



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

Mary and the Consolation of Mercy

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When we are confronted with the agony of suffering, our response can seem wholly inadequate, if not absurd. How can anyone console the sorrowful, as we are called to do by the spiritual works of mercy? Moreover, how can one forgive the evil that has been done and bear wrongs patiently?

During this month of May, we can recall the consoling role of the Blessed Virgin Mary at the foot of the cross. In *The Virgin Mary and the Priesthood*, Cardinal Pierre Paul Philippe writes that Mary's pure heart, which had never known sin, counterbalanced "the suffering which the numberless sins and abominations of the world had placed" on the Lord Jesus. "There was at the foot of the Cross, at least one creature who understood perfectly the mystery of His Heart and the reason for His Incarnation and Passion." The union

of the Immaculate Heart of Mary and the Sacred Heart of Jesus on Calvary "contains the entire mystery of compassion." The love on display in the consoling presence of the Blessed Mother at the foot of the cross is the fruit of friendship that results from a mutual compenetration of hearts and minds. As Philippe writes, "Our Lady continuously offered Christ to the Father at the foot of the Cross as she had offered Him at the Temple. ... Thus for the Blessed Virgin, as in the case of every one of her children, the union with the Passion of Christ consists essentially in an act of love."

Contemplating the mystery of the consoling presence of the Blessed Mother at the foot of the cross can begin to help us in our own dealings with those in the midst of evil and even with those who have inflicted acts of evil upon others. Mary loves sinners because her Son offered his life for them. Daily we turn to Mary to ask her intercession for "us sinners." May we come to know the reality of how much she loves us.

As the grace of the Easter season in the Year of Mercy unfolds, let us invite our brother Knights and their families to deepen their sharing in the mystery of mercy through a renewed outreach of consolation to those who are under their own crosses. May the testimony of forgiveness of St. John Paul II — who forgave his would-be-assassin 35 years ago — penetrate even the hardest of hearts to open to the grace of forgiveness.

Vivat Jesus!

The Unparalleled Forgiveness of St. John Paul II

In December 2014, a lone man made his way through the Vatican, two dozen white roses in hand. He laid them at the tomb of St. John Paul II, who had visited him in jail exactly 33 years before.

This same man, Mehmet Ali Agca, had shot John Paul II on May 13, 1981, while the pope greeted visitors attending an audience in St. Peter's Square.

Supreme Knight Carl Anderson discussed the moment in his address at the Divine Mercy Congress in Kraków, Poland, Oct. 4, 2011. "Agca tried to kill him, and his wounds from that assassination attempt continued to be a source of suffering for him throughout the rest of his life."

The supreme knight continued, "The real hallmark moment was afterward: when he left the Vatican and sat down in a prison to speak with and forgive the man who tried to kill him."

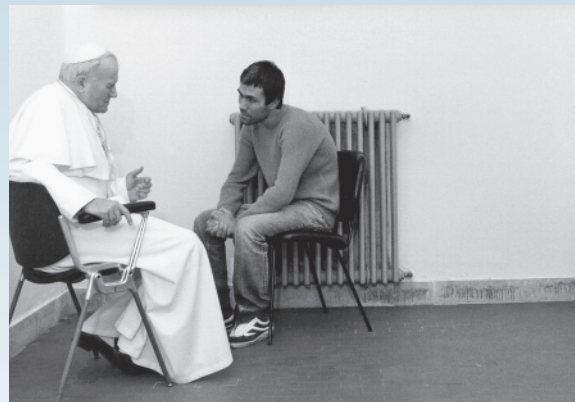
The pope had already publicly forgiven Agca before visiting the Roman prison where he was being held. There, Agca and his intended victim spoke privately together, with the pontiff personally extending his forgiveness.

Who can forget this example of mercy and forgiveness? Certainly not Agca, who had been sentenced to life imprisonment for his attempt on the pope's life. The sentence was shortened at the personal request of Pope John Paul II.

In an interview published in *Columbia*, March 2011, former-Supreme Knight Virgil Dechant shared his memories of the shooting, which took place only steps away from the altar where John Paul II is now buried.

"Father John McGuire headed up the Catholic Information Service and our vocations program at the time. He and I had been invited to the World Congress on Vocations in Rome in 1981. It was a Wednesday, and we went to the papal audience with Count Enrico Galeazzi [the Order's representative in Rome] and with Archbishop Lino Zanini. We had a front row seat, and we were waiting for the pope. When he went out into the crowd, we heard the shots ring out. The pigeons flew everywhere, and we knew the pope was shot. I recall that very well."

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Pope John Paul II talks with his would-be assassin, Mehmet Ali Agca, in a Rome prison in 1983, two years following the attempt on the pontiff's life.

Visit www.kofc.org/chaplain to sign up to receive future issues of this newsletter via email. Previous issues are also archived at this site.

Families, Become What You Contemplate!

By Father Luis Granados, DCJM

Almost 35 years ago, St. John Paul II sent this message to the Catholic families of the world: “Become what you are!” (*Familiaris Consortio*, 17). At first, this exhortation may strike us as a paradox. Wouldn't it be better to say “Family, become what you are not?” How can we become something we already are?

Every family is a gift and has a task. As the tree is already present in the seed and in the little sprout, the seed of holiness is present in each family. Therefore, St. John Paul II speaks to families: Become what you already are. You are a blessing and a gift to the Church. You also have a task: You are called to holiness and perfection in love.

In the words of John Paul II, who is known as the pope of the family, we discover his great trust in the family. Paraphrasing both his words and those of St. Catherine of Siena, we could say if the family becomes what it is, it will set the whole world on fire (cf. St. John Paul II, Homily, 20 Aug. 2000; Catherine of Siena, *Letter 368*). If the family lives truly as a domestic church, faith will be transmitted to the next generations and evangelization will experience a profound renewal.

How can we help the family become what it is and what it is called to be? Through practices of contemplation. We become what we contemplate, just as we become what we read and what we eat. When we spend time with someone, we tend to become like him. When we

consider the examples of the great saints and heroes of our nation, we realize that mediocrity is not an option. Instead, we must think, “If the family of Nazareth or the family of Lisieux did this, why not my family? Why not me?”

Our supreme knight has recently invited us to introduce or support the *Posadas* in our parishes. This popular family tradition helps families contemplate the journey of Joseph and Mary from Nazareth to Bethlehem. It “teaches each new generation that the Holy Family is not some abstraction or ideal, but an actual family that daily faced the difficulties of real life” (*Columbia*, April 2016). Through traditions like the *Posadas*, families contemplate the Holy Family and become like it. Contemplating St. Joseph, fathers and husbands learn prudence and true devotion; contemplating Our Lady, wives and mothers progress in their pilgrimage of faith.

“Family, become what you are.” As priests we contemplate Christ every day during the sacrifice of the holy Mass. As priests for the family, we are called to help families contemplate the Holy Family of Nazareth. Through the Holy Family they can remember the beauty of their vocation. Our parishes, therefore, are called to promote practices that will help families contemplate the first domestic church.

A member of Dr. Earl C. Bach Council 3340, Father Granados helped establish the Toward a Family Friendly Parish program at St. Mary Catholic Parish in Littleton, Colo. The 12-month program, whose focus is to draw families closer to each other and to their parish family, was the model of the Knights of Columbus' Family Fully Alive program. *Building the Domestic Church: The Family Fully Alive* booklets (#10162, available free of cost, only shipping charges apply) can be obtained by contacting the Supply Department at 203-752-4214. A copy of this booklet and additional resources are available at www.kofc.org/familyfullyalive. To order additional items mentioned in this newsletter, please visit www.knightsgear.com.

Altar in Saint John Paul II Shrine Dedicated



Members of the Knights of Columbus Board of Directors and their wives attend a Mass for the dedication of the altar in the Luminous Mysteries Chapel of the Saint John Paul II National Shrine in Washington. Supreme Chaplain Archbishop William Lori of Baltimore was the principal celebrant and homilist for the Mass, held on April 2, 2016, vigil for the feast of the Divine Mercy and 11th anniversary of Pope John Paul II's death. This year marked the first time since the year of John Paul II's death in 2005 that the vigil fell on April 2.

The Hallmarks of the Christian Life

Excerpts from a homily of Pope Francis given on April 3, the Feast of Divine Mercy

The Gospel of mercy remains an open book, in which the signs of Christ's disciples — concrete acts of love and the best witness to mercy — continue to be written. We are all called to become living writers of the Gospel, heralds of the Good News to all men and women of today. We do this by practicing the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, which are the hallmarks of the Christian life. By means of these simple yet powerful gestures, even when unseen, we can accompany the needy, bringing God's tenderness and consolation.



Pope Francis greets the crowd after celebrating Mass on the feast of Divine Mercy in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican, April 3.

Monthly Suggested Activities

MAY

- Celebrate the feast of the Ascension (May 5), the memorial of Our Lady of Fatima (May 13) and Pentecost Sunday (May 15).
 - ✦ Host a “Dry the Tears” prayer vigil in solidarity with the jubilee event conducted by Pope Francis at the Vatican. The event — to be held on the evening of Ascension Thursday — will focus on consoling those who have spiritual anxieties or physical concerns.
 - ✦ Lead the parish in a rosary novena to conclude on the memorial of Our Lady of Fatima. As this year’s feast marks the 35th anniversary of the assassination attempt on St. John Paul II, consider preaching on the saint’s devotion to Our Lady. You could also distribute *The Message of Our Lady of Fatima* (#341) or *Mary, Mother of God* (#324). For more information on these booklets offered by the Catholic Information Service, please visit www.kofc.org/cis.
- Honor the mothers of your local community following weekend Masses on Mother’s Day, Sunday, May 8. Invite your parish’s Squires to organize a Mother’s Day flower sale and encourage your brother Knights to support local mothers in need by donating supplies to women’s shelters or crisis pregnancy centers.
- Encourage the members of your council and parish community to celebrate the solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ (May 29).
 - ✦ Ask Knights to help distribute Holy Communion to the sick or homebound. Or, ask their assistance in contacting families of homebound parishioners and local hospitals’ chaplaincy services with details about your parish’s distribution of Communion.

JUNE

- Celebrate the solemnities of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (June 3) and the Immaculate Heart of Mary (June 4). Offer to bless images of the Immaculate and Sacred Hearts for families to display in their homes.
- Work with council officers to plan your parish’s Renewal of Wedding Vows program, to be held on Father’s Day, June 19. Several weeks prior to the event, be sure to preach on the Church’s understanding of marriage and fatherhood. For program materials, visit www.kofc.org/domesticchurch.
- Offer encouragement to fathers in your community by speaking on the gift, privilege and responsibility of fatherhood. For further ideas and support materials, visit www.fathersforgood.org.

Upcoming Jubilee Events

May 5 — “Dry the Tears,” a prayer vigil for all those in need of consolation

June 1 — Jubilee for priests

June 10 — Jubilee for the sick and persons with disabilities

The Best Practice for the Month

An excellent practice among Knights of Columbus chaplains is teaching Knights and parishioners that the mission of the Catholic Church expands far beyond the confines of their parish community.

Encourage Knights to help your parish embrace the work of the universal Church. For example, organize parish events to run simultaneously with the jubilee events conducted at the Vatican. Invite all the parishioners to a “Dry the Tears” event — mirroring the event which Pope Francis will hold on the evening of Ascension Thursday — to pray for and offer consolation to those suffering spiritual anxieties or physical concerns. Don’t forget your council can greatly assist with your planning efforts and help promote the event.

We would like to produce a listing of other commendable practices that we can consider for possible publication each month. If your council has established a practice that demonstrates a chaplain’s role in enhancing the spiritual life of Knights and their families, please send the information to chaplains@kofc.org.

FORGIVENESS, FROM PAGE 1

“They took the pope out in a jeep behind the side gates as we were sitting there. ... For about an hour we sat with them [the Polish nuns from the papal household and Cardinal Andrzej Maria Deskur] while listening to a small radio, and we prayed. Finally, the cardinal looked up at an image of Our Lady of Czestochowa and said, ‘You know, today is the feast of Fatima. She will save him.’ Just like that, he made a pronouncement, and the sisters and everybody smiled. It was quite an experience.”

Pope John Paul II likewise attributed his survival to the Blessed Mother. A year later, he visited the shrine of Our Lady of Fatima, placing the bullet intended to kill him into her statue’s crown. He prayed that through Our Lady’s intercession the mercy of God would shine upon the world: “In your motherly heart you feel all the struggles between good and evil — between light and darkness — that convulse the world. ... Take under your motherly protection the whole human family, which with affectionate love we entrust to you, O Mother. May there dawn for everyone the time of peace and freedom, the time of truth, of justice and of hope.”

John Paul II was shot at close range, but the bullet would not end his life. Rather, it became a symbol of the forgiveness and love that the saint extended to everyone and remains a lasting reminder of God’s mercy on the world.



Pope John Paul II lies injured in his jeep after being shot by Turkish gunman Mehmet Ali Agca, May 31, 1981, in St. Peter’s Square.



KNIGHTS
OF COLUMBUS®

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report

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*Knights of Columbus carry a statue of Our Lady of Family
in a procession in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican.*

Prayer to Mary, the Light of Hope

*From St. John Paul II's prayer consecrating the entire world
to Our Lady of Fatima, May 13, 1982.*

Immaculate Heart of Mary,
help us to conquer the menace of evil,
which so easily takes root in the hearts of the people of today,
and whose immeasurable effects already weigh down
upon our modern world. ...

Accept, O Mother of Christ, this cry
laden with the sufferings of all individual human beings,
laden with the sufferings of whole societies.
Help us with the power of the Holy Spirit to conquer all sin:
individual sin and the "sin of the world," sin in all its manifestations.

Let there be revealed once more in the history of the world
the infinite saving power of the Redemption:
the power of merciful love.

Amen.