



To the Knights of Columbus

As the Supreme Council of the Knights of Columbus prepares to celebrate its 109th Annual Meeting in St. Louis, I once again offer cordial greetings and the assurance of my spiritual closeness to all the Knights and your families. This yearly assembly enables the Supreme Council to review the efforts and achievements of the past year and to commit your Order anew to the noble ideals of fraternity and service of the Church laid down by your Founder. I pray that these deliberations will provide fresh guidance and direction to the Knights as you strive to bear witness to Christ by working zealously for the extension of his Kingdom on earth.

This year, as part of the celebrations marking the centenary of the Encyclical Rerum Novarum, I have invited the faithful to deepen their knowledge of the Church's social teaching and strengthen their commitment to applying it to the urgent questions facing society (cf. Centesimus Annus, 56). One hundred years ago, at the height of the controversies surrounding the "worker question", the Church's right and duty to address important social issues with principles drawn from the teachings of Gospel was forcefully affirmed by Pope Leo XIII. The publication of the Encyclical Rerum Novarum was itself part of a larger movement by Catholic workers, intellectuals and pastors who sought to meet the social

challenges of their time in the light of their faith in Christ the Redeemer. The establishment of the Knights of Columbus was an important aspect of that vast movement, and it is appropriate that during this year we should give thanks for the outstanding service which your Order has rendered on behalf of justice, peace and increased solidarity, not only in the United States but also in other parts of the world.

Among the pressing social issues of our own time is the presence of such new and profound threats to human life as those posed by the legalization of abortion and various forms of euthanasia. In the face of ways of thinking and political choices which tend to judge the value of human life in purely utilitarian terms and to exalt a freedom detached from the requirements of the objective moral law, the Church increasingly feels the duty to call upon all believers to affirm the sacredness of life at every stage of its development and to join forces with all people of good will in striving to ensure that it is adequately protected in every society. By reason of your Order's distinguished record of concern for the poor, the disadvantaged and the unborn in particular, I am confident that the Knights of Columbus will continue to be in the forefront of the Church's efforts to promote a "culture of life" (cf. Centesimus Annus, 39), one which fully respects the spiritual dimension of human existence and the sublime dignity of

each individual, created in the image of God and destined for eternal life in Christ.

Grateful for the fidelity and zeal with which the Knights of Columbus have cooperated in the Church's mission, I gladly assure you and your families of a continued remembrance in my prayers. Commending you to the loving intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church, I gladly impart my Apostolic Blessing as a pledge of abundant grace and peace in the Lord Jesus Christ.

From the Vatican, July 4, 1991

Joannes Paulus II