



# CHAPLAIN'S *report*

KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS *In service to One. In service to all.*

LEARNING THE FAITH, LIVING THE FAITH ♦ 1 COLUMBUS PLAZA, NEW HAVEN, CT 06510-3326, USA

## Faith, Reason and Human Life

*Reason and faith help us to recognize a person's humanity and dignity from the earliest stages of life*



**Archbishop  
William E. Lori**  
Supreme Chaplain

In 1965, a famous issue of *Life* magazine featured time-lapse photos of the development of an unborn baby. It was the first time that technology had allowed such clear pictures of nascent human life. When my high school

science teacher brought this issue of *Life* into the classroom as a teaching aid, none of us who saw those pictures doubted the humanity of that child.

Today's technology enables us to see and to know so much more about the gestation of a child in the womb. We can detect the unborn baby's brain waves, trace the development of genetic code and know when the baby can feel pain. The ultrasound machines that the Knights of Columbus has sponsored in so many places help expectant parents see for themselves the humanity of their tiny children waiting to be born. In other words, technology confirms what reason has always taught us: The unborn baby is a human being.

### IN DEFENSE OF REASON

For decades, pro-abortion forces have tried to obscure what science and human reason clearly show. These abortion advocates often describe the unborn baby as "a mass of tissue" and studiously avoid using the words "unborn baby." Instead, they opt for the word "fetus" and disguise the human features and characteristics of the child in the womb. They resort to saying that the beginning of human life is an unsolvable philosophical issue while ignoring the empirical signs of life.

More radical elements in the abortion camp admit that all the signs of the unborn child's humanity are present and accounted for — but then

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### FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

## Building a Culture of Life



**Father  
John P. Grace, O.S.A.**  
Director of Chaplain  
Programs & Development

So, it is January once again, and seemingly the world did not come to an end on December 21!

The Lord is offering us another year to live our lives and express our love for him and for one another.

May this New Year be one of many blessings as we bring about a renewal of our lives during this Year of Faith. We look forward with hope and confidence to peace and harmony in our homes, our country and around the world.

A number of reasons have spurred me on to change the pattern of these columns I have been writing over the past few months. Key #7 should be the next step in our process. However, for this month I am jumping forward to Key #10, which states:

### 10. Reinforce Knights of Columbus' emphasis on pro-life activities.

- Building a Culture of Life is a major goal of the Order at every level.
- Help council members and their families develop a pro-life mentality that will respect all human life from conception to natural death.

We are justly proud of our Knights who conscientiously dedicate time month after month in the cause for life. Yes, we are grateful for our pro-life — our people of life — mentality. There is a long list of activities carried out in all jurisdictions, as great respect is shown for all stages of the life cycle.

We live in a very divided country, here in the U.S. Many respect life from the moment of conception to natural death. This is the teaching of the Catholic Church, and as a consequence, it is the Knights of Columbus mentality. Others are not so convinced, as they prefer modification or conditions by which they approach capital punishment, euthanasia and abortion, and marriage and the family. Lamentably, there are those who seem to express total disrespect for any state of life that is vulnerable. You also have the half-hearted; those who say they are pro-life themselves but cannot express or profess the fact publicly nor impose it on others.

There are two main reasons for addressing the 10<sup>th</sup> Key at this time. During the month of January, numerous "Walks for Life" will take place. The second reason is broader in its aspect as we take up the desire of the bishops of the U.S. They have launched a pastoral strategy addressing critical life, marriage and religious liberty concerns. All this underlines our desire to respect all human life and the liberty to live that life as faithful Christians recognizing our Creator, our Redeemer, and our Salvation.

The Second Vatican Council expresses the Church's openness to the

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go on to assert that a child only becomes human when he or she is allowed to be born. Only then is the child granted the right to life. According to this view, it is not the Creator who grants life and the rights that are a part of our humanity, but rather human beings and the government itself. This has poisoned the public discussion of human rights and dignity around the world.

The Church's teaching on the dignity of the human person from the moment of conception until natural death is deeply rooted in what reason, science and sound ethics clearly show us. When the Church advocates publicly for the unborn and the vulnerable, she does not do so from a perspective of blind faith but from reason enlightened by faith. Faith sets in sharp relief what science and reason have already made plain, and this forms the only sound basis for public law and policy. That is why it is disingenuous for Catholic politicians to claim that they accept the Church's teaching on the sanctity of human life, but solely as a matter of faith or doctrine that cannot be imposed on secular society.

There is a growing cultural prejudice claiming that faith is akin to superstition, that it is irrational and even dangerous. To the contrary, faith and reason work together. Blessed John Paul II taught that, "Faith

and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth" (*Fides et Ratio*).

The faith we profess defends the capacity of reason for truth — the capacity to arrive at scientific and technological breakthroughs, but also the capacity to arrive at philosophical truths about the existence of God, about the dignity of the human person and about right and wrong. To advocate for abortion, a person must disregard the unwritten law of God in their own hearts, a law that teaches that killing an innocent human being is always and everywhere immoral.

In today's world, marked by so much skepticism and relativism, faith has become the great defender of reason. Please do not conclude from this that I have reduced the role of faith to that of being a mere cheerleader for reason. Faith is a door that leads us to Christ. When, in the power of the Holy Spirit, we open our hearts to Christ, he leads us to the Father and to the inexpressibly generous, creative and redemptive love of the Triune God. Faith is the door through which we pass to encounter that love for which we were created and for which we deeply long.

Whereas reason teaches us about the humanity and dignity of the human person from the first moment of conception, and ethics teaches us about our duty to respect and foster all innocent human life, faith gives us grounds for rejoicing in the gift of life as a gift of love and to go out of our way to defend, foster, protect and cherish each human life in public and in private. Our faith teaches us that each human being is called to eternal life and love in the presence of God. It negates nothing of what reason teaches us about life, but rather sheds the light of God's love upon it and gives us reasons for our hope. In the Gospel of John, Jesus says, "I came that they may have life and have it more abundantly" (Jn 10:10).

If religious freedom means anything, it means we are free to bring the truths and values that flow from reason and religious faith into the public square and to advocate for laws and policies that are shaped by those truths and values. As Catholics, our advocacy for life should always proceed from the perspective of a faith that defends and purifies human reason.

During this Year of Faith, let us resolve to redouble our efforts to advocate for the unborn and to defend the rights of private employers and churches to reflect profound respect for human life in their hiring practices and insurance benefits programs. May the voice of faith and reason cry out in defense of human life!

## Share Your Year of Faith Activities

The Year of Faith, proclaimed by Pope Benedict XVI, began on Oct. 11, 2012, and will end on the Feast of Christ the King, Nov. 24, 2013. It marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council and the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the promulgation of the Catechism of the Catholic Church. The work of Vatican II set the Church on the path of the Good Samaritan with faith expressed through acts of charity — a journey that it has continued into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It's a path that the Knights of Columbus has wholeheartedly embraced. Councils throughout the Order are now planning events to mark and celebrate the Year of Faith. We are interested in what your council may be planning and will possibly share your events with other Knights through this newsletter and other publications. Please send any information and photographs on your Year of Faith events to [knightline@kofc.org](mailto:knightline@kofc.org). We look forward to hearing from you.

### Here are some Year of Faith initiatives being undertaken by local councils:

Council 14250 in New Brighton, Minn., has a "Knighly Catechism" each month for members and non-member recruits after the regular business meetings. The council chaplain, Father Michael Skluzacek, leads the participants in a book study based on Matthew Kelly's *Rediscovering Catholicism*.

As a celebration of the Faith, Madonna Council 520 in Englewood, N.J., organized and assisted at an All Souls' Day Mass in a local Catholic cemetery's chapel. A Knight familiar with the history of the cemetery later led a walking tour, pausing at the gravesites of priests, war heroes and national or local historic figures while also pointing out examples of religious stained glass, Victorian cemetery sculpture and unusual stones.

## Sharing the Light of Christ

Staff of the Supreme Council headquarters in New Haven joined Knights of Columbus units throughout the world in illuminating a Christmas tree as part of the Order's tree and Nativity scene lighting initiative on Dec. 4. Father John Grace, O.S.A., director of chaplain programs and development, blessed the tree, and Deputy Supreme Knight Dennis Savoie offered remarks on the season to attendees. The event also included Christmas carols sung by performers in Victorian-era garb.

# Supreme Knight Calls on State Leaders to Engage in ‘Charity that Evangelizes’

Speaking to the state chaplains and state deputies assembled in Dallas, Texas, for the annual state deputies meeting, Supreme Knight Carl Anderson encouraged them in their charitable leadership and emphasized the importance of evangelizing through charity. Discussing his time in October in Rome as an auditor of the Synod of Bishops on the New Evangelization, he also called on Knights to strengthen Catholic families as a means of furthering the new evangelization. Both the Order's charity and its work to strengthen families spiritually must be oriented toward evangelizing, both in word and deed, a culture that is deeply in need of the Gospel's message of love.

With reference to the Order's charitable work, the Supreme Knight also announced that the Order had collected \$350,000 in donations for victims of Hurricane Sandy and had distributed \$500,000 in aid to the affected areas. Having visited the devastated areas of Staten Island prior to the meeting while helping to distribute relief supplies and funds to aid in the relief effort, Anderson singled out for special thanks the state deputies of New York, New Jersey and Connecticut, who have actively overseen Knights' relief efforts in areas affected by the storm.



## 10<sup>TH</sup> KEY, FROM PAGE 1

world and its sincere concern for the authentic development of the person. The Council's document *Gaudium et Spes* states: "The Church knows that her message is in harmony with the most secret desires of the human heart when she champions the dignity of the human vocation . . . Far from diminishing man, her message brings to his development light, life and freedom" (no. 21). Each person is made in the image and likeness of God and has incredible dignity and worth, according to the Church's teaching, and this is at the heart of the pro-life message. This must surely be the foundation and motivating principle for all our pro-life activities.

"Walks for Life" draw huge numbers of followers during January. These are impressive expressions of faith, of hope and of love. Of course, the media's rejection of these great events is expressed by their acknowledgement of the "hecklers" and small groups of objectors, while giving very little, if any, recognition of the whole purpose of the march. We thank and commend highly the organizers of these civil and peaceful demonstrations of solidarity with the Lord's gift of life and praise those who take part in the actual marches. Could we not encourage those who have never participated in such a march to do so this special year? Whatever the cost, they will be energized and very glad that they have done so. The presence of a family during the march — parents and children — would make a powerful pro-life statement to any observer.

I read a beautiful statement by Kimberly Baker that said: "In pro-life work, the focus on the sacredness of the person and the dignity of each individual is emphasized constantly for both the mother and her unborn child, for the elderly, ill and disabled, for the weaker and more vulnerable members of society, and for every single human being. Pro-life witness is an important part of sharing the faith because it gives hope to many who would otherwise feel dismissed, disregarded and unloved. Each of us can be an instrument of God's love to others, wherever we are."

Powerful words!

What we cannot achieve, the Lord certainly can. He asked the two blind men: "Do you believe that I can do this?" (Mt. 9:28). We all reply with the blind men: "Yes, Lord." Then he says to us: "Let it be done for you according to your faith," and we too can have our eyes opened.

May I suggest that we take up what the U.S. Bishops have indicated, as referred to on this website: [www.usccb.org/news/2012/12-212.cfm](http://www.usccb.org/news/2012/12-212.cfm). It says, "The U.S. Catholic bishops have launched a pastoral strategy addressing critical life, marriage and religious liberty concerns. The five-part strategy or call to prayer was approved by the bishops in November and is set to begin after Christmas. The overall focus is to invite Catholics to pray for rebuilding a culture favorable to life and marriage and for

increased protections of religious liberty. Campaign components include monthly Eucharistic holy hours in cathedrals and parishes, daily family rosary, special Prayers of the Faithful at all Masses, fasting and abstinence on Fridays, and the second observance of a Fortnight for Freedom . . . The call to prayer is prompted by the rapid social movements and policy changes currently underway."

We have work to do! Be not afraid!

Pray for us, and guide us, Father Michael McGivney, that we may continue to be imbued with your spirit.

God bless and keep you all during this New Year of grace and faith.

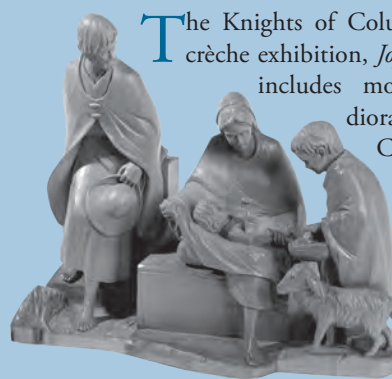
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## Crèche Exhibit at Knights Museum



The Knights of Columbus Museum's eighth annual crèche exhibition, *Joyeux Noël: Christmas in Canada*, includes more than 75 Nativity scenes, dioramas, statues and paintings from Canadian artists. This exhibition recognizes Canada's strong Christian devotion and popular celebration of Christmas by featuring crèches, sculptures and other forms of art. The crèche, or Nativity scene, has been enjoyed by French Canadians for centuries. Interest in the crèche has grown among other Canadian Christians as well. All the artwork included in the exhibit is of Canadian origin. Lenders include the world-famous St. Joseph's Oratory Museum in Montreal and the Rivière-Éternité collection from the Province of Quebec, as well as Canadian sculptors Timothy Schmalz and Antonio Caruso, two of Canada's finest living artists. Other Canadian crèches and art are on loan from the International Crèche Museum in Dayton, Ohio, and the Des Ruisseaux Collection in New Hampshire.



# Past Supreme Knight Receives K of C's Highest Honor

## *Gaudium et Spes Award Bestowed on Virgil Dechant*

Past Supreme Knight Virgil Dechant received the Order's highest honor at a dinner in Dallas, Texas during the annual midyear meeting. The *Gaudium et Spes* Award was established by Dechant in 1992, with Mother Teresa as its first recipient.

The award is named for the Second Vatican Council's Apostolic Constitution on the Church in the Modern World. Dechant is the award's tenth honoree. Other honorees include l'Arche founder Jean Vanier, Cardinal John O'Connor of New York, and Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone.

Cardinals Theodore McCarrick and Justin Rigali attended, joining Supreme Chaplain Archbishop William Lori of Baltimore and Archbishop Joseph Naumann of Kansas City in Kansas and a number of other bishops and priests, as well as Virgil Dechant's wife, Ann, members of their family, many of the past state deputies of Dechant's home state of Kansas, the state deputies and state chaplains, and the board of directors and members of the executive staff of the Knights of Columbus.

Cardinal McCarrick gave a speech recounting some of his fond memories of friendship and collaboration with Dechant for more than 50 years.

A video presentation highlighted some of the past supreme knight's notable accomplishments, especially in the areas of K of C membership, his emphasis on the inclusion of family members in the Order's activities, the professionalization of the insurance operation, the relationships built with the Vatican and the local Church, and the establishment of the *Gaudium et Spes* Award.

Supreme Knight Carl Anderson bestowed the award, with Supreme



*Supreme Knight Carl Anderson presents the Gaudium et Spes award to Past Supreme Knight Virgil Dechant, as his wife Ann Dechant looks on.*

Chaplain Archbishop William Lori reading the citation.

Receiving his award during the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of the opening of the Second Vatican Council, Dechant said that he accepted the award on behalf of all those Knights who had worked so hard to implement the teachings of the Council.

He informed those gathered in his honor that he would be donating the \$100,000 honorarium attached to the award to a K of C scholarship fund for seminarians.

Dechant also thanked Cardinal Theodore McCarrick for having first suggested that the Order open the cause of the Order's founder, the Venerable Servant of God Father Michael McGivney in 1977. Dedication to Father McGivney's vision, Dechant said, had transformed the Order.

The past supreme knight also praised the leadership of Supreme Knight Anderson, who succeeded him as leader of the Knights of Columbus, encouraging all those in attendance in their commitment to the Order and in their commitment to the leadership shown by the supreme knight.

## Nativity Scene Placed on Historic New Haven Green

The Knights of Columbus Supreme Council placed a crèche on New Haven's Green. The figures in the scene are resin versions of a wooden crèche made by Mexican sculptor Agustin Parra that was presented to the Vatican from the Mexican state of Jalisco in 2007.