

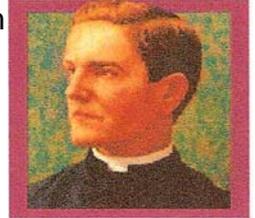


What the Knights are all about



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

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



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

By the end of 1897 the Order was thoroughly rooted in New England, along the upper Atlantic seaboard and into Canada. Within the next eight years it branched out from Quebec to California, and from Florida to Washington. The Knights of Columbus remains headquartered in New Haven, but now has nearly 12000 Councils in the United States, Canada, the Philippines, Mexico, and other countries.

One of the primary missions of the Knights of Columbus is to support local charities. The Knights are a familiar sight around town during the annual Tootsie Roll ® drive, which raises funds for charities that support the intellectually disabled. We also support other fund raising drives to aid local parishes and charities.

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

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

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

Hierarchical Structure of the Knights of Columbus

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

Several Councils within the same geographic area are grouped together in a District under the guidance of the District Deputy and his assistant, the District Warden. There are currently about 154 Councils organized into 32 Districts in the state of Maryland.

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

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

Ceremonials of the Order

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

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

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

