



# 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

## FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

# Acting Side by Side

### Father Jonathan D. Kalisch, OP

Director of Chaplains and Spiritual Development



It may come as a surprise to you that loneliness among men is making headlines. Billy Baker raised awareness of this threat in a *Boston Globe* article titled “The biggest threat facing middle-age men isn’t smoking or obesity. It’s loneliness.” (March 9, 2018). Baker highlights the trend experts have noted: As men age, and their lives become overscheduled with work and family responsibilities, they let their close friendships lapse. The result can be social isolation, depression and an uptick in various diseases, with premature death rates equivalent to that of long-term smoking.

Acknowledging this potential looming “killer,” and addressing some of the roots of its causes, may be a good first step to assisting our brother Knights and their friends in overcoming the epidemic of masculine loneliness. The dependence on and overuse of personal tech gadgets, the constant running from one event to another, and the staggering rate of busyness leads to frequent excuses not to foster genuine ties of fraternity and friendship.

Baker’s article focuses on the importance of the masculine bond that comes with doing things together. “Men need an activity together to make and keep a bond. ... We need to go through something together. That’s why, studies have shown, men tend to make their deepest friends through periods of intense engagement, like school or military service or sports.” Baker notes that researchers have spotted a trend in photographs: While women are often seen talking face to face, “guys stand side by side, looking out at the world together. But in the middle years of life, those side-by-side opportunities to get together are exactly the sort of things that fall off.”

As Catholic priests, we can attest firsthand to the necessity of prayer, silence and fraternity in order to function as the men God made us to be. The charisma of fraternity left by Father McGivney in founding the Knights of Columbus is a remedy the world continues to need. Baker ends his article with the advice of experts: “The best way for men to forge and maintain friendships is through built-in regularity — something that is always on the schedule.”

Perhaps the masculine loneliness epidemic is just the impetus your council needs to reach out in a new way to the brothers, sons and friends of the parish. A good place to begin is by reading and discussing with men Bishop Olmsted’s *Into the Breach*, which highlights the need for fraternal groups that help men support one another and hold each other accountable. A day of reflection or a spiritual retreat on this topic can also galvanize brother Knights and other men of the parish to step up and begin addressing this timely spiritual issue.

Let us redouble our efforts this Easter season to encourage our brother Knights to allow the joy of the Resurrection to manifest itself in a fraternity that overcomes every division, isolation and loneliness. *Vivat Jesus!*



Photo by Thomas Serafin

*Researchers have spotted a trend in photographs: While women are often seen talking face-to-face, ‘guys stand side by side, looking out at the world together.’*

## 55th World Day of Prayer Offers Opportunity to Launch Vocations Project

April 22 — the 55th World Day of Prayer for Vocations — is the perfect time for your council to launch an initiative benefiting men and women discerning the priesthood or religious life.

Start by having your council plan a vocations awareness event or Refund Support Vocations Program (RSVP) fundraiser. Encourage them to lead the Prayer for the Canonization of Michael McGivney before each council meeting and Mass; as a priest and an apostle of Christian family life, Father McGivney is a great intercessor. *Prayer cards* (#10502-A) can be ordered from [knightsgear.com](http://knightsgear.com), while videos and materials on promoting vocations are available at [kofc.org/vocations](http://kofc.org/vocations).

*“No vocation is born of itself or lives for itself. A vocation flows from the heart of God and blossoms in the good soil of faithful people, in the experience of fraternal love.”*

-Pope Francis, May 11, 2014

Visit [www.kofc.org/chaplains](http://www.kofc.org/chaplains) to sign up to receive future issues of this newsletter via email. Previous issues are also archived at this site.

# Why Encourage Membership in Knights? It's an Opportunity to Grow in Jesus Christ

BY FATHER BENEDICT CROELL, O.P.

*Since 2010, Father Benedict Croell has served as director of vocations for the Dominican Province of St. Joseph (Eastern) at the Dominican House of Studies in Washington, D.C. He previously served in parish, university and itinerant preaching ministries. He also served five years in the Order's East African missions, where he was novice master for young men from seven countries in their initial stage of formation.*

The Dominican Friars have felt a certain affinity with the Knights of Columbus over the years because Venerable Father Michael J. McGivney is entombed in St. Mary's Church in New Haven, where the Knights was founded. The Dominican Friars were privileged to be invited to take over St. Mary's shortly after Father McGivney was assigned to a different parish. The connection with Father McGivney is more than the parish itself, though. In fact, everything Father McGivney stood for in his founding of the Knights is everything we want for the young men coming to discern a vocation with us.

We have a general principle from which we work in encouraging men who feel the call: Be active in your Catholic faith and build up the Church. We want them to be socially connected with both men and women in good, healthy relationships. In particular, to follow the Lord Jesus, they should be especially connected with other young Catholic men. College-age or young adult men need a strong fraternity within a Christian community of men who can help them navigate today's ambient culture. Where do young university-age or young professional-age men find this countercultural Catholic fraternity? The Knights of Columbus!

During my eight years as vocation director, our friars and I have visited more than 45 (mostly secular) college campuses. Our sense is that the role of men, especially fathers and husbands, is under attack in a big way in our culture. The whole vocation to be a man and to be a follower of Jesus Christ is being thwarted in various ways. Young men need to understand by the guidance of the Church's teachings what it means to be a young man; what it means to be masculine; what it means to follow Jesus Christ; what it means to be in the world, but not to be of the world; what it means to love your country. All of the things that the Knights of Columbus stands for are the kinds of qualities that we look for in young men who want to become Dominicans. This begins with being a college Knight and continues as they mature.

With the assistance of the Knights of Columbus on college campuses, young men come "to mature manhood, to the extent of the full stature of Christ" in Jesus Christ (Eph 4:13). After they go to college, some guys "go off the deep end" and lose their bearings and, many times, their faith. What better place for them to make their own choices in life, away from home and family, than within a campus ministry that has a dynamic college council?

I have seen how a strong college council actually strengthens the campus ministry. On most campuses we have visited, there are disproportionately more women than men. Why is that? Where are all the men?

While the culture is strong, college and young adult Knights provide a Catholic identity to universities and young adult ministries. The Knights are a way to strengthen and build up the Church.

I've also found that when a man finishes college and goes into the world (say, for example, he moves to Washington, D.C., to get a job and is trying to find his way), the Knights of Columbus offers a great opportunity to really be connected. While the Knights are an independent Catholic organization, their role as men is to build up the Catholic faith and be leaders.

A lot of young men have received everything from everyone else their whole life. The Knights of Columbus enables young men to give back and be involved with their community and the local Catholic community. College students and young adults are called to build up the Church — now, not later.

We Dominicans have three super active young adult ministries within the D.C./Baltimore area. One is at our parish at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore; one is at our seminary, the Dominican House of Studies; and the last is at St. Dominic Church in Washington, D.C. Young men and women join these groups because they're searching for their way in life. I also think a lot of them are looking to find their future spouses. Such young adult groups can be found across the country in most big cities.

If these young adult groups also knew the Knights of Columbus, I think not only would the young Catholic men be strengthened, but the groups and ministries themselves would be strengthened by the Knights. Some young men will meet their future spouses, and some will also discover their vocation to the priesthood or religious life!



Photo by Spirit Juice Studios

*Father Croell served as a chaplain for college Knights during a special pilgrimage just prior to World Youth Day Kraków 2016. Here he walks along Poland's Tatra Mountains with Father Gabriel Gillen (left), who served as a media consultant for the K of C-sponsored Mercy Centre.*

# Planning the Months Ahead

## MAY

Honor the mothers of your parish on May 13. As both Mother's Day and the memorial of Our Lady of Fatima fall on this day, it's the perfect opportunity for Knights to distribute *The Message of Our Lady of Fatima* (#341) and lead a rosary for the intentions of all mothers of the parish.

Have brother Knights lead a parish campaign to collect items for women's shelters or pro-life pregnancy centers.

Celebrate Pentecost, May 20, with a family party following your most popular parish Mass. Welcome your brother Knights and their families to run this event, and ask them to reach out to the men and women who joined your parish family at the Easter Vigil.

## JUNE

Work with council officers to hold a Father's Day Affirmation of Wedding Vows during or following all Masses celebrated June 16-17. Be sure to preach on the Church's understanding of marriage and fatherhood on the days leading up to the event. For more information, visit [kofc.org/domesticchurch](http://kofc.org/domesticchurch).

Inspire fathers in your community by sharing the resources provided by Fathers for Good. Fathers for Good addresses the main concerns facing men: faith, family, finances, the domestic church, love and marriage. For more information, visit [fathersforgood.org](http://fathersforgood.org).

Mark the feasts day of Sts. Thomas More and John Fisher, who were imprisoned and killed for their faithfulness to the Church's teachings. In honor of the saints, lead your council members and parishioners in praying for those who are imprisoned. Encourage your parishioners and brother Knights to consider volunteering in prison ministry.

Celebrate the solemnities of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, June 23. Offer to bless images of the Sacred Heart for families to display in their homes.

# Supporting Vocations for Nearly 4 Decades

*For 37 years, the Knights of Columbus Refund Support Vocations Program (RSVP) has brought countless men and women the joy of pursuing their vocations without financial worry.*



Photo courtesy Columbia Magazine

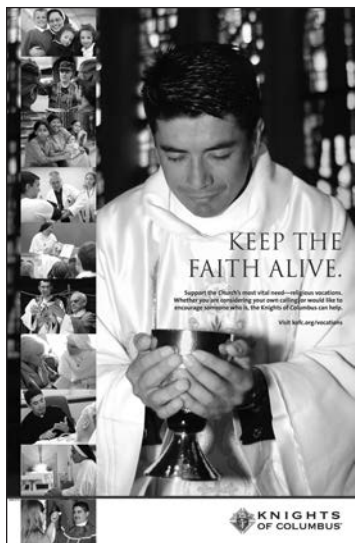
*Josh Bathon, seminarian, Notre Dame, Ind.*

Every priest knows the financial concern that accompanies discernment. It's getting worse each year, as students attending private 4-year colleges can see tuition averaging \$32,000 annually. Additionally, men pursuing the priesthood must consider the cost of the six to seven years of academic studies required by most dioceses.

This is where RSVP comes in: Through this program, councils "adopt" one or more seminarians or postulants, providing them with financial assistance and moral support.

Please lead your council in a RSVP fundraising event. After 37 years, it's still a great way for your council to invest in the future of our Church.

## Jesuits, Knights and Vocations: One Unique Scholarship



Since 2016, the Jesuits of the Midwest Province have provided a unique scholarship for Knights of Columbus members attending college in Wyoming, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Indiana, Kentucky, Ohio and most of northern and eastern Illinois. How did this scholarship come to be? Jesuit vocation directors realized that over 25 percent of their incoming novices were college Knights, and they wanted a way to encourage such vocations. This scholarship was the perfect solution! Details can be found by contacting the K of C College Councils & Young

Adults Outreach team at [kofc.org/un/en/college/contact.html](http://kofc.org/un/en/college/contact.html).

### BEST PRACTICE

## Engage Vocation-minded Knights and Parishioners

One of the most vital practices of a Knights of Columbus chaplain is to encourage an open dialogue about vocations among young Knights and parishioners.

A great way to begin is by sharing vocational materials and information through parish bulletins, church message boards and social media.

One excellent resource is Diocesan Priest, which offers guidance for the question "Is Jesus Christ calling me to be a Catholic priest?" The organization's website, [diocesanpriest.com](http://diocesanpriest.com), helps visitors discern, live out the Catholic faith and seek vocational guidance. Check out their great social media feed at [diocesanpriest.com/social](http://diocesanpriest.com/social).

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## Holy Spirit and Seat of Wisdom

*A Prayer by St. John Paul II*

*“Having accomplished the work that the Father had entrusted to the Son on earth (cf. Jn 17:4), on the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit was sent to sanctify the Church forever, so that believers might have access to the Father through Christ in one Spirit (cf. Eph 2:18).”*

Holy Spirit and Seat of Wisdom, help us in the great endeavor that we are carrying out to meet on a more and more mature way our brothers and sisters in the faith. Through all the means of knowledge, of mutual respect, of love, may we be able to rediscover gradually the divine plan. Teach us constantly the ways that lead to unity.

Help us all to proclaim Christ and reveal the power of God  
and the wisdom of God hidden in His Cross.

How greatly I desire to entrust to you all the difficult problems of the societies, systems, and states — problems that cannot be solved with hatred, war, and self-destruction, but only by peace, justice, and respect for the rights of people and nations. Amen.