



To the Knights of Columbus

Once again I offer you my prayerful good wishes on the occasion of the Annual Supreme Convention, being held this year in Anaheim, California. This yearly assembly enables the Supreme Council to commit your Order ever anew to the noble ideals of fraternity and service of the Church laid down by your Founder, the Servant of God Father Michael McGivney. I pray that the meeting will provide inspiration and guidance to all the Knights of Columbus as they strive to bear witness to Christ by working zealously for the spread of his Kingdom on earth.

The theme of this 120th Supreme Convention – “Now is the Time for the Great Catch” – is a summons to ever deeper trust in the Lord’s command to “put out into the deep” (cf. *Lk* 5:4) in obedience to his word. As I noted in my Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, this invitation – *Duc in altum!* – is directed to the whole Church at the dawn of the third millennium. The years of spiritual preparation for the Great Jubilee, the immense outpouring of grace symbolized by the opening of the Holy Doors of the great Roman Basilicas, and the lively sense of mission which followed the

experience of the Holy Year were an incentive to Christians everywhere “to remember the past with gratitude, to live the present with enthusiasm and to look forward to the future with confidence” (*ibid.*, 1).

Now indeed is the time to “put out into the deep”, without fear or hesitation! As the experience of the Great Jubilee made clear, at the heart of the new evangelization there must be a fresh blossoming of holiness in the Church (cf. *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 30-31). For this reason, I am most pleased that the Knights have continued to emphasize the need for profound spiritual renewal as the basis for the many and varied initiatives undertaken in support of the Church’s mission. The recent Knights of Columbus Eucharistic Congress marked a significant milestone in the life of your Order, providing new impetus for your efforts to meet the tasks and challenges facing the Catholic laity at this critical moment in the Church’s history. As “the vital and enduring center around which the entire community of the Church is gathered” (*Ecclesia in America*, 35), the Eucharist is at once the source of every apostolate and the Church’s greatest spiritual treasure. May a deep and abiding devotion to Jesus Christ, present in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar, mark the spiritual life of every

Council, inspire an ever more vigorous apostolate of service to Church and community, and bring about that transformation of society in accordance with God's will which is the essence of the lay vocation.

Conscious that this year's Supreme Convention is taking place at a time of painful purification and great suffering for the Church in the United States, I take this opportunity to echo the gratitude expressed by so many Bishops and priests for the spiritual and personal support given to them by the Knights of Columbus in their local and state Councils. As the Church in America seeks to move forward with sincere faith and confidence in the Lord's sustaining grace, I urge all the Knights and their families to intensify their prayers for the authentic renewal of ecclesial life and the preservation of "that unity which has the Spirit as its origin and peace as its binding force" (*Eph* 4:3). In this context, I express once more my gratitude for the Knights' unfailing commitment to promoting vocations to the priesthood and the religious life. Experience has shown that the more the lay apostolate develops, the more strongly the need for priests is felt; and the more the laity's own sense of vocation is deepened, the more deeply is the unique role of priests appreciated.

In this spirit I pray that the Knights of Columbus, in full fidelity to the vision of Father Michael McGivney, will make every effort to draw young people to Jesus Christ and help them to understand that the true meaning and value of life is found in the generous gift of self to God and to others. In this way a new generation will discover at the heart of the Church the spiritual resources necessary for building a society marked by authentic freedom, respect for the demands of truth and selfless concern for the good of all, especially the poor and the underprivileged.

With these sentiments I commend the deliberations of the Supreme Council to the loving intercession of Mary, Mother of the Church. To all the Knights and their families I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing as a pledge of abiding joy and peace in our Lord Jesus Christ.

From the Vatican, July 10, 2002.

Joannes Paulus II