

INVOCATION

October 2026



**Knights At Work In
Guatemala**

Knights At Work In Guatemala

By John O'Toole, Former Master, Florida District Fourth Degree



The annual mission of Florida Knights of Columbus to Guatemala is both physically and mentally challenging for all the men who make the trip. But it is an opportunity to see our faith in action. Each man gets to share his time, his talent, and his treasure – putting into practice the principles of our Order, Charity, Unity and Fraternity.

Every year, Monsignor Thomas Skindeleski and the Knights visit the village of Biatopo Protegido Choson Machacas. It is a very poor village, but

over time they have built a chapel. Every year the village has improved the chapel, and now it has a ceramic floor, replacing the original clay floor. Unfortunately, it's also the only time that a priest visits the village.

We get to help the people, to help them adapt and escape the poverty into which they were born. We also get to share our faith with our Mayan brothers and sisters.

On July 18 this year, 14 Brother Knights gathered early in the morning at the Emmanuel



Catholic Church in Delray Beach. These men had travelled from all corners of Florida for a nine-day mission to Father Tom Moran Education Center in Guatemala. It would be the beginning of a long weekend. Florida State Deputy Michael Gizewski (a veteran of this trip) met us in the parking lot to drive us to the Jet Blue Terminal at Fort Lauderdale Airport.

After going through security and boarding the plane, we flew to Guatemala City, carrying in our luggage, boxes of screws, sheets of sandpaper, paint brushes and rollers, as well as small tools.

Early the next morning we boarded a double-decker bus for a six-hour ride to Puerto Barrios on the Gulf of Honduras. In Puerto Barrios, we transferred by ancient taxis to an open boat for their trip across the open water to the town of Livingston, at the mouth of the Rio Dulce. It is here at the Hotel Gil Resort that we would sleep at night during our stay in Livingston.

It is at the Hotel Gil that the Knights meet we first challenge. There are 62 stairs going straight up from the dock, where we landed, to the lobby. We carry our luggage with its assortment of paint rollers, brushes, and sand paper. It is in their assigned rooms that we meet our second challenge, the medieval plumbing and intermittent electricity.

In the morning, we begin our 45-60 minute ride up the Rio Dulce in an open boat. We travel up the

river, while saying the rosary, meditating on our journey and appreciating the spectacular views that the scenery provides.

Our destination, the Father Thomas Moran Education Center. The school was founded in the 1990s by Steven Dudenhofer, a member of the Knights of Columbus. The school is run by the Mayans themselves under the Asociacion Ak' Tenamit, the Guatemalan Tomorrow Fund, with Steve as an advisor and Director. The school has almost a thousand students, ages thirteen to eighteen, grades seven through twelve.

The school is located in Biatopo Protegido Choson Machacas, on the Rio Dulce River. This is an undeveloped region of Guatemala located on the Gulf of Honduras and the Caribbean Sea. The region does not have modern improvements, such as roads, electricity, or running water. It is an area inhabited by the Mayan people, whose first language is Quiche', or K'iche, a dialect of the Mayan language the second most spoken language in Guatemala. Instruction at the school is usually given in both Quiche' and Spanish.

The only tuition students pay, once admitted to the school, is firewood, to cook the daily meals the students receive. Mayans from across Guatemala travel to the school and stay in the dormitories, built with the help of the Knights of Columbus. Local students commute daily by open boats and dugouts. The only means of travel is by the river.



The curriculum for the students is structured to provide the students with the skills necessary to provide a living for themselves and their families. In the upper grades students are placed in internships across Guatemala to give them practical experience in their chosen professions.

All of the Knights travelling from Florida possess various skills and knowledge, such as in carpentry, electrical, and plumbing. The crew is broken down into teams and students are assigned to work with each Knight. Each Knight is expected to lead a student team, and to pass on the knowledge and skills to the young apprentices.

This year's projects included building a new computer laboratory in the boys' dormitory, refinishing picnic tables, and installing a new circuit in the solar system for the new outdoor showers to be built for the boys' dormitory.

Work quickly begins, and soon the tools appear that had been brought from Florida on previous trips. Plans are made, and design follows the materials that are available. Everything is imported to Guatemala, the treated lumber, screws, wire, conduit, etc. Everything is transported up the river, carried by hand up the steep hill from the river to the work site. The boys and girls in the work crews make the work look easy.

The school depends upon outside aid for the support of the school. The school receives assistance from the Guatemalan government, but this does not cover all the costs of running the school. The school depends upon donations from civic and fraternal groups in the United States such

as the Rotary and the Knights of Columbus. There are also a group of Catholic Churches in Florida who help to provide the food necessary to feed the students 365 days a year.

The computers installed in the new computer lab are used and were donated by an American corporation. The electricity comes from a gas-powered generator. And the students are connected to the internet!

On Wednesday, work is finished early, because today the school will be having Mass in the cafeteria. This does not happen often. There are very few priests in this region. Today, Monsignor Tom will be saying Mass. The entire school is present, as well as their choir and the school's xylophone.

The last day at the school is a short day. It is a time when all the projects need to be completed, because we will not be returning for a year. It is also special because it is the day the Knights play soccer with the students. Not all the Knights, but the younger Knights, especially the four teenagers who have come with their fathers, along with a dozen soccer balls. The entire school comes out for the game.

We are only at the school until 3 p.m. At that time, the Knights leave the school and travel further up the Rio Dulce to one of the native villages on the river. It is here that Monsignor Tom will say Mass for the village, continuing a tradition for the Knights and Monsignor Tom. Unfortunately, it's usually their only Mass of the year.

Another Opportunity to Serve

My Worthy Brothers, as we enter the month of October, we have officially completed the first quarter of our fraternal year.

It is hard to believe how quickly these first few months have passed, but as I look back on everything that has taken place throughout the great state of Florida, one thing continues to stand out to me above everything else: Jesus Christ is alive and well within the Florida State Council of the Knights of Columbus.

Everywhere I go as your State Deputy, I have the privilege of meeting Knights who are putting their faith into action, and time and time again, I see the face of Jesus in my brother Knights. I see Him in the men who are lifting up the hungry and helping to provide for those who are struggling. I see Him in the Knights who reach out to the poor and those who are facing difficult times, and I see Him in the men who make sure that people with disabilities know that they are not forgotten, that they are valued, and that they are loved.

I see Jesus in the Knight who quietly gives of his time, his talent, and his treasure without ever asking for recognition. I see Him in the brother who gives up an evening with his family to serve his parish or his community, and I see Him in the men who visit the sick, comfort those who are hurting, support our veterans, protect the unborn, assist our Special Olympics athletes, and stand beside families who simply need someone to help them through a difficult moment in their lives.

These acts of charity may sometimes seem small to the person performing them, but to the person receiving them, they can mean everything. When we reach out to someone who is hurting, we are not simply performing another charitable act; we are showing that person the love of Christ through our own hands and our own hearts.

I am also incredibly proud of the way our Knights continue to stand beside our priests, religious, and seminarians. There are times when the needs of our religious brothers and sisters are not always visible to the rest of the world. Sometimes they

need financial assistance, sometimes they need encouragement, and sometimes they simply need to know that their brother Knights are standing beside them. Whatever the need may be, our Knights are there. We may not always be able to solve every problem, but we can always be present, we can always pray, and we can always remind them that they are part of our Knights of Columbus family. That spirit of brotherhood is one of the greatest gifts we can give to one another.

As we now move from the first quarter into the second quarter of our fraternal year, I want us to remember that the completion of one quarter does not mean that our work is finished. It simply means that another opportunity has begun. We should take a moment to thank God for all that He has allowed us to accomplish during these first three months, but we should also look forward with renewed energy and ask ourselves what more we can do for our Church, our families, our communities, and for those who need us most. There are still many people who need a helping hand, many families who need encouragement, many parishes that need our support, and many men who are searching for something meaningful in their lives and may simply be waiting for someone to invite them to become a Knight.

That is why our mission must always remain greater than numbers. Membership is important because every new Knight gives us another man who can serve his family, his parish, his community, and his Church, but our ultimate mission is to bring souls to Christ. When we invite a man to become a Knight, we are not simply asking him to join another organization. We are inviting him into a brotherhood where his faith can grow, where his family can be strengthened,



*State Deputy
Michael P. Gizewski*

and where he can discover the tremendous joy that comes from serving others. We must never lose sight of that purpose, because it is what makes the Knights of Columbus different. We are Catholic men who have chosen to live our faith, not simply by what we say, but by what we do.

As we continue through this second quarter, we also find ourselves moving closer to one of the most beautiful and sacred times of the year, the celebration of the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Before we know it, our churches, homes, and communities will begin to fill with Christmas decorations, lights, music, and celebrations. It is easy during this busy season to become focused on everything that comes with Christmas, but as Knights of Columbus, we must always remember the reason for the celebration. Christmas is about the greatest gift God has ever given to mankind. It is about the birth of Jesus Christ, who came into this world in a humble manger because God loved us so much that He sent His only Son to bring us salvation.

The same Jesus whose birth we celebrate at Christmas is the Jesus we encounter every day in our work as Knights. He is present when we feed the hungry, when we help a family that is struggling, when we comfort someone who is grieving, when we visit someone who is sick, and when we stand beside someone who feels that he has nowhere else to turn. He is present when we welcome a new Knight into our council, when we support our priests and religious, and when we put our arms around a brother who is going through a difficult time and remind him that he is not alone. When we live our lives in this way, we are giving people something far more valuable than anything that can be purchased in a store. We are giving them hope, friendship, compassion, and most importantly, we are giving them an example of the love of Jesus Christ.

My brothers, as we continue into the second quarter and begin our journey toward Christmas, I ask each of you to look for opportunities to make a difference in someone's life. Perhaps it will be through a charitable program, perhaps it will be through your parish, perhaps it will be through your council, or perhaps it will simply be by

taking the time to sit with someone who needs a friend. We never know what someone else may be carrying in his heart, and sometimes the smallest act of kindness can become the greatest blessing in another person's life. Let us continue to be men who recognize those opportunities and have the courage to respond.

I am deeply proud to serve as your State Deputy, and I am grateful for the opportunity to travel throughout Florida and witness firsthand the incredible work being done by our Knights and their families. Everywhere I go, I see men who are not simply wearing the emblem of the Knights of Columbus, but who are living the principles represented by that emblem through their faith, their charity, their unity, their fraternity, and their service to others. This is the Knights of Columbus that I know, and this is the Knights of Columbus that I want the people of Florida to see.

We have accomplished much during these first three months, but there is still so much more that God is calling us to do. As we move forward together, let us keep Christ at the center of everything we do and continue to open wide the doors for Christ. Let us continue to bring souls to Christ, to strengthen our families, to support our priests and our Church, and to be there for those who need us. If we continue to pray together, work together, and serve together, I believe we will continue to make a lasting difference throughout the state of Florida.

As we approach the Christmas season, let us also remember that the greatest gift we can give is not something that can be placed under a Christmas tree. The greatest gift we can give is the gift of ourselves through our faith, our prayers, our friendship, and our willingness to serve. May every Knight and every family in Florida experience the peace and joy of Christ during this holy season, and may our actions throughout these coming months help others to experience that same love.

May God continue to bless every Knight and every family throughout the Florida State Council. May He bless our priests, our religious, and all those who serve our Church. May He protect our military, our first responders, and all those who sacrifice for others. Most importantly, may He

continue to guide us as Knights of Columbus so that everything we do brings honor and glory to His name.

My brothers, the first quarter has given us much for which to be thankful, and the second quarter now gives us another opportunity to serve. As we continue our journey toward the celebration of the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, let us move forward together with faith in our hearts, love for our brothers, and a renewed commitment to serve

those who need us most. Let us remember that wherever we go, whatever we do, and whoever we encounter, we have an opportunity to let someone see the face of Jesus through the way we live our lives.

May God bless you, your families, the Knights of Columbus, and the great state of Florida, and may God bless America.

Council Hosts Sacred Heart Prayer Service

Knights of Columbus Council 8104 successfully hosted the Sacred Heart Prayer Service on Thursday, September 17, at Our Lady of the Rosary Catholic Church in Land O Lakes.

Held as part of the Knights of Columbus Pilgrim Icon Program, the evening gathered Knights, parishioners and members of the parish community for prayer centered on Christ's love and mercy.

The Sacred Heart icon stood prominently near the sanctuary as the Blessed Sacrament was exposed on the altar. Scripture, guided reflection, silence and Eucharistic Adoration invited those present to step away from daily distractions and spend time before Jesus in a setting marked by reverence and solemnity.

The service reflected on John 19:31-37, which recounts the piercing of Christ's side and the blood and water that flowed forth. The passage directed attention to the wounded heart of Jesus as a sign of sacrificial love, mercy and saving grace.

Under the leadership of Grand Knight Rick Buzzee, Council 8104 organized the event as part



of its continuing commitment to the spiritual life of Our Lady of the Rosary parish. The gathering offered another opportunity for the Knights and parish community to pray together while living out the principles of Charity, Unity and Fraternity.

Council 8104 extends its sincere thanks to Council Chaplain Fr. Thomas Gabriel Omunu, Parochial Vicar of Our Lady of the Rosary Catholic Church, for leading the service and guiding the community through the reflection and Adoration. His pastoral leadership and continued spiritual support helped make the evening a meaningful experience for all who attended.

Devastation and Relief

By State Chaplain Very Rev. Bob Kantor

“Keep on doing what you have learned and received and heard and seen in me. Then the God of peace will be with you.” - Phil 4:9

October can be a month of devastation or relief in Florida. Sometimes devastation comes in the form of a hurricane. The relief most often comes in calmer weather when the thermometer no longer tops 90 and nights bring some degree of cool. Recently I was reminded how Knights deliver another kind of relief and support in the aftermath of fierce storms and amid gentle breezes.

Four years ago, Hurricane Ian ravaged the gulf coast of Florida. Parishes in Sanibel and Ft. Myers Beach were severely damaged. The emergency response of Knights brought relief to people in the aftermath of that storm, as well as many others in recent years. I remember our Brothers providing tarps and serving hot meals at one of the poorest parishes in Fort Myers.

Recently, on the fourth anniversary of Hurricane Ian, Knights responded in another way. They helped bring Jesus back to the people of Ft. Myers Beach. Since the storm badly damaged Ascension Church, no Mass had been celebrated there. Newly installed Bishop of Venice, Emilio Biosca Aguero, decided it was time to bring the Eucharist back. When the task seemed overwhelming, given no building in which to celebrate Mass, he turned to the Knights of Columbus.

The Florida State Council and the Knights of Region 5 provided a vesting tent, portable air conditioner, items to celebrate Mass, and the manpower for traffic control onsite. Our Worthy State Secretary, Deacon Richard Dahn, assisted Bishop Emilio at the Mass. I had the privilege of concelebrating with several priests from the Diocese, some of whom are Knight chaplains.

“Wow, the Knights really came through,” was the reaction of the Bishop to me after the Mass.



*State Chaplain
Very Rev. Bob Kantor*



And don't we always? In the spirit of our founder, Blessed Michael McGivney, Knights rallied to a need, served their brothers and sisters in Christ, and played a vital role in bringing joy and hope to those who have not worshipped on the grounds of their parish in four years. More than

400 people came, spilling out of the large tent and under the shade of nearby trees. The Knights helped make Christ present, through their selfless service and, literally, through their support of the celebration of the Eucharist.

In his homily, Bishop Emilio, himself a Capuchin Franciscan, recalled the message St. Francis received from God to rebuild His church.

On this 800th anniversary of the death of St. Francis, the parallel was made to the rebuilding of the parish in the aftermath of the hurricane. Certainly, the church will be rebuilt, but as with St. Francis, the rebuilding will go beyond a damaged structure to the hearts and souls of those who make up the body of Christ which is the Church.

And whenever the Church is rebuilt, physically or spiritually, the Knights will be there at the center of it, where Blessed Michael McGivney would want us. Vivat Jesus!

10th Annual Duck Derby

The Knights of **Our Lady of Hope Council 8086** are set for the 10th annual Duck Derby, set for Oct. 17-18 at the City Center lake in Port Orange.

The Council's biggest fund raiser of the year will be part of the ArtHaus festival, which has taken over for Port Orange Family Days which hosted the event in the past.

The highlight of the event features kayakers "rescuing" four plastic ducks to award \$1,850 in prizes.

Last year's event raised \$20,201, which will benefit benefiting the many Knights of Columbus charities supported by Council 8086. These include Coats for Kids, Vocations, Global Wheelchair Mission, Habitat for Humanity, Pregnancy Crisis Center and numerous parish and community youth programs.

With no new date for the community event, the council Grand Knight Dr. Ernie Jackson and Program Director Tim Mell – Florida State Knight of the Year for 2021-22 – were tasked with finding an alternative location. This was the second time Community Days was cancelled, with the Knights accepting a generous offer from L.A. Fitness to use their swimming pool during the 2000 COVID breakout.

For 2024, the Knights opted to hold a drawing during the council's monthly pancake breakfast on Nov. 10. Instead of using the 23,000 plastic ducks, Mell's group prepared slips for the drawing, and SK Jim Baskin converted a 55-gallon drum.



DGK Vito Benedetto donned a duck costume to draw the winning slips. Kathleen, William and Brian Stark won the first prize of \$1,000. Second, \$500, went to SK Jose Vigara; third (\$250) went to Cindy Bland, and fourth (\$100) to Peter and Geri Mastropolo.

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Challenged with finding a new and innovative fundraiser by Danny McIntyre and Lorenzo Rodriguez 10 years ago, Program Director Tim Mell came up with the idea for the derby. Grand Vito Benedetto plays a key role in the project, donning a duck costume and paddles out into the lake to retrieve the winning ducks.

Honoring our Military Chaplains

In the 28 years I served in the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps, I interacted with many military chaplains; the most noteworthy occurred during the First Gulf War, in which I had the honor of leading Marines into combat. These patriotic men wear the uniform of our Nation and go into harm's way armed simply with the Bible, a Rosary, or sometimes just their abiding faith in our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Our very own State Chaplain, the Very Rev. Bob Cantor, served as a Navy Chaplain in Afghanistan and Iraq during the War on Terror.

Hundreds of military chaplains have died in wars the last 250 years; giving comfort to their comrades right up to the last moment of giving their full measure. I intend to share a little history on some of these heroes of our faith in the Invocation as often as I can.

The first is LT Vincent R. Capodano, Jr., MM, a Navy chaplain serving with the Marines in the Republic of Vietnam (RVN) in 1967. As a brief explanation, the Marine Corps relies on many of its support services from the Navy, to include medical personnel and chaplains. He was known in country as the "Grunt Padre," Padre being the preferred nickname for chaplains in the Corps, much like "Doc" for corpsmen.

Fr. Capodano was born on February 13, 1929 in Staten Island. A first-generation Italian-American, he was a daily Communicant, a practice he began during his time as a youth after the death of his father and with three of his brothers serving in World War II. He attended Fordham University and in 1949 was accepted into the Maryknoll Missioners. He was ordained in 1958. His first assignment was Taiwan in 1959. In the early 1960s, he sought permission to join the Chaplain Corps of the Navy. Following commissioning from OCS, he was assigned to the 1st Marine Division in RVN in 1966. His biography from the Archdiocese of the Military (ADM) reports that he "became a constant companion to the Marines: living, eating and sleeping in the same conditions of"

the Marine infantrymen – grunts – spending "hours reassuring the weary and disillusioned, consoling the grieving, hearing confessions, instructing converts, and distributing St Christopher medals."

Thus, he became the "Grunt Padre." He loved his ministry so much he requested an extension and immediately began

his second tour in RVN, in which he now went into combat assisting medical personnel. Surviving Marines told of how Padre comforted them after being wounded, while still under enemy fire, consoling them with the message that Jesus was with them that day.

It was in a devastating ambush with Marines of the 5th Battalion/1st Regiment that Fr. Capodano made the ultimate sacrifice. Seeing a corpsman assisting a Marine, both wounded, under intense machinegun fire, Fr. Capodano selflessly placed himself in the line of fire, shielding the two men. He died immediately; his body riddled with 27 bullet wounds. He was awarded the Medal of Honor in 1969 for his unmatched heroism that day.

Numerous buildings, chapels, streets and a Navy ship, the U.S.S. Vincent R. Capodano, bore his name. The chapel at Navy Chaplain School in Newport, R.I. was dedicated the Capodano Memorial Chapel soon after his death. Most notably for our Order, sixteen assemblies and councils are named in his honor.

Fr. Capodano received our Nation's highest award for bravery and now the ADM has submitted a Positio for heroic virtue to the Vatican for the veneration of this man of self-sacrificing faith and courage. [Sourced from ADM website.]



*State Treasurer
Kris Elliott*

Safeguarding Our Mission

My Brothers in Christ, I want to speak to you from a place of deep sincerity about something that touches the very core of who we are as Knights of Columbus: our responsibility to protect the most vulnerable. Safe Environment is not just a policy—it is a promise. A promise we make to our families, our parishes, our communities, and to God Himself.

For me, this commitment is personal. Every time I see a child running through a parish hall, every time I see a family attending one of our events, I am reminded that they trust us. They trust you. They trust our Order. And that trust must never be taken for granted. Safe Environment compliance is one of the clearest ways we honor that trust.

Our Order was founded to protect families. Blessed Michael McGivney gave everything he had to ensure that no family was left vulnerable. Today, we carry that same mission forward—not only through our programs and charitable works, but through our vigilance, our awareness, and our willingness to step up and safeguard those who cannot protect themselves.

This is why every council, and every Brother Knight, must be Safe Environment compliant. Not because Supreme requires it. Not because awards depend on it. But because our faith demands it. Because our vocation as Catholic men demands it. Because our love for our families and our communities demands it.

The roles required for compliance—Grand Knight, Program Director, Family Director, Community Director, and anyone working with youth—are not just titles. They are positions of trust. And trust must be protected; when we complete our training, we do more than check a box. We become Guardians of the vulnerable, Witnesses to Christ's love, Men who lead by example, Knights who honor our founder's legacy.

When an entire council is compliant, something powerful happens. Families feel safer. Pastors feel

supported. Councils grow stronger. Our reputation shines brighter. And our mission becomes clearer.

Brothers, I ask you—personally—to take this seriously. Even if your role does not require training, consider completing it anyway. Your willingness to learn, to be prepared, and to stand watch strengthens all of us. It strengthens our councils.

It strengthens our Church. It strengthens our Order. Safe Environment is not just a requirement. It is a reflection of who we are. It is a reflection of the men we strive to be. It is a reflection of our promise to protect God's children.

Let us walk this path together—with conviction, with humility, and with love. Let us ensure that every council, every leader, and every Knight stands ready, trained, and committed. In doing so, we honor our faith, protect our families, and uphold the noble legacy entrusted to us.

Brothers, Safe Environment is our responsibility. Safe Environment is our witness. Safe Environment is our promise.



*State Warden
Carlos Ortiz*



Supreme Chaplain's Challenge

By Supreme Chaplain Archbishop William E. Lori

They replied, “Caesar’s.” At that he said to them, “Then repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God.” (Gospel for Oct. 18, Mt 22:21)

The Pharisees were trying to entrap Jesus into taking sides in the dispute. Are the faithful to be good Jews or good citizens? But Jesus says there is no conflict here. One can be a solid citizen and maintain his true and proper obligations to the civil government, as long as he gives primacy to his duties to God. We should keep in mind that the Knights of Columbus was founded with the understanding that faithful Catholics are also faithful citizens.

Challenge by Supreme Chaplain Archbishop William E. Lori:

This month, I challenge you to study how the Knights of Columbus, at the time of its founding and throughout its history, has combated anti-Catholic bigotry and shown there is no conflict between love of God and love of country. The book *The Knights of Columbus: An Illustrated History* (2020) is an excellent resource.

Questions for Reflection:

Do you obey civil law and authority, even in smaller matters, or do you tend to rationalize infractions? Do you fulfill your civic duties, such as by voting? Do you consider moral issues when voting, beyond mere self-interest?

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Venice Knights Host Blue Mass

Members of Knights of Columbus **Council 9924 and Assembly 1818** of Venice teamed to host a Blue Mass at Our Lady of Lourdes Church on Sept. 13.

With thoughtful preparation and generous service, the Council helped create a deeply meaningful annual tribute honoring the brave men and women who serve our community as first responders, filling the church with representatives from every corner of public safety, including Fire, Police, EMS, the Sheriff's Office, Dispatch, and other first responders. Service dogs sat faithfully beside their handlers.

The Knights on Bikes arrived in proud formation, while members of Assembly 1818 and the Fourth Degree Color Corps brought a powerful sense of reverence, patriotism, and ceremonial honor to the Mass. The Color Corps marched solemnly and proudly, swords in hand, standing tall on each side of the center aisle as the Fire Department Color Guard led the solemn procession of honored guests, adding both beauty and dignity to the tribute with their disciplined presence.

Celebrant Monsignor Patrick Dubois of Epiphany Cathedral delivered a homily that touched every heart in the church, reminding all present of the courage, sacrifice, and unwavering dedication shown daily by those who protect and serve. Venice Mayor Nick Pachota and his wife brought forward the gifts at the offertory. Their participation symbolized the unity among civic leadership, the parish community, and those who safeguard our city.

A particularly touching moment came during the reading of the names of first responders who passed away this year. With deep respect, the Fire Department Color Guard recognized their service by ringing the bell for each name, its sound resonating throughout the church.

Following the Mass, Council 9924 hosted a light luncheon that offered fellowship, gratitude, and an opportunity for parishioners and first responders to share stories, smiles and appreciation.



Supporting Recovering Catholic Religious

Guest House, located in Lake Orion, Michigan, supports vocations through recovery, renewal, and a lifetime of service.

The Florida State Council supports Guest House through the Recovery Sunday initiative – an effective, parish-based fundraiser. Recovery Sunday was conceived by Florida State Deputy Michael Gizewski after becoming aware of Guest House during a dinner with Sir Knight Joe McGivney – a descendent of the KofC Founder. With State Deputy Gizewski's leadership and vision, Recovery Sunday was born.

That commitment closely aligns with the mission of Guest House.

In a recent article, Dennis J. Gerber, Jr., President and CEO of the Knights of Columbus Charitable Fund, wrote:

“A vocation unfolds over a lifetime, and at every stage there are moments when our generosity can help a priest, sister or brother continue to say yes to the life God has called them to.”

Guest House has witnessed the truth of those words for 70 years.

Since 1956, Guest House has provided specialized treatment and continuing care for thousands of Catholic priests, religious, and seminarians facing addiction and other behavioral health challenges.

But the impact doesn't end when treatment ends.

It lives on through our alumni.

Guest House alumni return to their parishes, dioceses, religious communities, and ministries—healthier, stronger, and equipped to continue their vocations. Their recovery touches families, parishioners, fellow clergy, and entire communities.



This is where the missions of the Knights of Columbus and Guest House come together: supporting those who have given their lives to the Church and helping them continue to say “yes” to their calling.

Guest House is grateful for the Knights' partnership and looks forward to expanding that shared mission in Florida.

It strengthens the entire Church. Read Dennis Gerber's full article: www.KnightsCharitable.org/resources/articles/2026/supporting-vocation-lifetime/.

To learn more about Guest House or support our mission, visit GuestHouse.org or scan the QR code below:



Knights Help Retired Church Leaders



Knights of **Father Brandon Heaslip Council 11850** of Panama City recently helped ensure retired church leaders receive the care and comfort they deserve.

Members of the Knights of Columbus in Panama City Beach gathered at Topgolf on for a charity golf tournament, raising more than \$10,000 to assist a nearby retirement home in Chipley.

The home is operated by nuns who care for Catholic priests following decades of parish service. After the facility recently lost its volunteer landscaper, organizers decided to step in so the sisters would not have to worry about maintaining the one-acre property.

The funds raised will cover the home's commercial lawn care and landscaping services for the next three to four years.

"I just absolutely love it," said Tom Fagan, Grand Knight Council 11850. "Just knowing that the end result is going to be these sweet nuns that do not expect to get anything. And they're going to have all their prayers come true and then some, it makes us feel even better."

Saturday's golf tournament builds on previous outreach by the council, which stepped up earlier

this year to purchase and install four new energy-efficient windows after learning the home was struggling with extreme seasonal heat and cold.

TGK Fagan presented the check to the Sisters. It was very emotional around the room as there were very few dry eyes. Monsignor Francis Szczykutowicz, 93, who is cared for by the Sisters, attended the presentation.

"Sometimes the retired priests and nuns actually feel like they are the forgotten ones in the church or diocese," SK Msgr. Francis said. "But you can always count on the Knights of Columbus! They bring much much joy and happiness to our home."



Knights Rejuvenated by Emmaus Retreat

Every man reaches moments when the noise of life grows too loud and the voice of God grows too faint. Work, responsibilities, and old wounds pile up until the spiritual life becomes something we “intend to get back to someday.”

The Emmaus Retreat exists for exactly that reason — to give men the space, silence, brotherhood, and grace to hear Christ again.

This past August, 16 Brother Knights from **Blessed Motor Council 13338** of Boca Raton attended Emmanuel Parish’s annual The Road to Emmaus Men’s Retreat, a three-day spiritual renewal weekend rooted in the Gospel of Luke (24:13–35). The retreat is designed to help men encounter Christ in a personal and transformative way:

The Emmaus weekend is a parish-based spiritual renewal experience led by laymen and clergy. It includes talks, reflection, prayer, and community — all offered in a simple, supportive environment. The specific activities are intentionally kept confidential so that each participant can experience the weekend without expectations or comparisons.

The Emmaus movement began in Miami and has since spread to more than 40 countries, including communities throughout the Americas, Europe, Africa, and Asia. Its growth reflects a universal truth: men everywhere are hungry for a deeper relationship with God.

Why Men Need This Weekend

Men often carry burdens quietly. We push through. We stay busy. We tell ourselves we’ll deal with our spiritual life “later.” But the soul doesn’t

run on autopilot. A man needs nourishment — real nourishment — not just information or obligation.

When men grow spiritually, families grow stronger. Parishes grow stronger. Brotherhood grows stronger.

A Personal Reflection

By Armando Minutoli

I support the Emmaus ministry because I’ve seen what happens when men finally give God uninterrupted time. Hearts soften. Old wounds begin to heal. Faith that had gone dormant wakes up. Men return home more patient, more grounded, more prayerful, and more aware of God’s presence in their daily lives.

In all my years serving in parish social ministry, I have seen nothing that compares to what the Emmaus weekend — and Cursillo as well — can do to lift a man’s spirit. These retreats reach places in the heart that ordinary programs simply cannot touch.

What first drew my attention was seeing several members of our Knights of Columbus Council take the journey. These Brother Knights returned with a deeper spiritual hunger, a stronger bond with one another, and a renewed desire to serve. I saw an authentic fraternity rooted in Christ through their witness. I saw men more

willing to help others, more open to prayer, and more committed to building a life of faith.

In my estimation, these Brother Knights — along with the other men of the parish who shared the joy of their retreat — will help bring about the reconciliation and healing our community sorely needs. When men grow spiritually, unity grows with them.



This retreat is not about perfection. It is about an encounter. It is about letting Christ walk beside you, just as He did on the road to Emmaus, and discovering that He has been there all along.

Voices from past participants:

David Colby: “The Emmaus weekend allowed me the time to focus on Jesus — to really hear what He wanted to say to me. He showed me what I needed to let go of and where I needed to trust Him.”

Joe De Santo: “My Walk to Emmaus came at a time when I needed God to cut through the noise of my life. I arrived carrying burdens I had kept to myself for too long. What I found was a brotherhood that listened, prayed, and walked beside me. Christ met me in the silence, in the talks, and in the men who shared their own struggles. Emmaus renewed my faith, strengthened my family life, and gave me a desire to serve other men who need the same encounter. It changed the direction of my spiritual life, and it continues to shape the way I walk with Christ today.”

John Gavin: “About a year ago, I was going through a very difficult time in my life.

My wife’s uncle suggested I attend Emmanuel’s first Emmaus retreat last fall.

I agreed, somewhat reluctantly and signed up. My expectations were neutral at best. I had never been to a retreat before and wasn’t sure it was the right thing for me. And if I’m honest, I didn’t think it would make much of a difference. In Luke’s gospel, the disciples walk the road to Emmaus alongside Jesus without even realizing he is there - until their eyes are opened and they recognize him. That’s exactly what this retreat did for me.”

Robert Hamernik: “My Emmaus Retreat last year was one of the best gifts I’ve ever given myself. It deepened my faith and opened my eyes to the many small ways I can live and spread God’s message.”

John Prokop Jr.: “This weekend retreat was a life-changing experience that allowed me to rekindle my spirituality. It enlightened me to understand the significance of accepting God’s will and the peace it brings. To my Emmaus brothers, I love you all.”

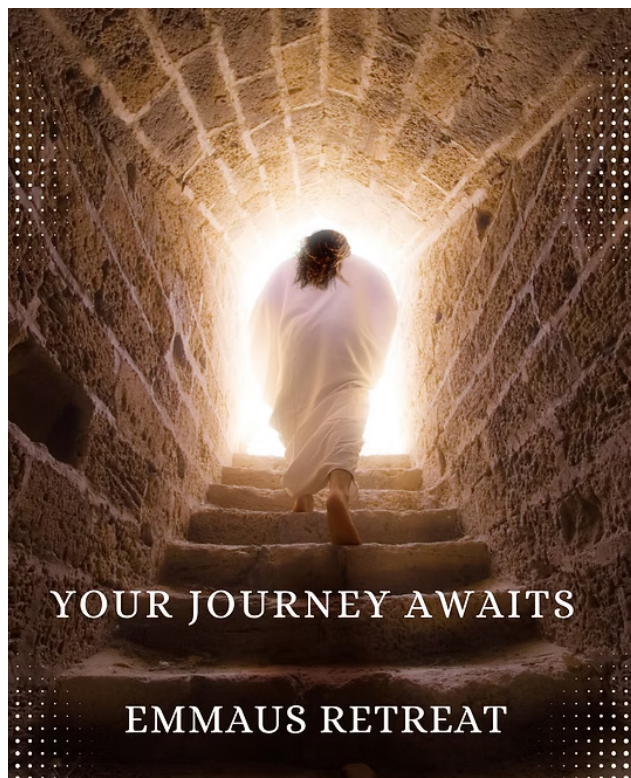
Dominic Scaduto: “I first experienced an Emmaus Retreat last year at the Amoris Christi Retreat Center. I had never been on a retreat like this - a three day away from home and with uncertain but curious expectations. I can say without any hesitation that the experience was incredibly uplifting. Just like the two disciples on the road after the resurrection, I found myself on that same journey.

The Emmaus staff created a heartfelt spiritual environment, with gentle dignity and fervor in an effort to open our hearts and minds to find Jesus at the end, just like the two Emmaus disciples. If only once, Catholic men participating in this retreat will come away with renewed faith, trust, comfort and confidence that Jesus is indeed our risen savior.”

If you feel even a small tug — a curiosity, a restlessness, a desire for something deeper — consider that it may be Christ Himself inviting you.

For information on 2027 retreats, please contact: Joe De Santo, Coordinator (954) 732-4479 - Space has limitations.

Let this be the year you walk the road — and discover Christ walking with you.



From Stadium Crowds to Community Service



St. Stephen Council 14084 turns football games, major concerts, and special events at Raymond James Stadium into year-round opportunities for charity, fraternity, and service.

When thousands of fans stream into Raymond James Stadium for a football game, concert, or major special event, members of St. Stephen Knights of Columbus **Council 14084** see more than a night of entertainment. They see an opportunity to put faith into action.

For years, the Council's concession operation at Raymond James Stadium has been one of its most important fundraising efforts. Knights, spouses, family members, and other volunteers work side by side serving stadium guests, with the proceeds helping support a wide range of parish, charitable, pro-life, youth, family, and community programs.

Spearheading this fundraising effort is PGK Julio Alvarez who works tirelessly, organizing

the many volunteers needed to fill the volunteer roster. In addition, his administrative efforts with stadium staff and vendors have positioned this Council as one of the preferred groups to operate a food and drink booth at the stadium.

Football remains an important part of the schedule, including Tampa Bay Buccaneers games and the annual Reliaquest Bowl, but the 2026 season continues to highlight just how broad the Raymond James fundraising effort has become.

Major concerts have played a significant role. The stadium's entertainment calendar throughout the years has included performances by some of the biggest names in music, including Taylor Swift, Metallica, AC/DC, Bruno Mars, KAROL G, Ed Sheeran, Chris Brown / Usher, the Hondo

Rodeo Fest, and Kenney Chesney. Events of this size can bring tens of thousands of people through the gates, creating important fundraising opportunities well beyond the traditional football season.

The Council's involvement also extends to some of the stadium's most distinctive non-football events. Monster Jam fills Raymond James with families and fans for an evening of high-energy entertainment, while the NHL Stadium Series transformed the venue into an outdoor hockey arena for one of the year's most unusual sporting events. College bowl games, festivals, and other large-scale attractions further expand the opportunities available to Council volunteers throughout the year.

Working these events requires commitment. Volunteers often arrive well before the gates open, prepare the concession area, serve large crowds throughout the event, and remain afterward for closing and cleanup. Fortunately, concessions in the stadium usually close early, allowing volunteers to partake of the last quarter of a game or event.

The work can be fast-paced and demanding, particularly during sold-out concerts and major sporting events.

But the real value of the program is measured far beyond concession sales.

Funds generated through the Raymond James effort help Council 14084 support various parish ministries, seminarians, pro-life causes, St. Vincent de Paul, Veterans, My Warriors Place, Coats for Kids, San Jose Mission, youth and family programs, and other charitable needs throughout the community.

Just as importantly, the program strengthens the bonds of fraternity. Knights and their families work shoulder-to-shoulder, sharing long shifts, busy concession lines, and plenty of camaraderie while knowing that their efforts will ultimately help someone in need.

Whether the crowd comes to cheer for the Buccaneers, watch Monster Jam, experience outdoor hockey, or sing along with major touring performers, Council 14084 volunteers are helping turn entertainment into service.

In doing so, they continue to live out the principles at the heart of the Knights of Columbus: Charity, Unity, and Fraternity.



Our Lady of Hope, Sacred Heart, & Epiphany
Fourth Degree Assembly
In Service to God, Church, Community and Country

SALUTE ★ TO ★ VETERANS ★ DINNER ★

Honoring All Who Have Served

SATURDAY, NOV. 7, 2026
Doors Open at 5:30 PM ★ Dinner at 6:30 PM
Father Raymond O'Leary Parish Center
Our Lady of Hope Catholic Church
Port Orange, Florida

TICKETS \$10 PER PERSON

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE.
YOU ARE NEVER FORGOTTEN.**

FAITH ★ UNITY ★ PATRIOTISM ★ IN SERVICE TO ONE. IN SERVICE TO ALL.

The reactivated **Father Henry Driscoll Fourth Degree Assembly**

#1726 recently held its first activity, joining 20 Veterans at the Diamond Assisted Living Facility in Edgewater for coffee and donuts.

New Faithful Navigator Leo Decker joined six of his fellow Sir Knights and three officers from the American Legion.

"It was a pleasure to get to know the Veterans, learn about their Service where they are from and their favorite Football Teams," Decker said. "We are in the process of having another gathering with the Vets in October."

Assembly #1726 was chartered on Jan. 22, 1977, at Sacred Heart Catholic Church in New Smyrna Beach. However, it had been inactive since the early 2000s. Decker got a group of 32



SKs to transfer into the reactivated Assembly, and added a dozen new members at the the August Fourth Degree Exemplification in Port Orange.

The Assembly meets at the Sacred Heart Father Burke Knights Hall on the first Tuesday of each month, with the Rosary at 6 p.m. followed by the meeting



★ ★ ★ 2027 ★ ★ ★

Victory
— for —
VETERANS
GALA

★ **VETERANS FUNDRAISER** ★

SATURDAY, MARCH 6, 2027
DOORS OPEN: 6:00 PM – 2:00 AM
📍 PLANTATION GOLF & COUNTRY CLUB

★
KEYNOTE SPEAKER
Monsignor Anthony R. Frontiero, S.T.D.
*Vicar General and Moderator of the Curia
Archdiocese for the Military Services of the United States of America*

★
\$100 PER PERSON
WHICH INCLUDES A PLATED DINNER,
A COMPLEMENTARY DRINK, DANCING
AND A SILENT AUCTION.

★
COME AND JOIN US IN HONORING OUR VETERANS
AND ENJOY A FUN EVENING AS WELL.

★
SPONSORED BY
KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS ASSEMBLY 1818

George Barbiero
203-885-8238

★ **FOR TICKETS SALES CONTACT:** ★
Marty Reis
209-480-6043

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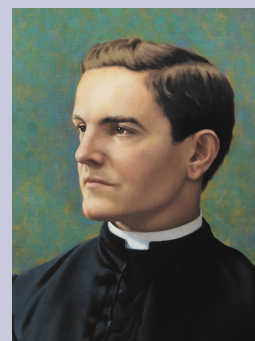
Prayer for the Canonization of Blessed Michael J. McGivney

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.**

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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.

