

Knights of Columbus land in Baltimore, bearing \$1 million gift

Archbishop William E. Lori, supreme chaplain of the Knights of Columbus, welcomed their national and state leadership to Mass at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Baltimore Aug. 4.

The celebration came as several thousand Knights were preparing for their 136th annual convention, Aug. 7-9 at the Baltimore Convention Center. The convention's theme, appropriately enough, is "Knights of Charity."

Prior to 5:30 p.m. Mass, in a private moment with little fanfare, Supreme Knight Carl Anderson presented the Archdiocese of Baltimore with a \$1 million gift from the Knights for a new K-8 school to be built on Baltimore's west side.

More will be presumably said by the Knights and the archbishop when he celebrates an opening Mass for the convention Aug. 7. Recipients of the Knights' philanthropy, however, were quick to voice their praise.

If all goes well, the archdiocese will open in 2020 the first new Catholic school in the city in nearly six decades. The archbishop announced plans in April for the project, on the West Side. It would serve as the new home for Holy Angels Catholic School, currently operating on the campus of the former Seton Keough High School.

"The new school will be a beacon of hope for the children and families on the West Side of Baltimore City," said Kathleen Filippelli, principal of Holy Angels. "Archbishop Lori is filling a void that has existed there for many years. He is following the gospel message of Jesus Christ to serve the poor.

“Our city Catholic schools give life to children who may not otherwise have a peaceful, prayerful opportunity to be academically ready for college and career. Church needs to be in the mix of the life of the city. We stabilize and strengthen neighborhoods when we are present.”

The project will cost an estimated \$18.6 million. The gift pushed pledges over \$15 million.

“I am very grateful to the Knights of Columbus and all of the donors who have given so generously,” Filippelli said. “Education changes poverty in the lives of children. ... I am hopeful and excited for the families of West Baltimore.”

Filippelli, her Holy Angels students and the Ss. James and John Catholic School community were among those invited for the presentation of the Knights’ gift. Also on hand were James Sellinger, chancellor of education; Dr. Donna Hargens, superintendent of schools; and Dr. Camille Brown, associate superintendent.

Archbishop Lori’s [homily](#) on the 14th Sunday in Ordinary Time referenced the Knights’ deep roots in The Premier See, and specifically at the Baltimore Basilica.

It was there, in 1877, that Father Michael J. McGivney, who would go on to found the Knights of Columbus, was ordained a priest by Cardinal James Gibbons.

“Father McGivney,” the archbishop said, “offered his life to God and spent his whole life preaching, teaching, celebrating the sacraments, engaging his parishioners, caring for them in their needs, walking with them through thick and thin.

“And in the process he saw the needs for a fraternal organization to help the men of his parish be better followers of Jesus, better husbands and fathers, and to enable them to continue providing for their families in the event of death. Thus he founded his beloved Knights of Columbus.”

The archbishop found similar inspiration in the late Monsignor Art Valenzano, who was rector of the Baltimore Basilica “and wonderful (Knights) Council chaplain” before his [death from leukemia](#).

“It was only in the last weeks of his life that I truly discovered what a beautiful priest Monsignor Art really was,” the archbishop said. “When he was no longer able to say Mass publicly, he and I would celebrate the Mass in his room. As he prayed the Mass and held the host in his priestly hands, I saw in Monsignor Art a complete identification of priest and sacrifice.

“A priest who had given his whole life to Jesus and to his people – not looking for a miracle, not seeking his own comfort, only God’s will, nothing else.”

The archbishop related the example the two priests set to the lives to which the faithful aspire.

“We learn from Father McGivney and from Monsignor Art,” he said, “that the greatest thing we can have in our lives is true intimacy with Jesus, Eucharistic intimacy with Jesus, a true spiritual closeness in which our souls are not only nourished, but in which they become capable of loving God and others even more than we love ourselves.”