

*Pennsylvania
Central District*



Fourth Degree

DISTRICT FRIARS REPORT

1.

Gentlemen,

As members of the Knights of Columbus we need to keep in mind what our mission is. Our mission statement describes what we need to be doing. "We strive to live as Catholic gentlemen, promoting brotherhood within our group and strengthening the Catholic faith in our lives."

Our Catholic faith stemming from the teachings of Jesus who summarizes all Ten Commandments into two: "To love God with our whole heart, mind and soul, and to love our neighbor as ourselves." To love God we must also love one another since we are all created in the image and likeness of God.

As Knights, we follow 4 core principles: Charity, Unity, Fraternity and Patriotism. Everything we do, all our good works we do are informed by these principles.

Charity is the first principle for us as Knights. We are to follow Christ and be men of faith. St. James reminds us, "Faith without works is dead." As your friar for this Central District, I remind you to recognize that our mission, and our faith, calls us and moves us to action. There is no better way to experience love and compassion that Jesus shows us in his life than by helping those in need, a call we answer every day. Therefore as Knights we are committed to charity, easing the plight of those less fortunate.

2.

Unity is our second principle as Knights. In unity there is strength. As members of the Knights of Columbus we know that together we can accomplish far more than any one of us could do individually. Living in an environment that was hostile to Catholics, Father McGivney and the early founders of our Order relied on strength of unity to remain strong, steadfast in the Faith while claiming their rightful place in society. Today, the Knights of Columbus uses that strength to speak out for religiously – grounded moral values in a society that has changed and forsaken.

We come to Fraternity the third principle. America during the 19th century, life insurance was beyond the reach of many poor Catholic, and at that time social services as we know today did not exist. The Knights of Columbus' top-rated insurance programs continues today, as do individual Knights who give hours of their time to assist the sick and the disabled members and their families. In the Knights of Columbus we watch out for and take care of one another. As Knights we are able to band together as brothers to help one another in times of distress, sickness and death.

Patriotism is our fourth principle. It is also the principle of the 4th Degree. One of the reasons for the Knights of Columbus was to emphasize that Catholics are proud citizens of their country. Today 4th Degree Knights in full regalia, the visible arm of the Order, serve to witness to the values of devotion to God and country, the bedrock of patriotism. Whether it's in public or private, the Knights remind our society and the world that Catholics support their nation.

3.

We have a unique and important role to play at this difficult time our society and world faces. It stems from our calling as Knights, it guides our work into the future, and it is rooted in our special commitment to our four principles. As Knights, we bear a certain character given to us by God for the sake of his people. Now more than ever, we need to seek ways to become better men, better fathers, husbands and brothers, and better Knights. In these difficult times we find ourselves in, we need to be better disciples of Jesus Christ. Ever since the pandemic, people have drifted away from the Church and sacraments. As Knights we need to be evangelizers, to re-evangelize and bring them back to Christ, to the Church and sacraments. Our world has changed because of the pandemic.

There are many ways we can do this, but certain characteristics are found in men who not only survive in a crisis, but who also lead through one. There are five pillars for us to live by as we navigate through difficult times.

First, we need to remain rooted in the truth of our faith. As Catholics, we are sure that no matter what may come, God has destined us to be with him forever. This life is not everything. This life is not our true home, it is only temporary. It is a battle field on which we give ourselves in love for his service and the service of his people. Once we really see and believe this we can lead without fear, trusting God and his vision for us. In order to secure this truth in our minds and hearts, so much so that we are willing to bet our lives on it. We must spend time in prayer. This is where leadership begins for Knights.

4.

Next we must not be passive in a moment of trial, a moment of difficulty. Like Jesus, we have a clear mission. In every moment we look to fulfill the will of our God, our heavenly Father. Perhaps we only see our mission for today, tomorrow, the next few days, or maybe even the next hour, but there is always some work for us to do. It is tempting to get fearful and reactive in a time of trial. It is easy to let others lead or to be paralyzed by the fear of making a mistake. Like Father McGivney, we pray for clarity, then we act. There are many breaches that will present themselves to us in our daily living. Our duty is to step into them with courage.

A Knight stays at his post in difficult times. A Knight remains vigilant and steady. There are many enemies of perseverance at our post, from fear to fatigue and sickness. Whatever the circumstances, a Knight runs the race to the end. It does not matter if a man is winning a race five feet from the finish line if he then stops. He must complete the task. A Knight loves to the end, serves to the end, and prays to the end. When all is said and done, with St. Paul a Knight can say: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."

No real service in a time of trial comes without suffering. A Knight does not choose suffering for its own sake, but he is not afraid of it when it comes as a result of taking the right action. Seeking to be a true disciple of Jesus, he readily chooses to follow Jesus who said, "If any man would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." A Knight knows that no suffering is meaningless, if it is united to the sufferings of Jesus.

5.

A Knight does not act on his own ability and strength alone. He maintains his humble confidence. One puts his trust in the Lord who is our strength and courage. At Confirmation we received the gifts of the Holy Spirit to be used and shared with others. As Knights we used our gifts for the good of others. As Knights we need to act and pray, convinced that the victory is the Lord's, that Christ has conquered sin and death. We are concluding the Easter Octave which celebrates this fact.

God has created us to a life of service. He has given each one of us as individuals a work which he has not committed to another. Each one of us have a mission and we have a part in God's work in the world today. Each of us as a Knight is a link in a chain, a bond connection between persons. We have all been given the Holy Spirit in our lives and it is the Holy Spirit that will guide and strengthen us to carry out our responsibilities as Knights.

Rules are important. If sound and reasonable, they guide us to virtuous behavior. They help keep peace and order in society and in our personal lives. When everyone follows the same rules, the playing field is level.

As Knights of Columbus, our rules include laws and regulations of the Order, which are based on the principles of charity, unity, and fraternity. We must not see these just as rule and obligations but much more than that. They must be very much part of us as we live our lives as Knights.

6.

Our blessed founder Father Michael McGivney was a man of charity, unity and fraternity, and he continues to exemplify these Gospel principles because of his holiness, his intimacy with God. His spiritual guidance reminds us that rules are important, but their true importance is best seen at their source.