



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

Making Intentional Disciples

Archbishop William E. Lori

Supreme Chaplain



Taken from Supreme Chaplain Archbishop William E. Lori's address to chaplains at the K of C Midyear Meeting

Iwould like to develop the theme that our central role as Knights of Columbus chaplains is making disciples. Years ago, when my own

father attended Knights of Columbus council meetings, I don't think there was much attention to spiritual development. And there were a lot of reasons for that.

In those days, nearly 75 percent of Catholics went to Mass on Sundays, and in our neighborhood, I would venture to say that almost every household prayed the rosary after supper, and almost every Saturday afternoon we confessed our sins. On Tuesday evenings, we watched Bishop Fulton Sheen on television — his award-winning series, "Life Is Worth Living." It was not an option in our house to switch the channel to watch Milton Berle.

I don't want to idealize those days; those who do idealize them probably never lived through them. I would submit that this applies also to the vocations of marriage and priesthood. Nonetheless, the practice of the faith was strong, and it probably didn't seem necessary at Knights of Columbus council meetings to engage in extensive spiritual formation of the membership.

Now, however, we find ourselves in a different situation. I don't have to describe it extensively, for it is a situation you and I face every day.

Today, in the United States at least, it is estimated that about 20-25 percent of our people come to Mass regularly. In many places, sacramental practice is in decline, most especially the Sacrament of Matrimony. For many, cohabitation seems like a better, less complicated option. The challenge of attracting "millennials" to the faith is also well-known. As I say, all of these pastoral challenges are part of daily life and ministry. With God's grace, with the support of one another and our people, we are not discouraged even as we are realistic about the magnitude of the challenge we are facing.

That challenge is not recreating what may have existed in the past but rather of responding to the situation as it is and as it likely will be. That situation has been described in many different ways. We are familiar with statistical and sociological studies, for example, which predict declining trends in religious practice as we move into the future. In many dioceses, parishes are being consolidated not only because of population shifts but also because of declining practice as well as the impact of a shortage of priests.

We are also familiar with various pastoral approaches that have been proposed — some of them promising, others, less so. At a deeper level, we are sometimes reminded that all this is not merely the result of sociological shifts or ordinary human weakness, but that something much deeper is afoot, and it's this: We are living in a culture that philosophers describe as "post-modern" — not an age of faith but an age of skepticism, an age when all truth-claims, except those that are empirical, are cast into doubt. It is also an age of deep skepticism about leadership, institutions

SEE **INTENTIONAL DISCIPLES**, PAGE 2

FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

The Pastoral Plan for Your Council

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Pope Francis makes clear in *Evangelii Gaudium* that he is proposing a pastoral program of conversion for the Church — which applies to every Knights of Columbus council. "I hope that all communities will devote the necessary effort to advancing along

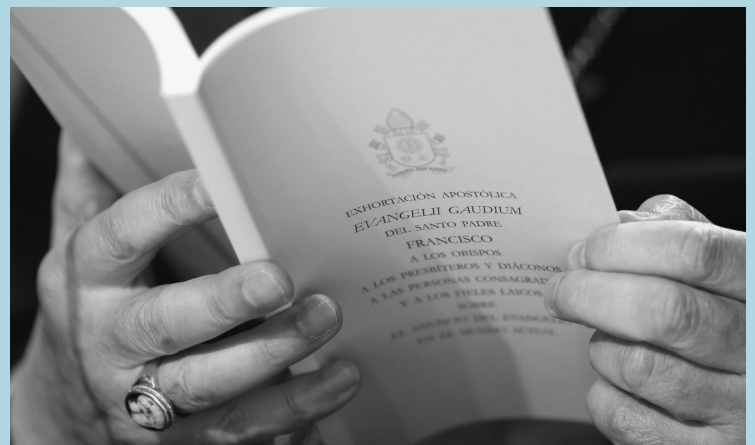
the path of a pastoral and missionary conversion which cannot leave things as they presently are. 'Mere administration' can no longer be enough. Throughout the world, let us be 'permanently in a state of mission'" (EG 25).

In calling our brother Knights and councils to a renewed sense of mission, the Holy Father has given us a mandate not to "become a useless structure out of touch with people or a self-absorbed group made up of a chosen few" (EG 28), but to be a source of enrichment, readily participating in the rich reality of the local parish. Abandoning the "complacent attitude that says 'we have always done it this way,'" Pope

Francis invites us "to be bold and creative in this task of rethinking the goals, structures, style and methods of evangelization" (EG 33).

In the New Year, it is our task as council chaplains to assist our

SEE **PASTORAL PLAN**, PAGE 3



(photo/Alessandro Bianchi, Reuters)

INTENTIONAL DISCIPLES, FROM PAGE 1

and structures, and this surely includes the structures and institutions of the Church.

Not surprisingly, the position of the Church in many countries has changed. In the United States, as elsewhere, we experience this shift in the various challenges to religious freedom that we are facing. It is not overt persecution that so many people across the world are facing but rather a chipping away, an erosion, of our most fundamental freedom that is going on for the most part under the surface.

Well, one thing we're all pretty sure of, we can't just do business as usual.

INTENTIONAL DISCIPLESHIP

It was Pope Paul VI who reminded us of the centrality of evangelization. Indeed, he reintroduced that very word into our Catholic vocabulary and prophetically taught us that evangelization is not merely a program to be done, but rather the Church's "deepest identity and mission." Even if, in 1975, such language seemed new, Pope Paul VI was describing what has been going on in the Church's life since the days of the Apostles and those who came after them.

We naturally think of holy priests and bishops who revitalized the Church's mission — for example, St. Charles Borromeo or St. John Vianney. We think of religious such as St. Dominic, St. Francis, St. Alphonsus Liguori, or heroic lay women and men who bore witness to the faith in ordinary and extraordinary ways.

Pope Paul VI and all the popes who followed him, including Francis, are saying to the likes of me and you: Now it's our turn. We are not breaking with the past, not disrespecting the past — but neither are we resting on the laurels of the past. Someone observed that our day and age in some respects resembles the situation of the early Church — not that Christianity has been outlawed or that we are about to be thrown to the lions. Rather, we are living in an increasingly secular society that leaves room for various forms of spirituality, some of them strange, but less room for religion — especially the truth-claims of religion.

Building on that insight, some have suggested that we learn from the experience of the early Church which, to say the least, had to find its way in a culture that was not welcoming. Again, we are not recreating the past but learning from it. And what we've learned is that the early Church rejected the paganism and immorality of the ambient culture but also sought to make connections with it.

Pope Benedict went so far as to describe Christianity's encounter with Hellenic thought and beauty as "providential." So too we have to connect with those whom we hope to attract to the faith, either to bring them back or to introduce them to religious faith. We have to connect with them at both a personal and cultural level, otherwise our efforts at evangelization remain superficial.

Given all the challenges that I've tried to describe thus far (and I hope that I am not depressing you), authors such as Sherry Weddell have suggested that, not unlike the early Church, we ourselves should be and become "intentional disciples," and with God's grace, we should be seeking to raise up intentional disciples among those with whom we minister and those we are privileged to serve.

I take it that an "intentional disciple" is the opposite of an "accidental disciple" — that is to say, someone who claims to be a Catholic Christian because he or she was born into a Catholic family or attended Catholic schools. When someone says to me, "I was an altar server," often my heart sinks a bit, because what this usually implies is: "And I haven't been to church since!"

Let's focus on the word "intentional." It has to do with closing the gap between the rich and beautiful teaching in Scripture, in tradition,

in the liturgy — articulated in our day as never before — and the lived experience of so many Catholic Christians, which barely scratches the surface.

What is lacking is not only an adequate knowledge of these riches but a conscious decision, inspired by the Holy Spirit, to follow Christ, or as Pope Francis put it in his encyclical, *Lumen Fidei*, "to gaze at Christ in faith." To be an intentional disciple is to make an act of faith that is not merely notional but is rather an entrustment of our whole lives to Christ our God.

It is an act of faith that shapes one's whole existence because it leads again and again to an encounter with Christ — an encounter which happens not only objectively but subjectively, *fides qua* and *fides quae*, as we say in the trade!

People don't get there automatically, as we know. They go through stages, beginning often with skeptical curiosity. We and those with whom we work have to be skilled in establishing an atmosphere of trust where the people we are hoping to attract can ask questions and ultimately be prepared to hear, for the first time, who Jesus is and what he has done to save us.

And then we ask for the grace to be catalysts in helping them to respond to their calling from God to be intentional disciples, those who have decided to embrace their faith fully and live it, and those who will be our co-workers in spreading the faith. And the more this happens in our parishes and faith communities, the more they become both evangelized and evangelizing.

THE UPSHOT FOR KNIGHTS

All of the above has something to do with the Knights. It relates very much to what the worthy Supreme Knight said to us: If we are serious about making "intentional disciples," then we need to turn to the Knights of Columbus. The men who actively participate in the council meetings, those who are involved in the service projects of the Order — these are the men who are likely to already be or are in the process of becoming intentional disciples; these are the men who are likely to be our best co-workers in evangelizing or re-evangelizing other men and their families. There are many fine men's groups and men's fellowships that have sprung up in parishes across the country, but none is as ready-made or as large as the Knights of Columbus. The field is fertile but we have to till it!

The spiritual formation which we should be aiming at is not merely the correction of catechetical deficiencies, important as that is; it is not merely informing brother Knights about the faith, important as that is; rather, it's something deeper — it's helping them to be those disciples who decide in God's grace every morning to follow Christ, to live their faith, to share their faith with their families and to bear witness to their faith at work.

Pope Francis reminded us recently that we do not live the faith alone but that we must do so in company with others. We priests know that from our own experience — none of us can really be effective in ministry without the support and friendship of brother priests, of good priestly friendships. The charity, unity and fraternity of the Knights of Columbus, as I said yesterday, is not an overlay on their Christian lives but rather goes to the heart of them.

We are not seeking street evangelists but men who will effectively bear witness to the faith in their ordinary, everyday lives — most especially in the way in which they live the vocation of marriage, join with their wives in communicating the faith to their children and bear witness to their faith to other couples, including fellow parishioners.

If our brother Knights and their families are serious Catholics, there will be no lack of opportunity for them to bear witness to Christ and to the Church.

MEMBERSHIP IN THE KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS is open to men 18 years of age or older who are practical (that is, practicing) Catholics in union with the Holy See. This means that an applicant or member accepts the teaching authority of the Catholic Church on matters of faith and morals, aspires to live in accord with the precepts of the Catholic Church, and is in good standing in the Catholic Church.

In Defense of the Culture of Life

With the anniversary of the infamous *Roe vs. Wade* decision, late January and early February will be times for discussions, sermons and homilies on the Culture of Life. Below are some quotes from Pope Francis on the topic that may be of use to you in preparing materials pertaining to the right to life.

“Even the weakest and most vulnerable, the sick, the old, the unborn and the poor, are masterpieces of God’s creation, made in his own image, destined to live forever, and deserving of the utmost reverence and respect.” — *Communiqué to the CBCEW (Bishops of Ireland, Scotland, England and Wales), July 17, 2013.*

“Human life must always be defended from its beginning in the womb and must be recognized as a gift of God that guarantees the future of humanity.” — *Letter to Brazilian families for National Family Week, Aug. 6, 2013.*

CALLED TO BE WITNESSES

“A widespread mentality of the useful, the ‘throwaway culture’ that today enslaves the hearts and minds of so many, comes at a very high cost: It asks for the elimination of human beings, especially if they are physically or socially weaker. Our response to this mentality is a decisive and unreserved ‘yes’ to life. ... Things have a price and can be sold, but people have dignity; they are worth more than things and are above price. So often we find ourselves in situations where we see that what is valued the least is life. That is why concern for human life in its totality has become in recent years a real priority for the Church’s Magisterium, especially for the most defenseless (i.e., the disabled, the sick, the newborn, children, the elderly, those whose lives are most defenseless).

“In a frail human being, each one of us is invited to recognize the face of the Lord, who in his human flesh experienced the indifference and solitude to which we so often condemn the poorest of the poor, whether in developing countries or in wealthy societies. Every child who, rather than being born, is condemned unjustly to being aborted, bears the face of Jesus Christ, bears the face of the Lord, who even before he was born, and then just after birth, experienced the world’s rejection. ... And every elderly person, even if he is ill or at the end of his days, bears the face of Christ. They cannot be discarded, as the ‘throwaway culture’ suggests! They cannot be thrown away! ...

“*Be witnesses and diffusers of the ‘culture of life.’* Your being Catholic entails a greater responsibility: first of all to yourselves, through a commitment consistent with your Christian vocation; and then to contemporary culture, by contributing to recognizing the transcendent dimension of human life, the imprint of God’s creative work, from the first moment of its conception. This is a task of the New Evangelization that often requires going against the tide and paying for it personally. The Lord is also counting on you to spread the ‘Gospel of Life.’”

— *Address to the International Federation of Catholic Medical Associations, Sept. 20, 2013.*

THE FOUNDATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

“Among the vulnerable for whom the Church wishes to care with particular love and concern are unborn children, the most defenseless and

Pope Francis Documentary Available on DVD

Francis: The Pope From the New World is now available on DVD through Amazon.com. The production features interviews with Pope Francis’ friends and associates in Argentina, as well as with American commentators such as Supreme Knight Carl Anderson and members of the hierarchy, including Cardinal Timothy Dolan, Cardinal Sean O’Malley, Archbishop Charles Chaput and Archbishop Jose Gomez. The world has been fascinated by our new Holy Father, but many people still do not fully know the man who is now our pope.



This film introduces viewers to Jorge Mario Bergoglio — the man who became Pope Francis — and his life story, from his childhood and the patronage of his local soccer team to his vocation and time as a priest, bishop and cardinal-archbishop of Buenos Aires. For more information on the film, visit PopeFrancisDocumentary.com.

PASTORAL PLAN, FROM PAGE 1

brother Knights in adopting this “missionary key” which must be at the heart of every activity of the Knights of Columbus. Pope Francis clearly puts this responsibility on our shoulders as chaplains: “In all places and circumstances, Christians, with the help of their pastors, are called to hear the cry of the poor” (EG 191). In a world of consumption, distraction and increasing self-centered lifestyles, Pope Francis asks us to remember the poor: “We may not always be able to reflect adequately the beauty of the Gospel, but there is one sign which we should never lack: the option for those who are least, those whom society discards” (EG 195).

The poor have much to teach us about the saving power of Christ at work in their lives. “We are called to find Christ in them, to lend our voice to their causes, but also to be their friends, to listen to them, to speak for them and to embrace the mysterious wisdom which God wishes to share with us through them” (EG 198). The charitable works of our councils first serves to evangelize our brother Knights, who can encounter the suffering Christ among the poor.

In particular, our brother Knights can assist us, as priests, with meeting the pressing spiritual challenge identified by Pope Francis: “I want to say, with regret, that the worst discrimination which the poor suffer is the lack of spiritual care. The great majority of the poor have a special openness to the faith; they need God and we must not fail to offer them his friendship, his blessing, his word, the celebration of the sacraments and a journey of growth and maturity in the faith. Our preferential option for the poor must mainly translate into a privileged and preferential religious care.” I ask each of our council chaplains, in imitation of Father McGivney, to seriously accept this renewed call to pastoral and missionary conversion and to seek ways of implementing this in every council. I invite your feedback and shared practices as you respond to this urgent task of proclaiming the Gospel with joy.

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CULTURE OF LIFE, FROM PAGE 3

innocent among us. Nowadays efforts are made to deny them their human dignity and to do with them whatever one pleases, taking their lives and passing laws preventing anyone from standing in the way of this. Frequently, as a way of ridiculing the Church's effort to defend their lives, attempts are made to present her position as ideological, obscurantist and conservative. Yet this defense of unborn life is closely linked to the defense of each and every other human right. It involves the conviction that a human being is always sacred and inviolable, in any situation and at every stage of development. Human beings are ends in themselves and never a means of resolving other problems. Once this conviction disappears, so do solid and lasting foundations for the defense of human rights, which would always be subject to the passing whims of the powers that be. Reason alone is sufficient to recognize the inviolable value of each single human life, but if we also look at the issue from the standpoint of faith, 'every violation of the personal dignity of the human being cries out in vengeance to God and is an offence against the creator of the individual.' (*Christifideles Laici*, 37).

"Precisely because this involves the internal consistency of our message about the value of the human person, the Church cannot be expected to change her position on this question. I want to be completely honest in this regard. This is not something subject to alleged reforms or 'modernizations.' It is not 'progressive' to try to resolve problems by eliminating a human life. On the other hand, it is also true that we have done little to adequately accompany women in very difficult situations, where abortion appears as a quick solution to their profound anguish, especially when the life developing within them is the result of rape or a situation of extreme poverty. Who can remain unmoved before such painful situations?"

— *Apostolic exhortation Evangelii Gaudium (213-214), Nov. 24, 2013.*

Charitable Activity Reflection

Below you will find a reflection for spiritual growth after charitable outreach composed by Bishop Bryan Bayda of the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of Saskatoon. Please share this with your council, especially following your good works for the community and those in need.

1. Our Father...
2. Reflect on the following questions:
 - In what ways did God call me to serve others today?
 - What sacrifices help me participate in this charity?
 - With whom and for whom am I doing this activity?

How do I ...

- see Christ in those I serve?
- see Christ in those who volunteer with me?
- share my faith with others in action and word?
- be evangelized by others doing charitable work?
- surrender, so God can use me to evangelize others?
- build unity, fraternity, family and a vibrant parish?
- follow the example of Venerable Father McGivney?
- follow the example of Saint Juan Diego?

3. Prayer of Dedication:

Our Lady of Guadalupe and God-Bearer! The Holy Father calls you the Star of the New Evangelization. Your image has and continues to evangelize me and millions of souls. You always lead us to your Son.

I cherish my encounters with Him and I pray that, through your intercession, this encounter will lead me to conversion, communion and solidarity, nourished by Christ in scripture and receiving Him frequently in the Eucharist. May I encounter Him in everyone, especially the poor. Thus, may I become a better instrument of evangelization to my family, friends, brothers and sisters in Christ.

Through the example and virtuous life of Venerable Father Michael McGivney and Saint Juan Diego, I ask this through Christ, Our Lord.

Amen.