



## To the Knights of Columbus

As the Supreme Council of the Knights of Columbus gathers in Washington, DC for its 121<sup>st</sup> Annual Convention, I take this opportunity to greet all the Knights and their families. May the deliberations of the Supreme Council provide inspiration and wise counsel to the more than 1.6 million Knights worldwide who daily strive to live as disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ, to work for the growth of his Mystical Body, the Church, and to contribute to the building of a society ever more fully shaped by the truth of the Gospel.

The theme of the present Convention - *Building a World of Justice and Mercy, Freedom and Peace* - evokes the great vision of the Old Testament Prophets who foretold the dawn of God's Kingdom on earth and the coming of the Messiah who would rule the world in justice and judgment (cf. Is 11:4-5). A sustained meditation on this prophetic vision of a world transfigured by God's grace should naturally flow from the continuing contemplation of the face of Christ which I have proposed to the whole Church as a particular inheritance of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000 (cf. *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 16). It is my hope that your Order will carry on the great work of spiritual renewal begun on the eve of the Jubilee by encouraging its members to grow in a living faith capable of discerning the authentic signs of the times, judging all worldly realities in the light of the Gospel, and working to ensure that every sphere of personal, social and political life is enlightened by the values of the Gospel.

Commitment to building a world marked by justice and mercy, freedom and peace has been a hallmark of the Knights of Columbus since their

foundation. The spiritual legacy of your Founder, Father Michael McGivney, has borne abundant fruit in an impressive network of social services, forms of charitable assistance, programs of educational and religious formation, and generous contributions to the apostolic works of the Church, both local and universal. Father McGivney's vision remains as relevant as ever in the changed circumstances of today's Church and society. At a time when many people throughout the world are experiencing uncertainty and fear about the future, and Christian faith is increasingly considered to belong only to the sphere of private belief and personal life, the Knights of Columbus are challenged to reaffirm their confidence in the power of God's word to shed light on, and offer solutions to, the grave problems affecting individuals and society. By bearing witness to the "faith which works through love" (Gal 5:6), the Knights can offer our world a powerful sign of the presence of God's Kingdom and an attractive invitation to rediscover the reasons for the Church's hope.

This witness to a hope that does not disappoint (cf. Rom 5:5) is especially important at a time when the Church in many parts of the world has been tried severely. I wish to state once more my appreciation for the daily encouragement and support given by the Knights to Bishops, priests and religious, as well as the continuing commitment of your Order to support vocations to the priesthood and the consecrated life. By their example as Catholic men, husbands and fathers, their witness of love for the Church and their fidelity to her teaching, the Knights have contributed significantly to the Church's interior renewal and her mission of evangelization. I am particularly grateful for the support which the Knights have given in the public forum regarding freedom in education, the

truth about marriage and family life, and the need to respect the dignity and rights of each human person, from conception to natural death.

In this Year of the Rosary, I encourage the Knights of Columbus to take up this outstanding “prayer for peace” (*Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, 40) and to entrust to the merciful hearts of Christ and his Mother all the aspirations and needs of the Church and our world. May the contemplation of the luminous mysteries of Christ’s earthly ministry enable Christians to become ever more fully “the light of the world” (Mt 5:14) and to work single-heartedly for the advancement of his Kingdom. With these sentiments I commend all the Knights and their families to the loving intercession of Mary, Queen of the Rosary, and cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing as a pledge of joy and peace in Jesus Christ her Divine Son .

From the Vatican, July 25, 2003

Joannes Paulus II