

# THE PATRIOT'S CALL: *United in Faith & Freedom*

## ASSEMBLY 1818

Volume I Issue IX March 2026



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## Lent: A Season of Renewal, Sacrifice, and Patriotic Witness

### Brothers,

Each year, the Church invites us into the sacred season of Lent, a forty-day journey of prayer, fasting, and charity that prepares our hearts for the glory of Easter. It is a time when Catholics around the world pause to reflect on Christ's sacrifice, deepen their spiritual discipline, and renew their commitment to living the Gospel with courage and humility.

For us as Fourth Degree Knights of Columbus, Lent carries a special resonance. Our call to the Patriotic Degree is not merely about civic pride or ceremonial honor it is a vocation to witness to the love of God through service to our nation, our Church, and our fellow man. Lent strengthens that vocation.

Patriotism, in the Catholic sense, is not blind nationalism. It is love of neighbor expressed through service, sacrifice, and moral leadership. When we embrace the disciplines of Lent, we strengthen the moral foundation upon which true patriotism stands. As we enter this holy season, please take a moment to check your individual parish websites and bulletins for:

Lenten missions, Stations of the Cross, confession times, Holy Hour and Adoration schedules, special masses and prayer services and opportunities for service and spiritual growth.

Each of our four parishes offers unique ways to deepen our Lenten journey. Staying informed ensures that we walk this path with intention, devotion, and unity as an Assembly

Vivat Jesus!



*SK George Barbiero*



## ***Valentines for Veterans Welcoming Remarks from our Faithful Navigator***

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen.

On behalf of *Valentines for Veterans*, it is my honor to welcome you to our **13th Annual Valentines for Veterans Dinner**. This evening stands as a testament to gratitude, remembrance, and service—values that bind us together and define our mission.

We are deeply honored by the presence of His Excellency, **Bishop Frank J. Dewane**, and we thank him sincerely for joining us this evening and for his continued spiritual leadership and support.

This event would not be possible without the dedication and generosity of many. I wish to extend my heartfelt appreciation to our **fifteen committee members**, whose months of planning brought this evening to fruition; to our **culinary staff**, whose excellence we have all enjoyed; and to our gracious host, **Father Tom Carzon**, for welcoming us into this beautiful facility.

I would also like to recognize our volunteers, whose quiet service often goes unseen but never unappreciated. In particular, I wish to acknowledge **Kathy Malik, Kathy Reis and Diana Hopfinger**, whose commitment and tireless efforts helped make this evening truly special.

Tonight, it is my great privilege to present this **esteemed symbol of our appreciation** to three individuals whose lives exemplify service, leadership, and devotion to God and country.

We honor:

- **Monsignor Colonel Robert Canon,**
- **Past District Master Sgt Rick Miller,** and
- **Sir Knight Machinist Assistant 3<sup>rd</sup> Class Michael LaVecchia.**

Each of these honorees has answered the call to serve with integrity, sacrifice, and unwavering dedication. Through their actions, they have strengthened our community, honored our veterans, and upheld the values we cherish as Americans.

To our honorees: we thank you—not only for what you have done, but for who you are. Your service has made a lasting difference, and your example continues to inspire all of us.

May God bless you, may God bless our veterans, and may God bless the United States of America.

**CALENDAR 2025-2026** Our Assembly is excited to present a calendar filled with opportunities for fellowship, spiritual growth, and service. We encourage all members to review the upcoming schedule and participate as actively as your time and talents allow. We look forward to seeing you there.

**MARCH 2026**

- **Wed, Mar 11** – SNC @ 8:30 AM
- **Thurs, Mar 19** – Assembly Meeting @ 6:30 PM
  - Rosary @ 5:30 PM - Dinner @ 5:45 PM
  - Guest Speaker – Mr. Ron Zaleski – The Long Walk Home
- **Thurs, Mar 26** – Color Corps Drill Practice @ 2 PM (MC)

**APRIL 2026**

- **Wed, Apr 8** – SNC @ 8:30 AM
- **Tue, Apr 14** – Officers Meeting @ 9:00 AM (OLOL)
- **Thurs, Apr 16** – Assembly Meeting @ 6:30 PM
  - Rosary @ 5:30 PM - Dinner @ 5:45 PM
  - *Presentation of Slate of Officers*
- **Thurs, Apr 30** – Color Corps Drill Practice @ 2 PM (OLOL)

**MAY 2026**

- **Sat, May 23** – Placement of Flags @ SNC @ 7:30 AM
- **Wed, May 13** – SNC @ 8:30 AM
- **Thurs, May 21** – Assembly Meeting @ 6:30 PM
  - Rosary @ 5:30 PM - Dinner @ 5:45 PM
  - *Election of Officers*
- **Thurs, May 28** – Color Corps Drill Practice @ 2 PM (OLOL)
- **Sat, May 30** – Removal of Flags @ SNC @ 7:30 AM

**JUNE 2026**

- **Wed, June 10** – SNC @ 8:30 AM
- **Thurs, June 18** – Award Presentation & Dinner @ 6:00 PM (OLOL)

## Knights on Bikes Faith, Fellowship & the Open Road

We encourage you to explore this link for the latest information about Knights on Bikes.



### [Knights on Bikes Venice Chapter](#)



### Fourth Degree Exemplification – Tampa, FL

St. Mark the Evangelist Church recently hosted a moving and memorable Fourth Degree Exemplification, where candidates from across Florida were honored in a ceremony that radiated dignity, unity, and patriotic pride.

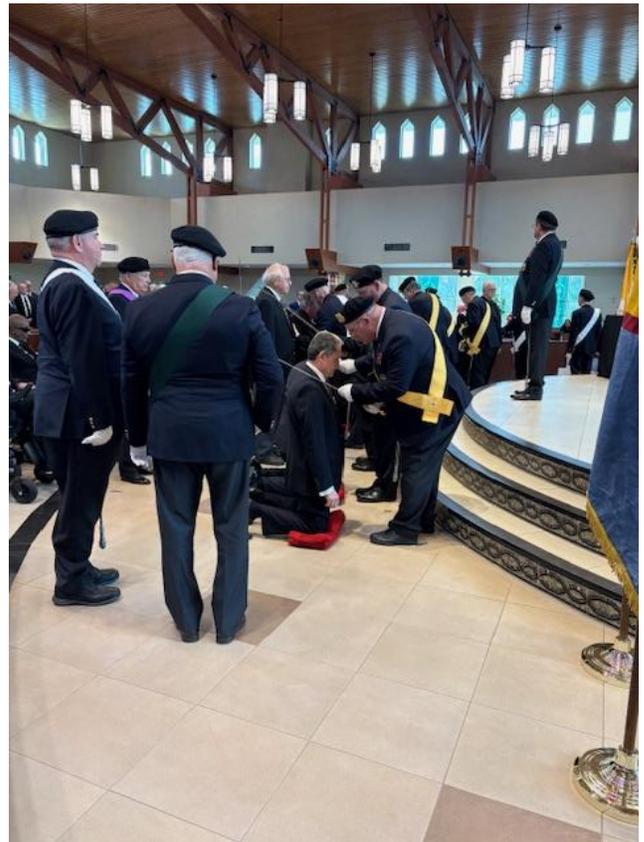
We were blessed to present the following candidates:

- Our Lady of Lourdes: Robert Nowicki and Joseph Macarelli
- San Pedro: Salvatore Fertitta
- Epiphany Cathedral: Lawrence Melocik

The event was a testament to the strength and spirit of our Order, with Knights, families, and clergy coming together to celebrate this milestone. As always, the ceremony was beautifully conducted rich in tradition and reverence.

Below are some snapshots capturing the joy, brotherhood, and solemnity of the day...







KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS  
**FOURTH  
DEGREE**  
EXEMPLIFICATION

*Patriotic Degree of the Order*



One Nation, Under God

**Looking Ahead: May 9, 2026 – Naples, FL**

We're blessed to announce that the following exemplification will be hosted at St. John the Evangelist Church in Naples, Florida on May 9, 2026. We encourage all eligible Third-Degree Knights to consider taking this next step in their journey. SK Steve Vacca the Membership Chairman for both Council 9924 of OLOL and the Assembly 1818, is available to assist with forms and guidance. Reach out when you're ready.

**Stay Connected:**

Reminders will be sent periodically to keep our Councils informed and engaged. Let's continue to grow our ranks and honor the legacy of the Fourth Degree.

For questions or to begin your application:

- SK Steve Vacca: 941-310-6061 – [stevac58@yahoo.com](mailto:stevac58@yahoo.com)

Together we will exemplify the values of Charity, Unity, Fraternity, and Patriotism.

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Brothers,

Your Faithful Comptroller is pleased to share that Bishop Charles McLaughlin Assembly 1818 now has its own website: [kocasembly1818.org](http://kocasembly1818.org). It's very much a work in progress still under construction, but it's already beginning to take shape.

I've been adding to it little by little each month, filling it with helpful Fourth Degree information, details about our Assembly, and updates on upcoming events. There's still plenty more to add.

If you have a moment, I invite you to visit the site and see what's there. Your early impressions are always appreciated, and more features and content will be added as I continue to develop it.

My hope is that this website becomes a strong tool for communication, keeping every Sir Knight connected, informed, and engaged in the life of our Assembly.

More updates will follow as the site grows.

## No Veteran Forgotten Ceremony

We are pleased to announce that the **No Veteran Forgotten Ceremony** will be on **Wednesday, March 11th, 2026**.



We ask all participants to meet by 8:45 AM. We head to the Internment Shelter at Sarasota National Cemetery at 8:50 AM, with the service beginning at 9:00 AM. Please wear your assembly shirt, and invite your spouses, friends and neighbors to join us as we stand together to remember the legacy of those who made the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom.

SK Bob Marrah our NVFC Coordinator, was notified of a change in the content of our monthly **No Veteran Forgotten Ceremony** at **Sarasota National Cemetery**. Bob explained the following:

We will honor only Unclaimed Veterans as Direct Burial Veterans will no longer be included as we have honored for some time.

Unclaimed Vets are those who, when they pass, no one comes forward to claim the body. Thus, the County is responsible, and they go to "great lengths" to determine "if" that person was a Vet. If so, the County is responsible for the preparation of the body (in Florida, cremation cannot take place on an unclaimed body) but the VA has the responsibility for the burial.

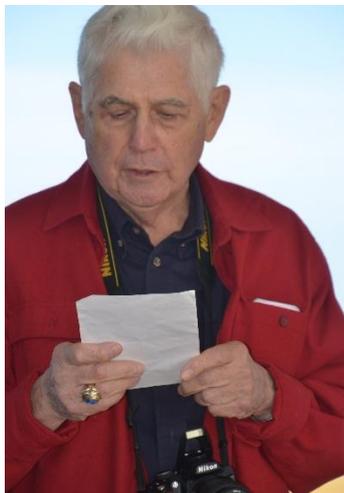
Typically, Direct Burial Vets are those who retire to Florida, but their entire family is "up North" somewhere. Their remains/cremains are shipped to "wherever" for services, viewing, whatever and then the remains/cremains are returned to **SNC** for burial. No family is present.

In any given month, typically, Direct Burials comprise 75-80% of those being honored with 20-25% of the total Unclaimed. Thus, going forward, our monthly Ceremonies will be for far fewer Vets than we have previously honored.

The VA at **SNC** has determined that many of the Direct Burial Vets have had "some sort of military service" when with the family, just no services at **SNC**. Thus, the change.

On Wed, Feb 11, we honored 11 Unclaimed Vets who were interred in January

RANK	VETERANS NAME	BRANCH OF SERVICE
PV2	William Burgess	US Army - Vietnam
PFC	James Anderson	US Army
SP4	Joel Rodgers	US Army
PV1	Robert Herz	US Army - Vietnam
A1C	Robert Cassidy	US Air Force - Korea
AMN	Bruce Robinson	US Air Force
SGT	Leonard Bell	US Air Force - Vietnam
SN	John Stevens	US Navy
PVT	William Kennedy	US Army - Vietnam
SP4 & AB	Ted Spragg	US Army & US Air Force
SP5	Robert White	US Army - Vietnam







**Milestones of our Brother Knights** This month, we extend our warmest wishes to those brothers observing a birthday, and we also recognize those who are celebrating an anniversary of their commitment to the Fourth Degree.

**MARCH BIRTHDAYS**

Name	Date	Age
Francis Bruno	2	82
Michael La Vecchia	7	90
Kevin O'Brien	7	68
Ronald Juaira	8	83
George Barbiero	9	72
Jerome Donovan	10	73
Leo Shuzdak	14	66
William Strofe	16	86
James Jerome	17	47
Richard Kunzier	17	84
William Donnellan	19	90
Robert Smialek	22	78
Kenneth Lescallett	23	80
Tony Dolejs	25	77
Jack Pasquale	26	83
Richard Pezzullo	27	68
John Tosado	29	54

**MARCH ANNIVERSARIES**

Name	Years
Ronald Balaze	25
Anthony Armorose	20
George Meekins	19
Edward Repose	17
Keith Chasse	17
Robert Ott	16
Paul Consbruck	13
Gearard Grabowski	9
Dennis Putman	9
Anthony Hopfinger	7
Derek Baiz	7
Fr. Krzysztof Piotrowski	5
Thom Gardner	3
Leon Alvarez	2
Warren Augenthaler	2
Kenneth Burroughs	2
Vince Gelsomino	2
Paul Grieco	2
Kyle Hill	2
James Jerome	2
Richard Pezzullo	2
John Prisco	2
Michael Sellner	2
Kevin Szopinski	2
Robert Wucki	2



This month, our prayer list is held in the quiet of our hearts.

As we did not gather for a formal meeting this February, we were unable to share the names of family members, friends, and brother Knights who need our prayers. This is a gentle reminder that prayer is not limited to a list. It is a movement of the heart.

This month, we open our intentions wide.

Each of us is invited to pause, reflect, and lift up all those who weigh on our minds: the sick, the lonely, the grieving, the struggle, the forgotten, and those carrying burdens they never speak aloud. We also remember the many blessings in our lives and the people who bring light into our days.

Let us take comfort in knowing that God hears every prayer spoken or unspoken. And as a brotherhood, when we pray for one another, we strengthen the bond that unites us in charity, unity, fraternity, and patriotism.

May this be a month of quiet compassion, heartfelt reflection, and the peace that comes from entrusting all our intentions to the loving care of our Lord.

Vivat Jesus.



### ASSEMBLY 1818 APPOINTED POSITIONS



Color Corps Commander	Martin Reis	209-480-6043
Vice Color Corps Commander	Darwin Reeck	941-451-9657
Cemetery Activity Coordinator	Rick Anderson	321-303-8172
Membership Chairmen	Steve Vacca	954-655-1110
Retention Chairman Bereavement /Birthdays Anniversaries	Charles Woodrum	304-282-8733
Valentines For Veterans	2026 Formal Closeout and Critique: Tony Hopfinger	412-496-6776
Football Commissioner	Richard Kunzier	973-903-1226
Welfare	Vinny Gelsomino Deacon Rich	815-409-2385 914-388-4389
Admissions	TBD – Volunteers Requested	
Knights on Bikes	Bill Blanchard	732-841-6074
Newsletter & Webmaster	George E. Barbiero	203-885-8238

### Gear Up, Brothers



Looking to show your Knights of Columbus pride? You may purchase shirts and caps at *Designer Tees* located at 565 Paul Morris Dr, Englewood. They may be reached at 941-272-8673. If you're looking for a wider selection of Knights of Columbus merchandise, including a variety of accessories and apparel, be sure to visit at [Knights Gear](#) online. They offer a range of items to help you display your dedication to the Order. Finally, for our esteemed Color Corps members, uniforms may be purchased directly at [Knights of Columbus | Supply Room](#) and [Home - Knights of Columbus Supplies](#)



## Council Updates & Family and Pro Life News



Below you will find the websites for each of the third-degree councils that contribute to our Assembly. Although each Council is unique, they all share the core values of charity, unity, and fraternity. We encourage you to explore each website as well as Deacon Rich's *Family and Pro Life News*.



[Click here](#) for Council 7997 San Pedro.



[Click here](#) for Council 15821 Our Lady of Mount Carmel.



[Click here](#) for Council 9924. Our Lady of Lourdes.



[Click here](#) for Council 7052 Epiphany Cathedral.



[Click here](#) for the monthly *Family and ProLife News Briefs* from Deacon Rich.