

DISTRICT MASTERS REPORT



**Pennsylvania Central
Biennial Meeting - April 6, 2024**



Knights of Columbus

Pennsylvania Central District Fourth Degree

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Brian C. Hallock
Central District Master

Worthy District Friar, Worthy State Treasurer, Worthy District Staff Members, Worthy Faithful Navigators, Worthy Assembly Officers, Worthy Delegates, Worthy Sir Knights, my brothers and friends. I bring you greetings from our Supreme Knight Patrick Kelly, our Supreme Master Michael McKusker, our Vice Supreme Master Fritz Leech, and our State Deputy Michael Kish.

It is hard to believe that two years have passed here in the Pennsylvania Central district and that we are convening together for the biennial meeting. When I was meeting with our extraordinary district staff, I told them the theme for our Biennial meeting today would be Fraternity.

I think that over the last ten years, many of us, including those in the Supreme office, have lost the Fraternity site. We all can attest to the fact that insurance has become the focus, ultimately outshining the proper focus of why Blessed Father McGivney founded the Order and why we are here.

Over the last two years, I have been to many assembly meetings where I have heard negative comments about the uniform and other issues. Recently, I heard from an assembly member that they did not even want to consider getting the uniform because they did not want to stand at casket watches and march in parades. This can not be our stance and image to all those we interact with, especially as Fourth Degree Knights. I know many of you here are working within your Assemblies to ensure that all of your Knights who have passed have a proper Honor Guard at funerals and are looking to help out locally in your Diocese. If your Assembly is not yet engaged in these activities, we need to work harder than we ever have to change that mentality. We need to continue on this path. Gone is the time for any other conversation. We need to be committed to our membership and show them that if they are members of the Knights of Columbus and, specifically, our Assemblies, we are there to support them through good and bad. We, their brothers, will be present for them and their families when they are called home to God.

I am privileged to receive the newsletter from Assembly 1859 in Moscow. I am always impressed that in the newsletter, there is a call to check on the members of the Assembly. It goes on to say if you have not heard from a member, have you tried to give them a call? If you know they can not get out, have you offered to stop over or lend a helping hand?

This is the Fraternity we all share as Brother Knights: one family, one faith, and one Church. I implore each Sir Knight here to bring back these types of ideas to the membership to engage continually and foster Fraternity.

As Master of the District, I am very pleased with our progress together, and I hope you all feel the same way. As District Marshal Martin has mentioned, many members have embraced the Color Corps and joined. We have around 65 members who have joined the Color Corps in the Pennsylvania Central District. I want to congratulate each of you here who helped make that happen. Several Exemplifications and events that the dignitaries have been at often comment on how nice it is to see our Color Corps growing and greater participation happening throughout the Pennsylvania Central District.

I am hopeful that as we continue together to grow the Color Corps in the District, we will take a look at some of the most meaningful events that we, as the Color Corps, need to be present for.

As those from the Diocese of Allentown know, one of the greatest sites that Bishop Schlert can see is the Color Corps is the Knights of Columbus; whether it is at a mass, confirmation, or diocesan special event, it holds a place near and dear to his heart to know we are there to support him and the efforts of the Diocese. Bishop Bambara commented in Scranton during Holy Week that he wanted to Thank, quote, "Our Knights." he tried to stress the point that he appreciated what the Knights were doing locally for the many Scranton events the Color Corps has been present to.

I say that we need to focus on some of the most important events, because I was present to both Chrism Masses in the Diocese of Scranton and Allentown this year. I have to admit, brothers, that I was a bit embarrassed. There I was, getting ready for Mass in Scranton around the priests of the Diocese from all over for a mass in which they are featured and honored each year. They are telling me about trying to help the Knights as much as they can continue to do our good works and how much the Knights mean to them.

When I arrived at the lineup of Color Corps members, I found only four people, all District Staff members. A bit worse in Allentown, finding out that when the District Marshal and I arrived, only two were present to support the priests in the Chrism Mass.

I hate to say it, Brothers, but "We have to do better than that"! I saw pastors, priests of Religious Orders, and retired priests looking around for the faces they knew of the Knights to be disappointed they were not there. Our theme is Fraternity; we have to have a fraternity with one another but to wholeheartedly have the support of our priests, deacons, and clergy, we need to share and foster that Fraternity with them. So when there are significant events like the Chrism Mass, Priest Ordination, or Deaconate Ordination, we need to show our support with as many Color Corps men as possible. Let's get the dates on our calendars together so we can be there for them as they are for us.

Color Corps Training

As many of you know or have heard, our new Supreme Master, Michael McCusker, is making some significant changes to the Fourth Degree, and one of those changes is going to be working more closely with the Third Degree. How do we do that?

Working Together with the Third Degree

Star Assembly – Each Assembly can achieve this

New Exemplification

I want to congratulate in a special way today the membership of Assembly 938 St. Ann Assembly in Scranton, Pennsylvania, who received the To Be a Patriot award for their Flags for Heroes program for the 2022-2023 Fraternal Year. The flags flew from Veterans Day through the new year on Courthouse Square. It is a great way to honor veteran heroes and those who had a memorable hero in their lives. However, as I mentioned, only three assemblies in the world are given that honor. So I am very proud that one of the three for last fraternal year came home to the Pennsylvania Central District.

I want to thank Faithful Navigator Kenn Splitt and the members of Assembly 959, who helped to facilitate the Merger of Assembly 932 into Assembly 959. I congratulate them on picking up the pieces left behind from the change to the new uniform. Together, they have made it possible for many men to remain active in the Fourth Degree.

Recently, it has come to my attention and the attention of our Vice Supreme and Supreme Master that many Assemblies are asking what Supreme is saying about legacy regalia. Is there a chance under our new Supreme Master that it is coming back? I am here to say that I heard directly from the Supreme Master that the answer is a definitive no. He quoted a line from the movie Hoosiers with Gene Hackman saying that those who proudly wear the uniform are his team on the floor. It has almost been ten years now, and the Supreme Master is not entertaining anything from the past regarding what was done and is now looking to the future. Again, as a fraternity of forward-thinking men, we should stop looking in the mirror and look forward together. I believe a famous philosopher in the room indicated that if needed, he would wear a clown nose if it would bring people back to Jesus Christ and back to the love of their faith.

I also congratulate Faithful Navigator William Hallock and the Officers and members of Assembly 938 on the merger of Assembly 2714 into 938; we all remember just two years ago being here and trying to get rolling after the Pandemic. Thankfully, we are all here; however, not all assemblies could make it back when COVID ended. Assembly 2714 had issues trying to return as a few of the officers passed away from COVID, and others had significant medical problems or could no longer function in an officer capacity. Through the work of the Officers of Assembly 938, another merger was successful. This is another excellent example of our brothers working together to ensure our Fourth Degree membership can continue to work to take care of our brothers.

We would all be remiss if we did not take time during this Biennial meeting to acknowledge someone special who has given his heart and soul to the District these past two years when I was appointed as the Master in September of 2022. I called up this individual who probably was dreading picking up the phone; I said the time has come, and I need your help. He said, "Okay, let me sleep on it. I saw him the next day after that phone call at the cathedral, and he said I am willing to help without any questions. I know it will not be easy, but I will get you started for a year and see how it goes. That year went by, and very selflessly, he said I will continue till the end of the term on August 31, 2024. That man Brother's is none other than our District Marshal Martin Sowa (Stand). Martin has decided to retire at the end of the term. Martin, we wish you well and salute you for a job well done for the Pennsylvania Central District. (How about a round of applause). We all will miss you; above all, we wish you well into the future and thank you for the love and care you have put into the position of District Marshal for the Pennsylvania Central District.

I hope you are aware and will watch our website, 4KofC.org, The Supreme Masters Newsletter, or the Provincial Newsletter to know. The 125th Anniversary of the Fourth Degree will be on February 22, 2025. A Fourth Degree will be held in St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City to commemorate the Anniversary as we know it all started in New York. The Pennsylvania Central District and other Districts will be asked to hold special masses and events within our District. I am hopeful you all will assist the leadership of the Pennsylvania Central District in being a part of history as we commemorate the 125th Anniversary of the Fourth Degree.

In closing, I want to focus on what the Fourth Degree means to those who see us in our churches and communities. Men like it or not, being the visible arm of the Order is not just some joke or throw-away statement many of us thought it has become over the years. When someone talks about the Knights of Columbus, they are not talking about the guy behind the counter serving fish at the Council Fish Fry or the Horse Betting window attendant at the Council Knight at the races. They are most likely talking about the men they saw at mass at the Parish coming in and leaving with Father. The man they saw on TV at the Local Parade. People recognize the Uniform and the Fourth Degree Knights. While all the work of Councils and Assemblies is equally important, we must remember that the Fourth Degree largely represents the Order to the majority of people who see the Knights of Columbus.

Finally, I share with you that through prayer, I have always asked Mother Theresa of Calcutta to be a guiding light for us in the Pennsylvania Central District. So, I would like to recall one of the quotes: "I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples." I need all of you as a strong team, together in solidarity, in Fraternity, and in action, to ensure we continue our great work as Fourth Degree Knights here and throughout the Order.

Be Strong, Be Bold, Be Visible & let all who dare to doubt our work know what is possible.

Let them know the Knights of Columbus are here to stay!

Vivat Jesus

Fraternally Yours,



Brian C. Hallock
Master
Pennsylvania Central District

