

# Catholic Review Column: In Service to One in Service to All

As this issue of The Catholic Review goes to press, I am preparing to take part in the annual convention of the Knights of Columbus which will be held this year in Anaheim, California. Since I serve as Chaplain to the whole Order and I am still in the process of introducing myself to all of you, I thought it might be helpful to offer a word or two about the mission and good works of the Knights of Columbus and about my involvement in the Order.

For those who aren't familiar with the history and mission of the Knights, here is a brief summary: The Knights of Columbus was founded by Father Michael J. McGivney in 1882 at St. Mary's Church, in New Haven Connecticut. Far ahead of his time, Father McGivney envisioned a lay group that would provide life insurance benefits to its members so that husbands and fathers could provide for their families in the event of death. Even more importantly, he saw the Order as a way of helping men live the Faith more wholeheartedly by following the principles of charity, unity, fraternity, and patriotism. It was a way for men to take some "ownership" of their faith and thus to fulfill better their vocations as husbands and fathers.

Father McGivney was not only visionary but also a natural leader. Nonetheless, it took a lot of perseverance to launch this new venture. Eventually, the new organization began to grow. Soon it spread throughout the United States, Canada, the Philippines, and Mexico. Today it is also found in many parts of Latin America and Poland and numbers over 1.8 million members; it is the largest fraternal organization in the Catholic Church. No organization in the Church provides more charitable services, project and program support, and volunteer hours than the Knights. Its insurance division is thriving not only in its size and scope and but also in its ethical integrity. True to the founder's original vision, the Knights continue to help men to practice the Faith, to be good husbands and fathers, and to provide for their families in the event of illness, need for long-term care, or death.

It is probably the case that Father McGivney could have successfully pursued a career in business. Instead, he answered God's call to be a parish priest (he was

ordained to the priesthood right here in Baltimore at the Basilica) and he led a truly holy life, proclaiming and bearing witness to the love of Christ. So it is not surprising that Father McGivney made charity the first principle of the Order. After all, God is love and Jesus revealed God's love for us. Jesus not only taught us to love God above all things and our neighbor as ourselves but He also made us participants in God's love so that we might love God as He first loved us. Father McGivney not only preached the message of God's love, he opened his heart to it and made charity the foundation of the Order. He led the Knights in expressing the divine love we share by building a tremendous legacy of service – in service of one, in service of all.

From the providing of wheelchairs and artificial limbs to the victims of the earthquake in Haiti, to offering assistance to the Special Olympics and the distribution of coats to young people in inner city neighborhoods during the winter, the Knights' service comes in many forms. The charity of the Knights is often experienced in parishes when Knights of Columbus, so often with support from their wives who make up the Knights Ladies, quietly reach out to those in need or undertake some project for the good of the parish. As mentioned earlier, the dollar value of Knights of Columbus charities, locally, nationally, and internationally – coupled with the tremendous number of volunteer hours – is amazing. In the midst of their charity they promote priestly vocations, foster family life, and defend the unborn and frail.

But that's not all. The Knights of Columbus do not substitute good works for practicing the faith. Quite the opposite. The charity of the Knights flows from the faith, worship, and moral teaching of the Church. The spirit of fraternity and unity that are characteristic of the Order helps Knights and their families not only to practice the Faith but to embrace it, to live it wholeheartedly, and to respond to their baptismal vocation to love.

I've been a Knight of Columbus for over 30 years. I was proud to be State Chaplain of the District of Columbia and for the past eight years to serve as Supreme Chaplain of the Order. I am grateful to the Supreme Knight, Carl Anderson, for the inspired leadership he gives to the Order and to the excellent leadership of the Order here in Maryland. I thank God for my association with the Knights because I believe wholeheartedly in the mission of the Order and I also believe that it reflects

the holiness of its founder, Father McGivney.

I hope many will come to see the Knights of Columbus as a path to deepening the faith, living their vocation more robustly, and leading a life of charity. It's not hard to join. Most of us carry the famous "Form 100"—the membership application—in our pockets. May I also invite you to pray for the canonization of Venerable Father McGivney whose cause is well underway. Please accept my warmest thanks!

To learn more about joining a Knights of Columbus council in the State of Maryland, visit [kofc-md.org](http://kofc-md.org).