed at the top of the Washington Monument, Catholics throughout the country would rise up and seize control of the government. So one night, the stone was stolen, broken into pieces, and thrown into the

Potomac River. In the controversy that followed, construction was stopped and did not begin again until 1876.

Now this was the America into which Michael McGivney was born. It was the world in which he knew needed an organization such as the Knights of Columbus.

Now, if we fast-forward to 1960, the situation had improved, but in some places, not by very much. Listen to this excerpt from a letter written by a popular Protestant evangelist to more than two million of his followers just weeks before the election. He warned them this:

“This year’s presidential campaign would be the most important in American history. The issues are deep. In fact, the issues are almost life and death for American freedom. We Christians must work and pray as never before in this election, or the future course of America could be dangerously altered, and the free preaching of the gospel could be in danger.”

He was not speaking about the threat of the Soviet Union during the Cold War. He was speaking about the threat of electing a Catholic president of the United States.

In response, Kennedy said that if the election was “decided on the basis that forty million American lost their chance of being president on the day that they were baptized, then it would be the whole nation that will be the loser.”

Kennedy’s election turned the corner for Catholics in America. Many of us here today are among those forty million that Kennedy spoke of at the time, whose rights Kennedy defended.

So as we prepare to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence next July, we need to ask ourselves, what difference has this legacy made for our nation, and what are our responsibilities as Catholics, as inheritors of this legacy. I would suggest to you that President Kennedy himself provided an answer to both questions in his inaugural address. Most Americans remember his speech for his stirring challenge: “Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country.” Many of those words from his inaugural address are engraved in granite at his gravesite in Arlington National

Cemetery. In 2010, just before the opening of our 128th Supreme Convention here in Washington, D.C., the Supreme Directors visited his gravesite, and there we saw that many of the words from his speech had become illegible due to the effects of weather. So, we decided to make possible the restoration of those engravings in time for the 50th anniversary of his inauguration.

What President Kennedy said as he took the oath of office, recognized two principles upon which should rest the twin pillars of our patriotic efforts as Knights of Columbus. The first pillar is reflected in the President’s affirmation of the principle upon which rests the Declaration of Independence, which is the bedrock of America’s claim to liberty. The belief, Kennedy said, that the rights of man come not from the generosity of the state, but from the hand of God. That belief has been challenged throughout much of the 20th century. Kennedy said that it was still at issue around the globe, and sadly, that remains true today. This is why the Knights of Columbus worked so diligently to have the words “Under God” added to the Pledge of Allegiance, to reaffirm that no government is absolute, and that there are inalienable rights every government must respect.

Then Kennedy identified the second pillar when he said at the conclusion of his speech, “Here on earth, God’s work must truly be our own.”

And so we should ask, “What is our share in that work as Knights of Columbus?”

In the City of God, St. Augustine wrote that peace depends upon what he called the “tranquility of order.” In other words, a rightly ordered political community, a society at peace with itself, depends upon justice and love. Only when justice and love are present and ordered properly, St. Augustine said, can we hope to achieve the well being of all people in society.

And this is why the gift of Blessed Michael McGivney is so timely. To bring the Christian witness of justice and love to every parish, and every community in our countries, to bring that by the determined effort of a brotherhood of Catholic laymen.

Our principles of Charity, Unity and Fraternity are the foundation of our life as brother Knights.

And Catholic brotherhood for us is not just a slogan, it is the way we answer Our Lord's call to love our neighbor. And where Charity and Unity abound, Fraternity must follow. And not only toward our brother Knights, but to all, to everyone.

There are those today who say that our Catholic principles are a narrow, sectarian creed. Maybe fine for private devotion, but unworthy of public consideration. But if we allow that argument to win, then as Kennedy said, it will be the whole nation that will be the loser.

We have come too far as Catholics and as Knights of Columbus to allow that to happen. So what we celebrate this year is not only the 65th

anniversary of the election of the first Catholic as president; we celebrate the right of Catholics to full participation in our nation's public life.

Now it is up to us to show that this achievement was not in vain. That Catholics have an important and unique contribution to make, one that each of our nations needs today.

And so my brother Knights, let us reaffirm our principles of Charity, Unity, Fraternity and Patriotism, so that it may always be said of the Knights of Columbus, God's work is truly their own.

Vivat Jesus!

ENJOY AN EVENING OF APPETIZERS, RAFFLES & CASINO TABLES WHILE RAISING FUNDS FOR CATHOLIC SCHOOLS!

Dress to Impress

Viva las Vegas!

THE KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS PRESENT
CASINO NIGHT FUNDRAISER
TO BENEFIT CATHOLIC SCHOOLS
IN VOLUSIA COUNTY

PURCHASE TICKETS ONLINE RIGHT HERE!

FRIDAY, APRIL 10TH 6:30-9:30
OUR LADY OF HOPE PARISH CENTER

\$55 CASINO NIGHT TICKET INCLUDES
\$200 "GAMBLING MONEY"
HORS D'OEUVRES AND DRINKS

*Presented by Council 8086 on behalf of the Knights of Columbus Councils
in the Orlando Diocese Eastern Deanery*



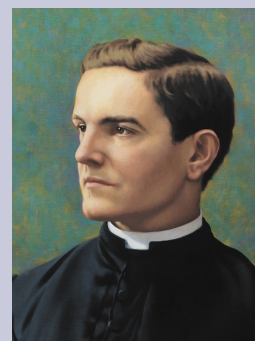
Prayer for the Canonization of Blessed Michael J. McGivney

God, our Father, protector of the poor and defender of the widow and orphan, you called your priest, Blessed Michael J. McGivney, to be an apostle of Christian family life and to lead the young to the generous service of their neighbor.

Through the example of His life and virtue may we follow your Son, Jesus Christ, more closely, fulfilling His commandment of charity and building up His Body which is the Church.

Let the inspiration of your servant prompt us to greater confidence in your love so that we may continue His work of caring for the needy and the outcast. We humbly ask that you glorify your venerable servant Blessed Michael J. McGivney on earth according to the design of your holy will.

Through His intercession, grant the favor I now present (here make your request).



Is Your Personal Information Accurate?

Every member of the Knights of Columbus in the Florida jurisdiction is listed on the Florida KofC website. Financial Secretaries update council lists on the Supreme and State websites at least quarterly. To ensure your information is correct, please review the brief YouTube video link below to confirm that your personal information and your preferred contact information is correct.

The 5-minute video describes how to log on or gain initial access, and reviews how to correct or confirm your personal information.

Please note that if you are a State, Assembly or Council officer, chairman or director, you must remain subscribed to the State Council's email list. Failure to do so will result in you missing important communications concerning your position and may result in your forfeiture of that position.

Follow the instructions on the video <https://youtu.be/IVS3XkgiUs> and while you are on the site, check out the other good news and information is available to you with just a click or two.

KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS FLORIDA STATE COUNCIL MISSION STATEMENT

Evangelize and proclaim our faith, protect families, and perform works of charity.

Through our witness and deeds attract Catholic men to our Order.

Build the Domestic Church through service, support our parishes, clergy, and communities.

Incorporate principled fiscal responsibility for charitable giving.

The Florida State Logo



Explanation of the Florida State Council Pin 2025-2027

“OPEN WIDE THE DOORS FOR CHRIST” is a powerful and fitting exhortation for the Knights of Columbus in this Jubilee Year. As men of faith, the Knights are called to welcome Christ into every aspect of their lives—into their homes, their parishes, and their communities. By echoing the words of St. John Paul II, we are reminded to live boldly and faithfully, opening our hearts to Christ’s truth, mercy, and love. Worn as a pin, it becomes a visible sign of commitment to evangelization, service, and the defense of life; encouraging all to embrace and share the Gospel in this special year of grace.

“JESUS IN MARY’S WOMB” is a profound symbol of the sacredness of life from its very inception. His presence as a child, unborn, reflects the divine value of every human life. The Knights of Columbus draws strength and inspiration from this mystery, standing firmly for the right to life from conception to natural death. As Mary carried the Savior of the world in her womb, so too must society recognize and protect the dignity of every human being at all stages of life.

We are a fraternity of men who love our God, love our Family, and love our country. We protect the children, we salute our veterans, and we pray to our patron Blessed Michael McGivney. We do all unashamed and with pride because we understand that which is not against us is with us. For we are the Knights of Columbus protectors of the widows and orphans, and we wear it proudly so **OPEN WIDE THE DOORS FOR CHRIST and he shall enter.**

Florida State Council Officers

STATE DEPUTY

Michael Gizewski
mpgizewski@gmail.com

STATE CHAPLAIN

Most Rev. Robert Kantor
frbob@stagnenaples.org

STATE SECRETARY

Edward Sleyzak
esleyzak@outlook.com

STATE TREASURER

Richard E. Dahn Jr.
rdahn32@gmail.com

STATE ADVOCATE

Kris Elliott
kris.elliott@1980.usna.com

STATE WARDEN

Richard Gallant
floridaknightsofcolumbus@gmail.com

IMMEDIATE PAST STATE DEPUTY

Richard Hughes
rhughes14084@gmail.com

STATE EXECUTIVE ADMINISTRATOR

Carlos Ortiz
carlos.ortiz.EA@outlook.com

STATE MEMBERSHIP DIRECTOR

Danny McIntyre
danmci@aol.com

STATE PROGRAM DIRECTOR

Steve J. Zajac
sjzajac@embarqmail.com

STATE CHARITIES DIRECTOR

Vince Cipriano
vinnie1248@outlook.com

STATE MARKETING DIRECTOR

Weldon "2E" Watkins
kofctuewowiii@gmail.com

PUBLIC RELATIONS DIRECTOR

Marc Anderson
marcstx19@gmail.com

INVOCATION

Publisher- John O'Malley *jomalley1@cfl.com*

Scott Huetteman Technical & Layout Editor *fl.hutts@gmail.com*

Harry Rother Photographer Website: www.kofcfoto.website

Regional PR Coordinators

Region 1 Bob Gualtieri *rag130@outlook.com*

Region 2 (Open)

Region 3 John O'Malley *jomalley1@cfl.rr.com*

Region 4 (Open)

Region 5 (Open)

Region 6 Armando Minutoli *alminutoli46@gmail.com*

Region 7 (Open)

Region 8 (Open)

Florida State Council Social Media

Your State Council is now on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and You Tube. We need all Brother Knights to participate and Let Your Light Shine.

- Go to Facebook and "LIKE" the page
- Go to X (Twitter) and Instagram and "follow"
- #LetYourLightShine @KofcFlorida



Knightline

KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS IN SERVICE TO ONE, IN SERVICE TO ALL

Check out the current issue of **Knightline**, a monthly resource for local KofC leaders. It is designed to help council officers plan events and activities, meet quarterly goals for the fraternal year and learn about Orderwide news. [CLICK HERE](#) to download the issue.

COLUMBIA

[CLICK HERE](#) to view the online version of **COLUMBIA** Magazine, a publication for the Knights of Columbus.



DISCOVER
— THE —
Catholic
DIFFERENCE