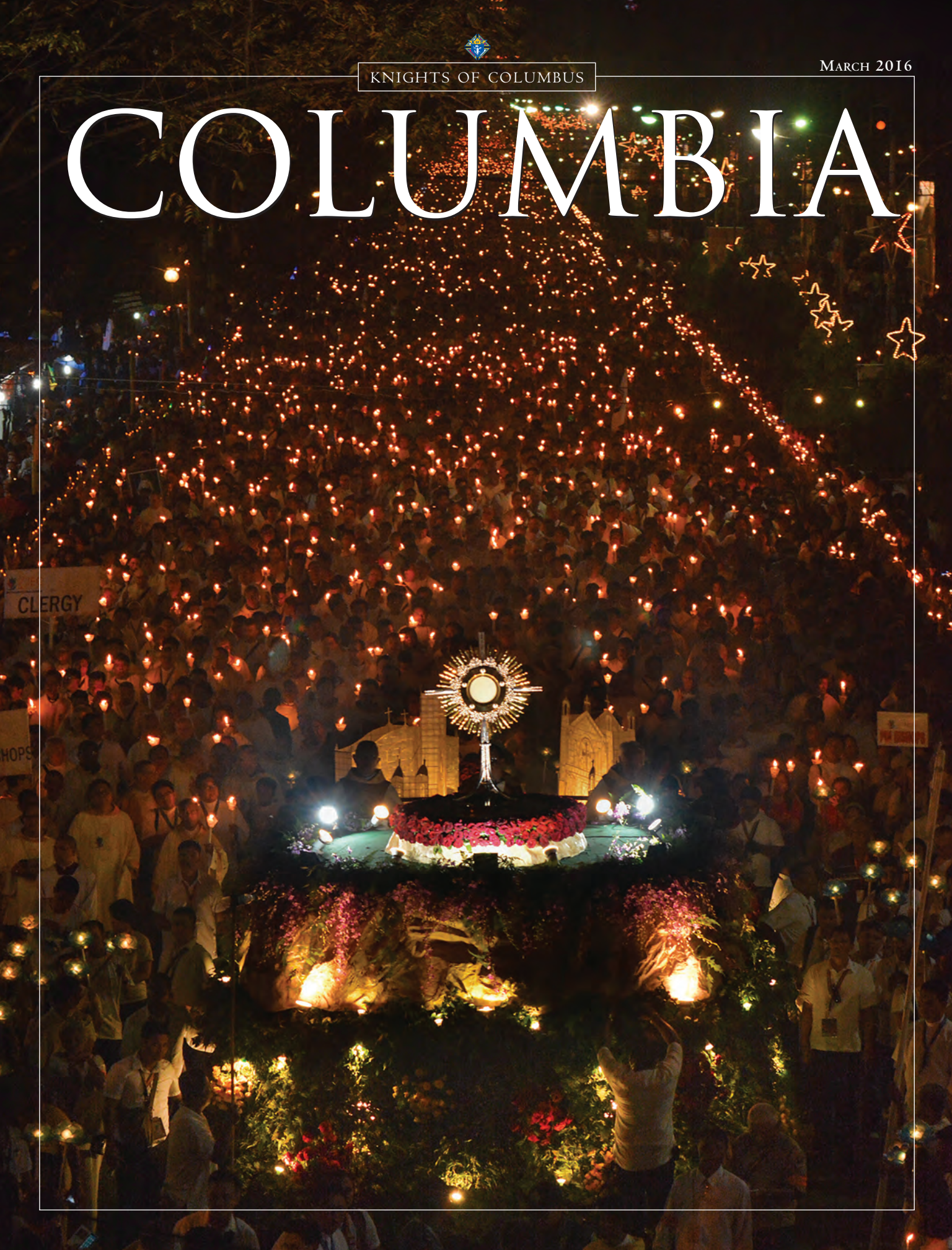




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MARCH 2016

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COLUMBIA

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On the Path to Life

EACH YEAR, the Mass readings for the Thursday after Ash Wednesday focus less on repentance and fasting than on a fundamental choice. Moses speaks to the people of Israel at the threshold of the Promised Land, urging them to follow the commandments and flee from idolatry: "I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Choose life, then, that you and your descendants may live" (Dt 30:19). In the Gospel reading, Jesus challenges his listeners, "If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it" (Lk 9:23-24). In each case, there are two alternative paths — one that leads to life and one that leads to death.

St. John Paul II also recognized a clear choice between life and death in the moral and spiritual challenges of our time. He wrote in his encyclical *Evangelium Vitae* that we are "in the midst of" a great conflict, that "we are facing an enormous and dramatic clash between good and evil, death and life, the 'culture of death' and the 'culture of life'" (28). In turn, Pope Francis has not only adopted this language regarding a clash of "cultures," but has expanded it.

In addition to the "culture of death," Pope Francis has often referred to a "throwaway culture" that sees the weak and defenseless as disposable; a "culture of relativism," which "drives one person to take advantage of another, to treat others as mere objects"

(*Laudato Si'*, 123); and the "globalization of indifference" toward God and neighbor. He has further decried a "culture of the provisional" that sees nothing as definitive and a "culture of comfort, which makes us think of only ourselves" (Homily, July 8, 2013). In response, the Holy Father has called on the Church to build an authentic "culture of encounter" and a "culture of solidarity, mercy and compassion."

When seen together, it becomes clear that the choice presented by Moses, the Lord's invitation to carry one's cross and follow him, and the conflicting "cultures" today are all closely related. Each comes down to a choice: Do we recognize that we are created by God for communion with him and one another, and strive to live accordingly, or are we instead resolved to answer to no one but ourselves?

This issue of *Columbia* includes several stories about people who, inspired by faith, have reached out in charity and made personal sacrifices in response to the needs of those on the margins of society. In doing so, they bear witness to Christ, who both reveals the mercy of God the Father and "fully reveals man to man himself" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 22). As we celebrate the Paschal Mystery, there is no better time to take stock of our relationships with God and others, and to recommit ourselves to following Christ on the path to life. ♦

ALTON J. PELOWSKI
EDITOR

Prayer Time: A Collection of Catholic Prayers

The booklet *Prayer Time: A Collection of Catholic Prayers* (#309) is an invaluable resource for growing in faith and devotion. Part of the Veritas Series published by the Order's Catholic Information Service, it includes numerous traditional prayers and devotions, prayers for various intentions, helps from the Catechism, guidance on the sacrament of reconciliation and family prayer, and more. To download or order this and other Catholic resources, visit kofc.org/cis.



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ON THE COVER

The Blessed Sacrament is carried through the streets of Cebu City, Philippines, accompanied by more than 1.5 million people during the International Eucharistic Conference Jan 29.



Consecration and Renewal

Councils can strengthen Catholic family life through our prayer program and consecration to the Holy Family

by Supreme Knight Carl A. Anderson

IN MY COLUMN last month, I related a part of the conversation the supreme chaplain and I had with Pope Francis regarding our Order's new emphasis on strengthening Catholic family life.

During the last fraternal year, we implemented a new family life program titled Building the Domestic Church: The Family Fully Alive. Each month, it provides prayers, Scripture readings and meditations for families on different aspects of the domestic church and recommends charitable activities that councils can sponsor. At last August's Supreme Convention, we began our 17th Order-wide rosary-based pilgrim icon prayer program — this year dedicated to the Holy Family.

Then, at the midyear State Deputies meeting, I announced an important new initiative: Building the Domestic Church While Strengthening Our Parish. It encourages councils to sponsor programs promoting Catholic family life while integrating their activities more closely into the life of their parish.

Last month, I asked that the opening Mass at all state conventions this year include an act of family consecration to the Holy Family. This should become an essential part of our family life programs, and should move from state convention Masses to the parishes where our local councils are based.

The response of Pope Francis and of many bishops and priests to these programs has been greatly encouraging, and I now take this opportunity to announce another expansion of our initiative.

Our Holy Family Prayer Program has met with such success that we should take it to a new level. I have asked our state deputies and state chaplains to continue our Holy Family Prayer Program in local parishes, but also to select one Saturday this October to offer the program as a diocesan-wide event, and to invite all Catholic families.

The diocesan-wide event should retain the rosary, papal meditations on

Millions of families can be helped by coming together in solidarity with and for each other.

family life, and the litany to the Holy Family that is already a part of the parish-based prayer program. But it should be expanded to include recitation of the new act of family consecration to the Holy Family and solemn Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

State councils should begin now to make preparations for this diocesan-wide Holy Family Prayer Program. State chaplains should also assist in selecting a suitable parish in each diocese and in coordinating the event with the local bishop.

Recently, Pope Francis reminded us that the Church continues to propose marriage “not as an ideal only for a few” but as “a reality that can be experienced by all the baptized faithful.”



This is precisely the idea of our program. Every family can benefit, and every family should be invited to participate.

One of the great lessons of the recent World Meeting of Families in Philadelphia was that millions of families can be helped by coming together in solidarity with and for each other.

What is also necessary for an effective evangelization of family life is for Catholic families to realize that the principles of charity, unity and fraternity apply also to them as families. This is one of the keys to understanding the

family as a “domestic church.”

There is no Catholic organization better positioned today to assist in the renewal of family life than the Knights of Columbus. But the realization of this goal will require the renewed dedication of our local councils.

A renewal of Catholic family life can begin with a simple plan: the consecration of millions of Catholic families to the Holy Family and their dedication to living as a domestic church within their parish communities.

The Knights of Columbus can begin to make this happen. With the intercession of Our Lady of Guadalupe and our venerable founder, Father McGivney, let us begin!

Vivat Jesus!



Caught Up Into Divine Love

*Amid both difficulties and joys,
the vocation of marriage and family
is a call to reflect the love of God*

by Supreme Chaplain Archbishop William E. Lori

THE SECOND VATICAN Council taught that “authentic married love is caught up into divine love and is directed and enriched by the redemptive power of Christ and the salvific action of the Church” (*Gaudium et Spes*, 48). To some, this might sound idealistic, out of touch with the daily challenges of living the vocation of marriage and family. People might ask: “Is my love for my spouse and my children ‘caught up into divine love’ when I’m struggling to support my family or just trying to keep peace among my children?”

There’s no doubt that families today face tough challenges. In fact, the vocation of marriage and family has always been challenging. But the best way we can defend marriage and family is by living this vocation to the fullest.

BUILT ON FAITH

More than 50 years ago, the fathers of Vatican II recognized that marriage was threatened by divorce and so-called “free love,” and that “married love is too often dishonored by selfishness, hedonism, and unlawful contraceptive practices.” The council also cited the economic, social and psychological pressures facing families in the modern world (*GS*, 47).

For the past five decades, societal support for marriage and family has eroded even further. But there’s no sense in longing for the good old days or just complaining about the way things are.

Instead, more and more couples must make a conscious decision to make their homes truly a domestic church — a home built on the solid rock of faith. Families are made beautiful by a self-giving love that not only endures but flourishes amid sacrifices and sufferings. Such a home, rooted in faith and love, bears witness to Christ and his love for his people. Such a home bears witness to the beauty and nobility of the vocation of marriage.

Go to the Source of the divine love we share by taking part in the Church’s liturgical celebrations during Holy Week.

As the cultural erosion of authentic marriage continues, one thing might be clearer than ever: A couple cannot go it alone. There’s really no way to live the vocation of marriage *without* getting caught up into divine love. Far from being a starry-eyed notion, this is the only way to transform life’s sufferings and inconveniences into moments of grace.

In the famous words of Jesuit Father Pedro Arrupe, “Nothing is more practical than finding God, that is, than falling in love in a quite absolute, final way.” When a couple has fallen in love, not only with each other but with God in this absolute and final way, they will come to see even the most



difficult moments of life as an invitation to love God more deeply and to bear witness to his love “in season and out of season, whether convenient or inconvenient” (cf. 2 Tm 4:2).

SAVING MYSTERIES

This leads me to offer a suggestion to all families attracted to the idea of living as a “domestic church,” and of having their all-too-human love caught up and transformed by divine love. It’s not novel but it is powerful, and it’s something almost every family can do. My suggestion is that we, as families and as a family of faith, go to the Source of the divine love we share by taking part in the Church’s liturgical celebrations during Holy Week.

I can almost hear objections: “My kids will never sit still that long.” “Don’t you know what it means just to get my family to church on Sunday?” “How will my 13-year-old manage to sit through a two-and-a-half hour Easter Vigil?” Formidable objections, all! And it’s true that I probably *don’t* have a realistic idea of how hard it is, especially for young families, to spend *that* much time in church, even if these are the holiest days in the year! After all, the only things I have to pack up are my crozier and miter, not a diaper bag, blankets or toys. Nonetheless, let me stand my ground.



LEARNING THE FAITH, LIVING THE FAITH

Holy Week and Easter are not just a collection of solemn ceremonies. This is the time when the Church re-lives and vividly reenacts all that our Redeemer did to bring about our salvation — the Lord's triumphal entry into Jerusalem, the Last Supper with his Apostles, his suffering and death on the Cross, and the victory of his Resurrection. We not only recall but also encounter palpably God's utterly generous, self-giving love — that divine love which must enfold our marriages and families. Holy Week, and specifically the Easter Triduum, is the apex of the Church's

liturgical year and brings us, again and again, to the epicenter of the Church's faith. Here is where our baptismal call to love is nurtured; where my vocation as a priest is renewed; where the vocation of marriage and family is caught up into Christ's sacrificial love for his Bride, the Church.

So, how can you and your household prepare to take part in these liturgical celebrations? There's no magic formula, but I do think it's helpful if, during Lent, getting ready for Holy Week becomes a family project. For parents, this might mean reading in

advance the prayers and Scripture readings for Holy Week and meditating for a few moments each day on what the Lord has done to save us. There are also many online and print resources to help parents teach their children about the events of Holy Week and about what to anticipate in the liturgy itself.

So with that, I wish you and your family a blessed Holy Week and a Happy Easter. May you and your household truly rejoice to be caught up into the self-giving love of our crucified and risen Redeemer! ♦

HOLY FATHER'S PRAYER INTENTIONS

Offered in Solidarity with Pope Francis

UNIVERSAL: That families in need may receive the necessary support and that children may grow up in healthy and peaceful environments.

EVANGELIZATION: That those Christians who, on account of their faith, are discriminated against or are being persecuted, may remain strong and faithful to the Gospel, thanks to the incessant prayer of the Church.



POPE FRANCIS: CNS photo/Paul Haring — LUIGI ROCCHI: Courtesy of Father Dino Ramaccioni (Recanati, MC, Italy)

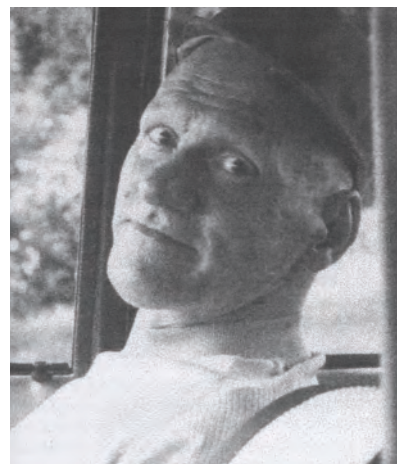
CATHOLIC MAN OF THE MONTH

Venerable Luigi Rocchi (1932-1979)

THE OLDEST of three children, Luigi Rocchi was born in Rome on Feb. 19, 1932. Two years later, his parents, a mechanic and a homemaker, moved north to Tolentino, where Rocchi would live with them for the rest of his life.

A lively boy who loved to play games, Rocchi struggled to run and at age 4 was diagnosed with muscular dystrophy. Though a strong student, constant falls later forced Rocchi to leave high school. At age 20, Rocchi entered into a long period of crisis as the disease confined him to a wheelchair. Having always yearned to marry and have a family, he now saw himself as a “nothing.”

Then, at age 28, he met Giulio, a man who was twisted by arthritis into a “human ball of yarn” and yet radiated serenity and joy. Rocchi later wrote that this encounter, together with the words his mother spoke to him every night — “Luigino, Jesus loves you” — opened his heart. “I don’t care if I’m healed on the outside, heal me on the inside,” he recalled praying to Our Lady at the time. “Don’t let me be a man for myself, make me a man for others.”



In time, Rocchi embraced his suffering as a gift and a mission. Typing with a stick fastened to his forehead, he wrote over 1,700 personal letters of counsel and consolation to people who sought meaning in their suffering. He also wrote articles, gave weekly radio addresses and received a constant stream of visitors who were drawn to his humility, courage and wisdom. “I am not a hero, or a saint,” he wrote. “I’m only someone who has put himself in God’s hands, believes in his love and lets himself be led.”

Luigi Rocchi died at age 47 on March 26, 1979, and was declared Venerable by Pope Francis on April 3, 2014. ♦



NFL Hall of Famers Help Distribute Coats Before Super Bowl



On Feb. 1, the Monday before the Super Bowl, California Knights of Columbus and Supreme Advocate John Marrella joined Football Hall of Famers Anthony Muñoz (Cincinnati Bengals) and Dave Casper (Oakland Raiders); Raiders Head Coach Jack Del Rio and his wife, Linda; and several current NFL players and coaches to distribute new coats to more than 270 needy students of Our Lady of the Visitation School in San Francisco. Sponsors of the Knights of Columbus Coats for Kids event included Catholic Athletes for Christ, the Raiders Foundation, the Jack and Linda Del Rio Foundation and the Anthony Muñoz Foundation. This winter, the Knights of Columbus distributed more than 78,000 coats in 1,600 communities throughout the United States and Canada.

Knights Lead 51st International Eucharistic Congress

ONE YEAR AFTER Pope Francis made his historic visit to the Philippines in January 2015, the nation hosted the 51st International Eucharistic Congress in Cebu City, Jan. 24-31. Archbishop Jose Palma of Cebu, a member of the Knights for nearly 40 years, served as the host of the congress.

Bringing together some 15,000 official delegates from around the world, the congress featured presentations by clergy and leading theologians, catechetical sessions, youth rallies, visits to local parishes and charitable outreach to the poor, the imprisoned and those still suffering from the devastating effects of Typhoon Haiyan in 2013. A number of members of the hierarchy who are also longtime Knights of Columbus delivered addresses, including Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle of Manila, Cardinal Orlando Quevedo of Cotabato, and Cardinal Timothy Dolan of New York.

Among the highlights of the weeklong gathering was an evening torchlight eucharistic procession with more than 1.5 million participants stretching over five kilometers. Earlier in the week, 5,000 children received their first holy Communion.

With more than 350,000 members of the Knights of Columbus in the predominantly Catholic country, Knights were a visible presence as hundreds served as congress delegates and many others were key figures in the Masses, presentations, processions and publicity. In addition, the Supreme Council was a major sponsor of the congress, providing funding for the satellite uplink that broadcast the proceedings worldwide and for the publication of a daily



A Fourth Degree honor guard accompanies (from left) Cardinal Orlando Quevedo of Cotabato, papal envoy Cardinal Charles Bo of Yangon, Myanmar, and Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle of Manila at the International Eucharistic Congress in Cebu City, Philippines.

newspaper and other media materials that were provided free to all participants.

In a satellite telecast that was broadcast at the conclusion of the congress, Pope Francis said, “The theme of the Eucharistic Congress — ‘Christ in You, Our Hope of Glory’ — is very timely. It reminds us that the risen Jesus is always alive and present in his Church, above all in the Eucharist. ... It is also a summons to go forth, as missionaries, to bring the message of the Father’s tenderness, forgiveness and mercy to every man, woman and child. How much our world needs this message!” ♦



A Clean Heart

An interview about the U.S. bishops' new pastoral statement on pornography

by Brian Caulfield

In November 2015, the U.S. bishops approved a statement titled *Create in Me a Clean Heart: A Pastoral Response to Pornography*. Andrew Lichtenwalner, executive director of the Committee on Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, spoke with Fathers for Good editor Brian Caulfield about the statement, which outlines the harms pornography inflicts on individuals, families and culture, and which offers guidance and hope. Lichtenwalner is a member of Sacred Heart Council 2577 in Bowie, Md. For more information, visit usccb.org/cleanheart.

COLUMBIA: Why have the U.S. bishops issued this statement now?

LIGHTENWALNER: Pornography has always been a challenge, but at no time in history has it been so pervasive and damaging. The Internet and mobile technology make pornography readily available not only at home and at work, but virtually anywhere. It reaches young people and even children in ways never before possible, and some experts have documented its addictive nature. The bishops recognized the serious challenge facing marriages and families, as well as the need for a renewed encounter with Jesus Christ and his mercy.



COLUMBIA: What does the term “pastoral response” mean?

LIGHTENWALNER: *Clean Heart* is “pastoral” because the bishops, as pastors (shepherds), wanted the statement “to give a word of hope and healing to those who have been harmed by pornography and to raise awareness of its pervasiveness and harms.” It is primarily addressed to Catholic leaders and parents but also seeks to encourage all who need support. Jesus Christ is at the center of the statement, which seeks to point people to his mercy and healing, through his Church, and to the many resources available to help people cultivate the virtue of chastity.

COLUMBIA: How should Catholic families use this statement?

LIGHTENWALNER: All Catholic parents should read it and take practical steps to protect their home and family. *Clean Heart* encourages parents to make the home a safe place

and an environment of chastity by being vigilant about the use of media and technology, educating themselves about filtering software, and fostering openness and trust with their children. For men who struggle with pornography use, *Clean Heart* is an encouragement to seek the Lord’s mercy in the sacrament of reconciliation and get the help they need to fight and win this battle. As the bishops state, “You are not alone in your struggle. ... God’s grace and concrete help are always available. Healing is always possible.”

COLUMBIA: How should pastors introduce the statement to their flocks?

LIGHTENWALNER: In addition to reading and praying about it themselves, a great way for pastors to introduce the statement is to share it with all their parish ministry leaders, and with the pastoral council, perhaps organizing a time to discuss it together and think about ways the parish can assist those affected by pornography. The statement could be advertised in the bulletin, copies could be made available in the church along with

other resources, and prayers for those struggling with pornography could be included in the Prayers of the Faithful during Mass. Priests also should have information that can be shared in the confessional with those facing habitual pornography use or addiction.

COLUMBIA: Given the pervasiveness of pornography, what practical effect will the letter have?

LIGHTENWALNER: As a statement from the body of bishops, *Clean Heart* is a decisive reference point and an encouragement for all those battling pornography and seeking freedom from its chains. It is a rallying cry that joins a growing number of religious leaders as well as non-believers who agree that pornography hurts women, children and men, damages relationships, and enslaves hearts and minds. Freedom and healing are really possible — one heart, one marriage, one family, one parish at a time. Mercy and healing are available in Christ and through his Church. There are many good initiatives already underway that deserve ongoing support, and *Clean Heart* is a foundation for further efforts by the USCCB. ♦

Surviving ISIS

Partnering with medical clinics in Iraq, the Order assists refugees persecuted for their faith

by Elizabeth Hansen





In September 2015, 15-year-old Katreena quickly won the hearts of the sisters and elderly residents at her temporary home in Connecticut. A diminutive Iraqi girl with hair long enough to sit on, her quiet and cheerful presence became a mainstay while she served meals at St. Joseph's Residence in Enfield, Conn. Although Katreena speaks little English, she expressed a clear fondness for the Little Sisters of the Poor. To her, the residence director, Mother Genevieve Regina, was "Sister Mama."

Katreena's crutches, though, betrayed the reason for her brief respite in scenic northern Connecticut: She required urgent medical attention beyond what a Slovakian medical clinic for refugees in Erbil, Iraq, or Iraqi medicine in general, could provide.

A little over a year earlier, in the summer of 2014, she and her family fled their home near Mosul, Iraq's second largest city. Together with tens of thousands of other Christian families, they barely escaped the invasion that irrevocably changed their lives. Forever seared in their memories is the day "ISIS came."

To assist those affected by the persecution, the Knights of Columbus launched its Christian Refugee Relief Fund in August 2014 and has since raised more than \$8 million. Katreena and her family are among those who have benefited, and through a partnership between the Knights and medical clinics in the Kurdistan region of Iraq, Katreena received the life-saving treatment she needed.

Katreena, an Iraqi girl who was injured while fleeing from ISIS with her family in 2014, is pictured with Dr. Zuzana Dudová in Erbil, Iraq.



Above: Katreena and her mother, Rajaa, are pictured with Little Sisters of the Poor at St. Joseph's Residence in Enfield, Conn., in October 2015.

• *Left: Dr. Zuzana Dudová takes the heartbeat of a young child at the Clinic of St. Zdenka Schelingová in Erbil, Iraq.*



FLIGHT TO ERBIL AND BEYOND

"It was peaceful; it was a normal city," Katreena's mother, Rajaa, said, describing their middle-class home in the Nineveh region of Iraq, where Katreena had her own bedroom. That was before militants of the Islamic State, also known as ISIS and *Daesh*, swept through on their way to toppling Mosul.

Their neighbor's two children were killed in the explosions of bombardment, as was Katreena's aunt. Katreena immediately fled with her family — her parents, three younger siblings

and grandmother — on a dangerous 50-mile journey, complicated by Katreena's serious medical conditions. Hoping the displacement would be short-term, they left everything behind; Katreena even left her personal savings in a small "piggy bank" in her room.

According to the United Nations, more than 600,000 Iraqis were driven from their homes in June 2014 alone. Many of these were Christians, like Katreena's family, or other religious minorities who had been targeted by ISIS and told that they must either convert to Islam, pay a submission tax or leave. Death awaited those who refused. Katreena's family followed the mass migration to the city of Erbil in the Kurdistan region of northern Iraq, finding shelter first in a church nave. Now, they are among the lucky families to have a more permanent living space: one bedroom in a house that they share with several other families.

Amid the turmoil of fleeing and living in overcrowded conditions, Katreena's foot became badly infected, exacerbating her already complicated health issues. By the time she came

Katreena stands with Supreme Knight Carl A. Anderson in his office at the Knights of Columbus headquarters in New Haven, Conn.

to the Clinic of St. Zdenka Schelingová, run by a medical staff from Slovakia, Katreena's situation was dire. She needed a lifeline. And in the fall of 2015 — after more than a year of living as a refugee — she finally got one.

Clinic director Dr. Zuzana Dudová, 29, reached out to the Knights of Columbus for help when she realized that Katreena's case was beyond the clinic's capabilities. During the previous spring, the Order began providing support to the Erbil clinic through its Christian Refugee Relief Fund.

Meanwhile, a hospital had diagnosed Katreena with a failed kidney. She was literally on the way to have surgery to remove that kidney when her family learned that the Knights could bring Katreena to the United States for treatment.

After she arrived, it became clear that her trip to Connecticut had almost certainly saved her life. It turned out the removal of the kidney was unnecessary and doctors warned that had she had her kidney removed in Iraq as had been planned, the surgery would likely have killed her due to a persistent infection that had not been resolved.

A month of treatment at the Connecticut Children's Medical Center in Hartford shed a great deal of light on Katreena's overall situation, and stabilized her kidney issues. Unwilling to stay in the United States without the rest of her family, she and her mother returned to Erbil — though she would be sorely missed by new friends at the Little Sisters' home.

Given the medical problems she continues to face, Katreena and her family hope to be able to immigrate to the United States, where the level of care would be higher and surgeries and treatments unavailable to her in Iraq would be possible.

MEDICAL MISSION OF MERCY

Katreena was able to receive the immediate medical attention she needed, but with no foreseeable prospect of returning to the home from which she and her family were driven, and with limits of health care infrastructure in Iraq, her future remains uncertain. The difficulty of her situation underscores challenges faced by many in Iraq today. This is where the heroic efforts of Dr. Dudová and her team come into play.

Founded by St. Elizabeth University of Health Care and Social Work in Bratislava, Slovakia, the team's two clinics currently serve two different refugee populations. In Erbil, the majority of refugees are Christians; farther northwest in Dohuk, the mobile Clinic of Blessed Jerzy Popiełuszko travels among the more isolated camps of Yazidi refugees, another religious minority persecuted by ISIS.

Since being put in touch with the clinics around Easter 2014, the Knights of Columbus has donated more than \$400,000 to fund the bulk of their operations, including the purchase of medicine and equipment, lab work and salaries. Any extra staff the team can afford is crucial; in addition to managing the whole operation, Dudová currently serves as



the only doctor at the Dohuk clinic. The Erbil clinic has only one doctor as well. Patients come in a steady, daily stream, and the staff must regularly turn away up to half of them.

"Many times, we're saying to ourselves that it's already too much," Dudová said, describing the overwhelming nature of her work. "But thanks to God, we continue."

With the media spotlight on Europe's refugee crisis — the worst since World War II — the world is starting to pay attention to the wave of displaced men, women and children fleeing their war-torn homelands. But Europe is only the tip of the iceberg. "It's much worse back in Iraq and Syria," said Dudová.

A native of Slovakia, Dudová had been working as a physician in Cambodia, serving orphans with HIV. She then came to Erbil at the end of 2014, right after the massive influx of refugees to that region.

She intended to stay only a few months; now, more than a year later, she is certain "this is the right place to be." Dudová speaks with a gentle self-assurance about her work, even as she reflects on the horrors her patients have witnessed and the stress they continue to live through.

After more than a year since the refugees' initial displacement, "people are still living in very miserable conditions," Dudová explained. For some, ailments such as infectious diseases and respiratory problems reflect their overcrowded living situations. Others suffer from chronic issues such as diabetes and heart disease.



Yazidi refugees wait in line for treatment outside the Clinic of Blessed Jerzy Popiełuszko in Dobuk, Iraq.

Refugees also face the trauma of having been hunted down and run out of their homes, and the despair of facing an indeterminable amount of time in camps or overcrowded houses with no way to provide for their families. The psychological effect of falling from relative comfort to refugee status is perhaps more subtle than maladies like Katreena's. "But it is affecting the way they are looking at life," Dudová said. "They are tired."

The experience of Katreena's family illustrates a limbo-like status shared by the other refugees. Their home was emblazoned with the Arabic letter "nun" — ن — the first letter of the word *Nasara* (meaning "Nazarenes"), which ISIS uses to refer to Christians. Rajaa explained their situation further: There is no way to go home to the Nineveh region, no way to earn money and very little chance of obtaining a visa to immigrate to the West. Visibly frustrated, she added, "Who wants to live like that?"

STANDING IN SOLIDARITY

Despite the refugees' hardships, Dudová knows that without support from the Church — from the local archdiocese to groups such as the Knights of Columbus — the situation would be drastically worse.

"People would be still staying in open spaces without access to basic life needs ... probably begging in the streets," Dudová said.

In Erbil, the Knights' Christian Refugee Relief Fund has helped to meet those needs not only through its partnership with the Slovakian clinics but also a \$2 million donation to the archdiocese to build approximately 70 permanent housing units for families. In addition, the Order sponsored the delivery of a month's worth of food for more than 13,500 families last fall.

The Church's willingness to stand in solidarity with their brothers and sisters in the Middle East can mean the difference between a glimmer of hope and utter despair.

When he addressed the Knights of Columbus Supreme Convention in August 2015, Archbishop Bashar Matti Warda of Erbil said Iraq's Christians would continue to proclaim "that we are children of God, and this is our home."

He added, "You stood at our side just as our Mother Mary and the beloved disciple did at the side of the crucified, even as much of the world turned away."

Knowing the clinics are a part of this faithful service allows Dudová to sustain her own hope and to share moments of grace in a compassionate hug, a listening ear or a simple smile. That reward, she said, is priceless.

"For many of them, the very presence of our organization is a source of comfort," Dudová explained. "They see there's someone who still cares for them." ♦

ELIZABETH HANSEN writes from Branford, Conn.



The Demolition of Christian Memory

As a result of ISIS' campaign of religious cleansing, an ancient Christian monastery has been destroyed

by Dale Gavlak, Catholic News Service

Catholic clergy lamented the destruction of Iraq's oldest Christian monastery, St. Elijah, and urged the international community to do more to stop such assaults.

"I had the same emotional and perhaps spiritual experience as I did when I was standing over the bodies of fallen soldiers," Father Jeffrey Whorton told Catholic News Service after seeing satellite images of the monastery's destruction.

Father Whorton, who served as a Catholic chaplain for the U.S. military in Iraq and holds the rank of major, was instrumental along with others in seeing a preservation initiative mounted on the 1,400-year-old structure. Father Whorton said he believed he was the last priest to "offer Mass on that altar before it was destroyed."

The Associated Press confirmed the news that the ancient monastery on the outskirts of Mosul had been turned into a field of rubble, with exclusive satellite images published early Jan. 20, 2016. Islamic State militants claimed responsibility.

Father Whorton, who now works at Fort Bragg, N.C., had the chance to both worship and give informal tours of the monastery during his tour of duty in Iraq.

"In the forefront of my mind was the reality that in the 1700s, 150 or so (monks) had been martyred there," the American priest said. "So I knew I was in a sacred place offering the holy sacrifice of the Mass. I felt extremely unworthy standing at the venerable altar. That, along with celebrating with the Holy Father, was the highlight of my entire priesthood."

Father Whorton recalled a piece of wood shaped like a yoke that stood above the entrance to the nave of the monastery.

"For me, there was a kind of putting on the yoke of Christ and to bend low into that space where my fallen brothers and sisters had died (centuries ago). It was extremely emotional and a spiritually palpable event for me," he said.

Many had voiced concern about the fate of the monastery after Islamic State militants swept into the area in June 2014

and had cut off most communication there. Hundreds of thousands of Christians were forced to flee rather than convert to Islam, pay a submission tax or be killed.

Father Whorton said the finality of ancient monastery's fate has weighed heavy on him.

"I did not realize until I saw the pictures of the destruction that I would be one of the ones to literally close the door on this ancient church," he said.

Assyrian Father Emanuel Youkhana, who heads the Christian Aid Program Northern Iraq, CAPNI, denounced the attack as yet another assault on Christians and their heritage in their ancient homeland.

"Dozens and dozens of scientific, philosophic, historical and other books were written or translated in such monasteries. This is a memory of Iraq which has been cut off," he told CNS.

"When they damage my 2,000 years of Christianity and 5,000 years of Assyrian heritage as the indigenous people of this country," Father Youkhana said, "my question is this: If my history is being damaged, my present is being threatened, is there any future?"

He cited the Islamic State's bulldozing of the ancient Assyrian city of Nimrod, where the Tower of Babel is believed to have existed. The United Nations called its destruction cultural cleansing and a war crime.

Father Youkhana also drew attention to the destruction of archaeological sites in Nineveh along with the forced displacement of Christians and other religious minorities long present in Iraq from their historic area. And he renewed a call for the international community to do more to preserve the Christian presence in their ancient homeland.

"What will be the future of Christianity [in the Middle East] if we don't protect or give future chances for Christians to survive and to build a future," he said. "We have to keep this mosaic and diversity, not give up." ♦

DALE GAVLAK is an American freelance journalist based in Amman, Jordan.



The 1,400-year-old St. Elijah Monastery is seen in a 2009 photo, before being razed by Islamic State militants in late 2014.



Bishop of the Last Frontier

Serving the geographically largest U.S. diocese involves immense challenges and blessings

by Robert Hannon | photos by JR Ancheta

New Year's Eve 2014 found newly ordained Bishop Chad Zielinski carrying a duffle bag across the black tarmac of the Fairbanks airport. In the darkness of a northern winter morning, broken only by the glare of sodium lights on snow mounds, he was in line to board a small twin-engine prop flying to Alaska's central Yukon.

Bishop Zielinski was no stranger to small aircraft and remote locations. He had served 14 years as a military chaplain, with three tours of duty in war zones. He had merely

traded in Afghanistan's dust for Alaska's snow. What was unfamiliar was the destination — Nulato, a small village sitting on the banks of the Yukon River, roughly 300 miles west of Fairbanks.

With a smile, Bishop Zielinski recalled that morning flight and said, "Looking down from the plane in the growing light, the white expanse of snow seemed to stretch on forever."

From takeoff to landing, it was starting to sink in: he was now head of the geographically largest diocese in the United States.



Bishop Chad Zielinski of Fairbanks steps onto ice while disembarking his connecting flight to Hooper Bay, Alaska. The rural village has a population of approximately 1,000, primarily consisting of Alaska Native Yup'ik people.

AN UNEXPECTED CALL

The number of practicing Catholics in the Diocese of Fairbanks hovers around 10,000, making it, from one perspective, among the smallest dioceses in the country. The borders of the diocese, however, encompass more than 400,000 square miles — almost twice the area of Texas. Hundreds of miles of tundra, forests, rivers and mountains separate most of the diocese's 46 parishes; only nine parishes can be reached by road. Flying is the surest way to reach rural parishes. Getting back

home is another matter.

Weather systems in Alaska come in fast and hard. A few weeks following Bishop Zielinski's ordination, one priest found his short visit to the most remote parish in the diocese — located on Little Diomed Island at the center of the Bering Strait — extended to 39 days. Arctic storms and mechanical problems had grounded all helicopter flights for over a month. Mother Nature's unpredictability means that those ministering in the Diocese of Fairbanks routinely block out two days on either end of village trips.

Bishop Zielinski was prepared to roll the dice on his first trip to the interior. After discovering that the people of Nulato and Koyukuk hadn't seen a bishop in years, he promised to visit, and before long he was seated in a small plane as it nosed its way westward to a village of 300 souls.

Living in Alaska seems to agree with Bishop Zielinski, who recognizes God's providence in the steps that have led him there.

"I wanted to go to Alaska ever since I did a report on it in fourth grade," he said. "In fact, two days after I graduated from high school, a buddy and I drove there to work in a fish processing plant for the summer."

Born in Detroit in 1964, the oldest of five children, Chad Zielinski was raised on a 120-acre farm in Alpena, Mich., where much of his youth was filled with outdoor activities.

As a college freshman, with plans to eventually study law, he decided to join the Air Force.

It was about this time that Airman Zielinski also joined the Knights of Columbus.

"Growing up in Alpena we had four churches with very active Knights," the bishop recalled. "They really modeled Christian service. And I'm proud to report that Alaska's Knights of Columbus were recognized at the Supreme Convention as having the highest number of service hours of any councils on record. They are so generous with our needs."

While stationed in Idaho, Airman Zielinski became good friends with the chaplain, and it gradually dawned on him that he had a vocation to the priesthood. At the end of his military service, he began his seminary formation and was ordained a priest of Gaylord, Mich., in 1996.

Five years later, in the months following the 9/11 terrorist attacks, Father Zielinski learned there was a shortage of Catholic chaplains in the Armed Forces. Beginning in 2002, he served as an Air Force chaplain at bases throughout the United States and served combat tours in Iraq and Afghanistan. Several times he celebrated Mass while mortar and rocket fire punctuated the liturgy.

In October 2014, while serving at Eielson Air Force Base outside of Fairbanks, Father Zielinski received a call from Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò, the papal nuncio to the



Bishop Zielinski anoints 79-year-old Henrietta Naneng, a Yup'ik elder and active parishioner, at her home in Hooper Bay, Alaska. Also pictured is Jesuit Father Gregg Wood. • After celebrating Mass, Bishop Zielinski greets a boy outside the Little Flower of Jesus Church in Hooper Bay. One of the many remote parishes in the diocese, Mass is celebrated there approximately once a month.



During a welcome reception following his ordination, Bishop Zielinski, a member of Bishop Kaniecki Council 13566 in Fairbanks, receives a Knights of Columbus jacket from the Alaska state council.

United States. The archbishop said Pope Francis was asking Father Zielinski to serve as the bishop of the Diocese of Fairbanks.

"I kept asking him, 'How can this be?' It made no sense," Bishop Zielinski said, laughing as he recalled the conversation. "The nuncio was most gracious with me."

It was the first time an active U.S. chaplain had been tapped to be the ordinary of a diocese — but there was no mistake. On Dec. 15, 2014, Chad Zielinski was ordained the sixth bishop of Fairbanks.



HOSPITALITY AND MISSION

Bishop Zielinski's initial visits to Nulato and Koyukuk were well received and allowed him to experience firsthand the dynamics of village life. Most rural Alaskan communities now have running water and boast a school, health clinic, village council building and at least a small runway for flights. Cell phone coverage is expanding slowly across the state.

These modern amenities are welcomed, yet age-old traditions remain. The diocese is home to at least three distinct Alaska Native peoples: the Yup'ik/Cup'ik Eskimo, the Athabaskan Indian people, and the Inupiat Eskimo. Each people possesses its own rich culture and language.

Bishop Zielinski has observed there is something reminiscent of early Christian communities in the generosity of Alaska Native peoples.

"The people are warm and welcoming, and they are excited about their faith," Bishop Zielinski said. "You see villages of 800 people, and 200 show up for Mass. All these people have blessed my life."

Each summer, other activities are put on hold so the harvest of salmon can be caught, dried and stored for the year. And in the villages, if someone catches an abundance of fish, or brings down a moose, no one lacks for meat. The bounty is shared. The traditional potlatch gathering likewise provides an opportunity for people from various villages to share food, gifts and song.

There are many challenges facing the people of Alaska, too. Rural Alaska sees high rates of suicide, substance abuse, violence and sexual assaults. Media influence has contributed to a further erosion of values and cultural identity. There are economic hurdles as well, as most villages are only partly run on cash economies. Jobs are scarce, and prices would stagger the average American consumer: \$11 for a gallon of milk, \$8 for a pound of ground beef or gallon of gas. What isn't grown or harvested must be flown or barged in before ice locks up rivers.

As a result, rather than parishes supporting the bishop's programs, the diocese must financially support parish life in most

of its communities. Besides being the nation's geographically largest diocese, Fairbanks is also the only one to fall under the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, the Church's missionary wing. Without the generosity of donors from around the United States, the Church in northern Alaska would not exist as it is.

However, Bishop Zielinski identifies an even more pressing need: priests. In the 19th century, the Society of Jesus served the entire territory. As recently as the 1980s, parishes were likely assigned their own Jesuit priest and were assisted by other men and women religious. Over time, the number of priests serving in the region decreased, and there are currently only 15 serving the diocese's 46 parishes.

Some priests must circulate among six or eight remote villages, and Mass is a rarity for most rural Catholics in the diocese. Priests stationed in Fairbanks now routinely fly out to parishes across the diocese, and Bishop Zielinski says he has learned that travel is an essential part of serving the people of God in the last frontier.

"It's wearing on your system," he said, "and flying is one of our largest expenses. But it is what we are called to do."

If he is daunted by the task before him, Bishop Zielinski doesn't show it. He has discussed his needs with his brother bishops in the United States, and he has also established contacts with missionary dioceses around the world that are blessed with an abundance of priests. But he knows he must move with discernment.

"Not every priest is called to serve in the far north, because winters are dark and cold," he said. "But the hospitality of the people is warm and gracious, and we invite priests who feel drawn to serve here to contact us. For the right servant, who will walk with the people, this frontier can be a paradise." ♦

ROBERT HANNON is the former chancellor of the Diocese of Fairbanks and continues to assist the diocese with special projects.

A Witness in Winter

*Despite the forecast of a historic blizzard, tens of thousands gathered
in Washington for the annual March for Life*

by Alton J. Pelowski





When snowflakes began to fall in Washington, D.C., on Friday, Jan. 22, signaling the arrival of one of the East Coast's all-time largest snowstorms, tens of thousands of people were gathered on and around the National Mall for the 43rd March for Life. The forecast for Winter Storm Jonas had forced many to cancel their travel plans to the nation's capital, and Washington's mayor declared a state of emergency as the city prepared for the impending blizzard. But this did not prevent large groups of young people, Knights of Columbus and their families, and others from marching in peaceful protest of the 1973 U.S. Supreme Court decision *Roe v. Wade*.

"A little snow couldn't keep you away, could it?" asked March for Life president Jeanne Mancini, welcoming those gathered for the hour-long rally that preceded the march. "The world may think we're a little bit crazy being here today," she added, "but those of standing here know that there is no sacrifice too great to fight the human rights abuse of abortion."

The growing crowd cheered loudly as they held up placards with pro-life messages, including thousands of "Defend Life" signs provided by the Knights of Columbus. Pro-life legislators, post-abortive women, former abortion clinic workers and other leaders were among those who took the stage, sharing personal testimonies and reflecting on the theme of the 2016 march: "Pro-Life and Pro-Woman Go Hand-in-Hand."

At the conclusion of the rally, participants marched along the 1.5-mile stretch of Constitution Avenue toward the U.S. Capitol. Many joined in chants or prayed the rosary as they hurried along the route, reaching the Supreme Court building while heavy snow covered the streets. Before long, thousands of young people traveling with their respective dioceses, Catholic high schools and universities boarded their buses to head home.

"We got out of D.C. by about 3 o'clock, and just started west," recalled Neil Pfeifer, a K of C general agent from Norfolk, Neb., who attended the march for the first time. Pfeifer's son, Noah, a senior at Norfolk Catholic High School and a fellow member of Sacred Heart Council 1793, had gone twice before with the Archdiocese of Omaha and convinced his dad to be a chaperone for this year's trip.

"To see these kids so alive in their faith and on fire for this cause blew me away," Neil said, noting that the group would normally stay longer and sightsee. "This year, it was about business. With the snowstorm coming, we knew we'd have to cut things short. And the kids, they didn't care. Their main goal was to be there and to represent, and to show their strong belief in the right to life."

The buses continued along the Pennsylvania Turnpike amid traffic delays, until a semitrailer accident brought them to a complete halt by 9 p.m. Altogether, more than 500 vehicles, including dozens of buses returning from the March for Life to such states as Missouri, Wisconsin, Michigan and Ohio,

Members of George Washington University Council 13242 in Washington, D.C., stand in front of the Supreme Court building during the March for Life Jan. 22.



Father Patrick Behm, a priest of the Diocese of Sioux City and member of Trinity Council 1466 in Le Mars, Iowa, celebrates a roadside Mass for hundreds of young pilgrims Jan. 23. Their buses were stranded on the Pennsylvania Turnpike since the previous evening, when they were stalled on their way home from the March for Life.

were stranded along a 20-plus mile stretch of Interstate 76, approximately two hours east of Pittsburgh.

By about 5:30 the next morning, the National Guard had cleared the road enough for some of the vehicles toward the front to be on their way. The bus carrying the Pfeifers made it out, but most, including six other buses from the Archdiocese of Omaha, were not so lucky.

“By the time they got the truck moved, the snow was too deep for anyone parked on the interstate to go anywhere,” said Steve Merrill, a member of Council 1793 who has served as a chaperone and bus captain for many years.

“There was never a sense of being in danger; it was just an inconvenience,” Merrill added. “This one really turned into a pilgrimage. We tried to use all of our experiences as a teaching moment.”

With sufficient water, snacks and gas, as well as bathrooms on board, the pilgrims made the best of their situation and spirits remained high. Each of the Omaha buses included a priest and a religious sister who led prayer and shared reflections, turning the experience into an impromptu retreat.

Late Saturday morning, Merrill learned that an outdoor Mass was being organized just a few buses down. At the suggestion of Bill Dill, youth ministry events coordinator for the Archdiocese of St. Paul & Minneapolis, some of the Min-

nesota pilgrims had constructed an altar made of snow. Father Patrick Behm, a priest of the Diocese of Sioux City and member of Trinity Council 1466 in Le Mars, Iowa, was asked to celebrate.

It did not take long for word to spread. A half-dozen priests from various dioceses soon joined in to concelebrate as more than 500 people from various states gathered together at what some called “St. John Paul the Great Hillside Chapel.”

“It was really beautiful,” Merrill recalled. “We had gone to Mass at the cathedral in Pittsburgh and to the Basilica of the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, and this Mass was just as moving.”

It was not only a memorable experience for everyone present, but reports of the Mass went viral on social media and were published by news outlets around the country.

“Our kids were disappointed we weren’t back there with them to attend,” Neil Pfeifer said with a laugh.

Most of the buses began moving again later that evening, after nearly 24 hours on the turnpike. The pilgrims eventually made it safely home, but they won’t soon forget the time that “a little snow” couldn’t keep them from traveling to Washington and standing up for life. ♦

ALTON J. PELOWSKI is editor of *Columbia*.



Roe v. Wade at 43

Public opinion and a new pro-life generation stand opposed to the tragic legacy of abortion on demand

by Archbishop Charles J. Chaput, O.F.M. Cap.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following column, originally published by the Archdiocese of Philadelphia on Jan. 22, has been slightly abridged and is reprinted here with permission.

The Jan. 22, 1973, U.S. Supreme Court *Roe v. Wade* decision is important for two reasons: its flawed reasoning and its destructive effect. In practice, *Roe* legalized abortion on demand. It has enabled the killing of tens of millions of unborn children, an entire American generation. Abortion “procedures” — a sanitized understatement worthy of George Orwell — have emotionally scarred millions of adult women and men.

Abortion supporters talk a good line about reproductive health care. But there's very little health care in homicide. There's simply no way around the living, developing unborn daughter or son — visible on any ultrasound machine — who ends up dead at the end of the abortion industry's doublespeak.

Abortion supporters press the importance of reproductive rights. But they systematically violate the most basic human right of all: the right to life.

“Right to choose” advocates often claim that most Americans support abortion rights. But polling data are easily misused or misunderstood. Key information is often overlooked or omitted because it doesn't fit the preferred storyline.

The most recent Marist Poll, commissioned by the Knights of Columbus and released in January, found that 44 percent of surveyed Americans describe themselves as pro-life, while 51 percent describe themselves as pro-choice. But the really telling data emerge from beneath those broad labels.

More than 80 percent of Americans, including two-thirds of pro-choice supporters, would restrict abortion to — at most — the first trimester of pregnancy. By a 25-point margin, Americans believe abortion does women more harm than good. Sixty percent believe abortion is

morally wrong. And 77 percent believe that our laws can protect both a mother and her unborn child. Nearly 70 percent oppose public funding for abortion.

In an immediate sense, these facts change nothing. Forty-three years after *Roe*, the abortion industry has grown fat on public money and pious in its own deceptions. Its leaders really don't care what Americans think, because they've been ideologues from the start, playing the long game of changing people's attitudes through aggressive court action and sympathetic media. It's an intelligent strategy. It should have worked. So it's understandable that industry leaders are annoyed and baffled — and increasingly paranoid — that proliferators have not gone away. Because they haven't. Quite the opposite.

We see the proof every January. Year after year the March for Life's pro-life numbers keep coming and keep growing. They also keep getting younger.

Here's why. Abortion is not like other social issues. It's visceral; instinctively repugnant; an obscenity in the present and a refusal of the future. It can't be reduced to a

theoretical dispute or a smokescreen of laundered language about “reproductive health.” *Health can never mean homicide.* No matter how good the verbal gymnastics, no “pro-choice” PR firm can escape the flesh and blood violence to mother and child, and the lying to women, that occur in every abortion.

The unborn child is alive, innocent and now *observable*, thanks to the same medical technology that the abortion industry perverts in every killing. Today's young people may differ from previous generations in many ways, but killing innocent life isn't one of them. And that simple fact can be the beginning of a new and better culture that respects the sanctity of human life at every stage. May we, with God's help, make it so. ♦

MOST REV. CHARLES J. CHAPUT, O.F.M. Cap., is archbishop of Philadelphia.



PILGRIMAGE TO THE MILLET CROSS

*For 90 years, New York Knights have honored the missionary
and patriotic heritage of Old Fort Niagara*

by Kevin T. Di Camillo



For the past nine decades, Knights of Columbus from across upstate New York have made an annual pilgrimage to the historic Millet Cross at Old Fort Niagara in Youngstown, N.Y. Organized and led by local Fourth Degree assemblies, more than 100 Knights and their families gather in early September for a solemn procession to a towering bronze cross, followed by a memorial Mass in tribute to those who served at the old French garrison.

“Father Millet planted the first cross here on Good Friday over 300 years ago,” said John F. Sowinski, master of New York District #4 and a member of Father Baker Council 2243 in Lackawanna, N.Y. “Every year, we come here to honor his strong faith and those who died there. We also remember all who have given their lives in service to our country.”

The Millet Cross, which stands on a bluff overlooking Lake Ontario, with Toronto visible across the water some 30 miles away, was authorized in 1925 by President Calvin Coolidge and an Act of the Department of War. Both the initial concept and the subsequent hard work of fundraising came from the Knights of Columbus, who were inspired by a local historian named Peter A. Porter. Their efforts made it possible for the 18-foot cross to be dedicated in 1926.

FROM WOOD TO BRONZE

Father Pierre Millet (pronounced “mil-LAY”), a Jesuit missionary, arrived to Fort Niagara (then known as Fort Denonville) in the spring of 1688 with reinforcements from France. Built in part to deny British access to the Niagara River, the garrison is located where the mouth of the river spills out into Lake Ontario, 14 miles north of Niagara Falls. Upon landing at the fort, Father Millet and his compatriots were horrified to discover that all but 12 of the more than 100 men stationed there for the winter had died of starvation and scurvy.

Father Millet wasted no time in attending to the spiritual and physical needs of those few survivors. He then ordered the new troops to erect an oak cross in the middle of the fort. Carved on the crossbeam was “Regn. Vinc. Imp. Chrs.” — the abbreviation for the Latin phrase *Regnat Vincit Imperat Christus*: “Christ reigns, conquers and rules.” Once the cross was set in place, Father Millet offered the Mass of the Pre-sanctified, as it was Good Friday.

An exceptional linguist, the intrepid Jesuit priest served the French colonial forces as interpreter as well as chaplain. After leaving Fort Denonville, he spent the next decade bearing witness to Christ among the Onondaga and Oneida peoples, converting many, including an Oneida chief. He endured five years in captivity and spent the last decade of his life as a missionary in Québec, where he died Dec. 31, 1708.

More than two centuries later, the Knights of Columbus undertook the construction of a permanent memorial in honor of Father Millet and his heroic ministry at Fort Niagara. On Sept. 5, 1925, President Coolidge’s proclamation set aside a tiny parcel of land for the Father Millet Cross as a national monument under the jurisdiction of the Department of War.

That this happened in 1920s America is nothing short of remarkable, explained Thomas Chambers, professor of history at nearby Niagara University.

“During a time of especially high-pitched anti-Catholicism, the Millet Cross — a Catholic monument donated by a Catholic fraternal organization — was still seen as an important tribute to erect on *state* land,” he said.

The Daprato Statuary Company of New York and Chicago created the cross with a unique inner structure — an iron framework, wrapped in sheet metal specially electroplated with a patented zinc-and-copper alloy.

Measuring 18 by 15 feet, the Millet Cross stands on a concrete block base engraved only with the date “1926.” A dedicatory plaque on the ground reads: “To Father Pierre Millet, French Jesuit Priest, Missionary to the Iroquois and Chaplain at Fort Niagara. Here on Good Friday, 1688, he dedicated a Cross invoking God’s Mercy for the plague-stricken garrison. Erected by the Knights of Columbus, Fourth Degree, 6th New York District, Calvert Province.”

On the horizontal beam the original inscription is reiterated: “Regn. Vinc. Imp. Chrs.” Between “Vinc.” and “Imp.” is an image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, a devotion characteristic of French Catholicism.

On May 30, 1926, the Millet Cross was officially dedicated and blessed by Bishop William Turner of Buffalo in a ceremony attended by nearly 2,000 people, including state and local officials, the fort commandant, a military escort from the 28th Infantry and a Fourth Degree honor guard.

In 1937, a decade after the annual pilgrimage to the Millet Cross had begun, the U.S. National Parks Service published a historical account of the Father Millet Cross National Monument that included this tribute: “It stands as a memorial not only to Father Millet, but to those other priests whose heroism took Christianity into the wilderness and whose devotion sought to create in this new world a new France.”

A LIVING TRADITION

The smallest national monument ever established, the 320-square foot site of the Father Millet Cross was removed from the national park system in 1949. However, the tradition of annual pilgrimage has continued unabated, with numerous Knights and their families making the journey to pay tribute to Father Millet and the memory of those who served their country.

Lewis Herman, a member of St. Pius X Council 11168 in Getzville, has been making the pilgrimage for more than 20 years and now takes his grandchildren. “My father was inducted into the Army for World War II here at Fort Niagara,”

A Fourth Degree honor guard from the St. Isaac Jogues Province stands at attention as Father Michael H. Burzynski, a priest of the Diocese of Buffalo and a member of St. Justin Council 5670 in Cheektowaga, N.Y., raises the chalice at Mass during the 2008 pilgrimage to the Millet Cross.



In this archival photo from the 1930s, a priest presides at the Good Friday Mass of the Presanctified for pilgrims gathered at the Millet Cross.

Herman said. “This is a place to experience living history and faith, which is why so many Knights bring their families.”

The Millet Cross has survived the harsh winters and summer heat of Western New York for nine decades, whereas the original wooden cross is estimated to have lasted five years at most.

“While the cross still to this day is quite beautiful and striking, a group of local Knights noticed that it was beginning to show its age, and they brought this to my attention in 2013,” said Jerome Brubaker, curator and assistant director of Old Fort Niagara. “The Knights have been very proactive in their concern for the Millet Cross.”

One of the oldest, largest and best preserved military sites in North America, Old Fort Niagara is still an active base for the U.S. Coast Guard. Since the fort is part of Fort Niagara State Park, the Historic Preservation Office of New York State Parks has begun to formulate a plan to fully restore the Millet Cross to its original luster and grandeur. Local Knights have offered to assist in its restoration.

After the Millet Cross was raised in 1926, the Knights also

helped fund the restoration of the small but beautiful chapel inside “The French Castle” at Fort Niagara, which was completed by 1929.

“One year, it rained and we had to have the ceremony indoors,” recalled Michael Flanagan, a member of St. John XXIII Council 7707 in Spencerport, who serves as the New York state program director. “We held Mass at the chapel in the castle, and it was especially moving, praying in a place where so many men over the centuries have prayed.”

A former master of New York District #4, Flanagan led the pilgrimage in 2004 and 2005 and is proud to be part of such a unique tradition.

“The pilgrimage to the Millet Cross lives on because of the faith of our brother Knights,” he said. “It is a special experience, a moving experience, to gather, to recall our history and to celebrate Mass — as Knights and Catholic Americans.” ♦

KEVIN T. DI CAMILLO is a member of Don Bosco Council 4960 in Brooklyn, N.Y.

The Radiant Charity of Madre Nati

Mexico's first female saint is an eloquent witness of love for Christ and the poor

by J.D. Long-García

Santa Maria Venegas Assembly in Lake County, Ind., bears a unique name. It's not often that a Knights of Columbus assembly or council is named after a woman, let alone a saint related to one of the assembly's members.

Michael Velasco, the culture of life director for the Indiana state council, grew up hearing stories about his great-grandaunt, Sister María Natividad Venegas de la Torre, whom the family affectionately called "Tia Nati." When his late father, John C. Velasco, was just a boy, Tia Nati nursed him back to health from malaria. John later fled to the United States as a teenager with his mother and two brothers, during the period of religious persecution in Mexico in the 1920s.

"After the announcement was made that Tia Nati was going to be canonized," Michael recalled, "my father wept."

At age 87, the senior Velasco traveled to Rome with his wife, June, to attend the canonization Mass on May 21, 2000. A year later, just months before his death, John became a charter member of Santa Maria Venegas Assembly, named after his grandaunt, the first Mexican woman to be declared a saint.

SEEDS OF SANCTITY

The youngest of 12 children, María Natividad Venegas de la Torre was born in Zapotlanejo, near Guadalajara, in the

Mexican state of Jalisco on Sept. 8, 1868. Raised in a deeply religious household, Natividad, or Nati for short, learned to read the Bible at an early age and prayed the rosary each day with her family.

An energetic child, Nati was also drawn to contemplation. When playing hide-and-seek, she sought places where no one could find her so that she could pray.

Her mother, who had prepared Nati to receive her first holy Communion at age 9, died young, when Nati was 16. Her father, an accountant, then moved the family to Compostela, in the state of Nayarit, for economic reasons. Nati made frequent visits to their parish church there to gaze at an image of the crucified Christ called the "Lord of Mercy." Nati's father eventually brought the family back to Zapotlanejo, where he entrusted his children into the care of his brother and sister-in-law, Justo and Crispina Venegas Velasco. He died three years later in 1887.

Living with her aunt and uncle, Nati came to know the beauty of nature and agriculture. She would later write about the pastures, wheat, bananas, mangos and sugar cane, reflecting on God's abundant generosity. Many who worked in

the fields were illiterate, and Nati began teaching the children how to read and gave them religious instruction. She also participated in parish life and attended daily Mass.



St. María de Jesús Sacramentado Venegas (1868-1959), foundress of the Daughters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, became Mexico's first female saint in 2000.



John C. Velasco, the grandnephew of St. María de Jesús Sacramentado Venegas, stands with Bishop Dale J. Melczek of Gary, at the charter presentation of Santa Maria Venegas Assembly Aug. 8, 2001.

In 1898, Nati joined the Association of the Daughters of Mary and began to give serious thought to a religious vocation, praying frequently before the Blessed Sacrament. In November 1905, her spiritual director recommended that she make an Ignatian retreat. Less than a month later, on Dec. 8, she joined the Daughters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, a pious union of women dedicated to caring for poor and abandoned people at Guadalajara's Sacred Heart Hospital. Sister Nati served in many roles — as nurse, pharmacist and the community's accountant — and earned a reputation for knowing patients by name and creating a family environment at the hospital.

In 1921, Sister Nati was elected superior general, having made her temporary religious vows in 1915. In order for the Daughters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus to receive official approval as a congregation, a bishop encouraged Madre Nati, as the sisters now called her, to write the constitutions. Though she did not consider herself competent to do so, she completed the task in 1924.

LA CRISTIADA

Beginning in 1926, Mexican President Plutarco Elías Calles strictly enforced the persecutory laws of the anti-clerical constitution that had been adopted nearly a decade earlier. The government seized Church property, Catholic schools and seminaries; shut down hospitals, orphanages and homes for the elderly; outlawed religious education; prohibited public worship; and exiled Mexico's bishops. This sparked a rebellion known as the Cristero War, or *Cristiada*.

Against all odds, Madre Nati was able to keep the hospital open, said Sister Maria Rosa Bohórquez, a Daughter of the Sacred Heart who serves as the order's general counsel. "Madre was not afraid. She would always say, 'The Sacred Heart of Jesus will fix it all.'"

When soldiers tried to shut the hospital down, Madre Nati offered them food, disarming them through her compassion. The sisters treated injured government soldiers and Cristeros alike.

Madre Nati was also adamant that the Blessed Sacrament would be present at the hospital.

"To prevent the soldiers from committing sacrilege, the Eucharist was often hidden with the bees," recounted Sister Clara Guenoveva Encarnación Luna, who knew the saint for many years. "The sisters always kept an empty hive for the Lord."

On one occasion, when Madre Nati and a sister transported the Blessed Sacrament to safety in a shoebox, they boarded a bus filled with federal soldiers. If the sisters had been discovered, they would have likely been killed. Still, the saint remained calm, trusting in the Lord.

It was during this same period that John Velasco, who like his Tia Nati was born in Zapotlanejo, fled Mexico at age 15. His father and two uncles fought in the Cristero army against the anti-religious government, and their homes were frequently searched for ammunition and priests in hiding.

In fact, John's family used to smuggle their parish priest, Father José Isabel Flores Varela, in and out of a secret room in their home so that he could celebrate clandestine Masses.

"If the soldiers had found the priest, I wouldn't be here," Michael Velasco said. "They would have killed everyone. They were merciless."

Eventually, the soldiers caught Father Varela and hanged him — three times.

"Each time, just at the point of death, the soldiers let him down and asked the priest to denounce God," Velasco said, "But he wouldn't do it. Eventually, a soldier cut his throat."

In 2000, Father Varela was one of the 25 Mexican martyrs, including six priests who were members of the Knights of Columbus, whom Pope John Paul II canonized together with Madre Nati, now known as Santa María de Jesús Sacramentado.

'EVEN NOW SHE FILLS US UP'

In 1930, when the constitutions of the Daughters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus had received approval, Madre Nati declared, "We will celebrate the approval of the congregation without fear."

This was also the year that she made her final vows and took the name María de Jesus Sacramentado (Mary of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament). She served as superior general of the congregation until 1954.

Sister Clara had met her two years earlier, during her interview for admission into the congregation at age 15.

"She was a very simple woman. You could approach her with confidence," Sister Clara recalled, noting that the saint always had a ready smile.

All the sisters sought her gentle counsel and guidance, as did the doctors, priests and other coworkers. Together they cared for patients of all ages.



John C. Velasco, age 10 (middle row, first boy on left), is pictured along with his mother (seated in back with his little brother, Cruz), his brother Aurelio (front row, last boy on right), his maternal grandmother (far right) and other relatives during a family picnic in Zapotlanejo, Mexico, in 1922.

"The elderly are travelers who we must take care of before their life ends," Madre Nati would say. "We must take care of them with all the tenderness possible."

Sister Clara explained that the saint had many such sayings, and her words have become teachings for the sisters today:

"Suffering is short. Our joy will be eternal."

"Those who are merciful with the needy of the world will not lack God's mercy."

"The weight of the cross is burdensome for those carrying it, but not for those who embrace it."

"The hospital is the antechamber to heaven."

Sister Clara served as Madre Nati's nurse and shared a room with her for some time. The saint didn't sleep much, she said, but the alarm was always set for 5 a.m. so that they could attend eucharistic adoration.

"We have to visit my Jesus," Madre Nati would say.

Even toward the end of Madre Nati's life, Sister Clara would often find her tending to patients from her wheelchair. Children at the hospital thought of her as a grandmother, and

seminarians would sometimes remark that she loved them more than their own mothers did.

In all, Madre Nati lived at the hospital for 55 years until her death on July 30, 1959, at the age of 91.

"She didn't live an extraordinary life," Sister Clara said. "She lived an ordinary life in an extraordinary way."

For Michael Velasco, who recalls growing up with the stories about his great grandaunt's faith, courage and service to the poor, Tia Nati was always just a part of the family.

Sister Maria Rosa affirmed that Madre Nati continues to inspire all the sisters in their service to the sick and poor.

"She is known for her great charity and is still interceding for us from heaven," Sister Maria Rosa said. "Even now she fills us up, she loved us so much." ♦

J.D. LONG-GARCÍA is editor in chief of *The Tidings* and *Vida Nueva*, the newspapers of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. He is a member of Father Marcel Salinas Council 11536 in Mesa, Ariz.



Vicksburg (Miss.) Assembly leads participants on a pro-life march from St. Aloysius High School to a memorial to the unborn at Vicksburg Cemetery during an event sponsored by Vicksburg Council 898. While marching, Knights led participants in praying the rosary.

SCRAP METAL DRIVE

St. Henry's Council 14248 in Owasso, Okla., conducted a scrap metal drive to raise money for council functions. Knights went to homes throughout the community, collecting everything from barbecue grills to old appliances. The drive helped neighbors recycle old, unwanted items and raised more than \$1,000 for charity.

CEMETERY CLEANUP

Members of St. Leo Council 9477 in Casselton, N.D., regularly volunteer to maintain the cemetery at their parish. Knights straighten headstones and perform grounds maintenance as part of the ongoing program.

MEAT RAFFLE

St. Clement Council 8095 in Plant City, Fla., organized its annual meat raffle. Held with

support from a local butcher and an anonymous donor, the council sold tickets to win a trunk-load of packaged beef. The raffle raised \$2,400 to support pro-life centers in the area.

REDISTRIBUTING WEALTH

Sarnia (Ontario) Council 1429 raised \$120,000 through the sale of its social hall. The funds were distributed among four area parishes, with the bulk going to Our Lady of Mercy Church to cover the cost of a new air-conditioning unit, windows and electrical upgrades.

LIFE FROM LOAM

Calvary Council 8144 in Scarborough, Maine, promoted recycling by collecting food garbage and waste from diners and having it commercially processed into organic fertilizer.

Knights then used the fertilizer to plant flowers and plants at the entrances to their church.

RAFFLE AND STEAK DINNER

St. Joseph the Worker Council 13359 in Maple Grove, Minn., held a raffle and steak dinner to raise funds for the council's charitable activities. More than 170 guests attended the event, which included cash prizes and a cabaret show. The dinner netted \$9,000.

MEMORIAL SERVICE

St. Hilary of Poitiers Council 8840 in Mathews, La., hosted a special memorial service in honor of deceased council members. The event included a bilingual rosary in English and French, along with meditations written by a past grand knight of the council. The memorial cul-

minated with the blessing of two new evergreen trees that had been planted in memory of deceased Knights.

DINNER THEATER

Father Francis Lawless Council 1534 in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, hosted a dinner theater event for charity. Attendees enjoyed dinner before a performance of the play *Pistols & Posies* at St. Marguerite School.

COFFEE FOR THE HOMELESS

The Knights of Columbus Patterson (N.J.) Federation began collecting donations of coffee for Eva's Village, a local organization that serves hot coffee to homeless people. The Knights' collection helped the organization meet its goal of having 1,000 pounds of coffee on hand to continuously serve the homeless.

CHESS SCHOLARSHIPS

Bishop Foley Council 2660 in Dearborn, Mich., awarded



Two young attendees view a reproduction of the Shroud of Turin at a multimedia event hosted by St. Vincent de Paul Council 9560 in Charlotte, N.C. The council invited local researcher Kevin Moran to discuss his 35 years of research on the shroud, along with photos and reproductions that shed light on Christ's resurrection.



\$500 scholarships to Lucas Watson and David Pettinaro, members of the Divine Child Chess Club. The funds for the scholarships were raised through the council's chess tournament.

IPSWICH DINNERBELL

Members of Carrollton Council 498 in Ipswich, Mass., regularly assist with the "Ipswich Dinnerbell," a program sponsored by various churches, civic organizations and businesses that welcomes the entire local community to come together for fellowship and dinner each Monday night. The council hosts the event twice each year.

MASS ITEMS FOR MISSIONS

Bishop Gunn Council 1583 in Gulfport, Miss., collected chalices, cruets, crucifixes and other items that will be sent to Franciscan missionaries serving in Syria. The items will aid the missionaries in providing Mass and the sacraments to Catholics in the war-torn region.



Steven Steider and other members of Meadville (Pa.) Council 388 pick up trash and debris along State Route 322 as part of the state's adopt-a-highway program. The council has been participating in the program for several years and removed 30 bags of garbage during its most recent event.

COLLEGE CHAPEL

The Knights of Columbus Western Metroplex Chapter in the Diocese of Fort Worth, Texas, donated \$1,000 to help build a new church for the St. John Paul II University parish community, which serves the students, faculty and alumni of the University of North Texas and Texas Woman's University. A major fundraising effort is underway to build the church with support from K of C units from throughout the Fort Worth Diocese.

SAINT STATUE SPRUCED UP

Lucena (Luzon) Council 3469 cleaned and repainted in the courtyard in front of St. Ferdinand Church. Knights cleaned a statue of St. Ferdinand, along with its pedestal and plaque, and repainted the concrete bumpers, walls and flag bases that adorn the church's front courtyard.

HELPING ST. VINCENT

Sheridan Council 24 in Waterbury, Conn., donated \$4,000 and 1,100 pounds of food to the local St. Vincent de Paul food pantry and soup kitchen. The donations were raised during a food drive that was held at the Basilica of the Immaculate Conception in Waterbury. In addition to the donation of nonperishable items, the monetary gift will allow the Society of St. Vincent de Paul to purchase an additional 30,000 pounds of food to serve the needy.

FLAGS FOR SCHOOL

St. Brigid Council 13204 and Father Joseph T. O'Callahan Assembly, both in Johns Creek, Ga., donated \$600 to provide a large U.S. flag and a Vatican flag to Cristo Rey Atlanta Jesuit High School.



Members of Cotabato City (Mindanao) Council 3504 sort rice, sardines and noodles into care packages to be given to refugee families. The council mobilized 40 volunteers to repack and distribute 3,000 kits to families from Maguindanao Province who have been displaced because of fighting between the Philippine Army and the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters, an Islamist militant group.

In addition, Knights donated 16 flags for each classroom. Jesuit Father James R. Van Dyke, school principal, provided a special blessing for the flags upon their delivery.

'IN GOD WE TRUST'

Fitzgerald Council 833 in Lincoln, Neb., launched a

program encouraging people to add the words "In God We Trust" to all of their correspondence. The council sells stickers bearing the message that can be placed on envelopes and has distributed more than 50,000 since the program began in 2014.

A LIFE CONNECTION

Michael-James Feider Council 7048 in Mukwonago, Wis., donated \$35,000 to Life Connection to help put a down payment on a new pregnancy resource center building in Waukeasha. Funds for the donation were originally earmarked to purchase a council social hall, but members scrapped the idea and decided to donate the money to charity instead. Knights from Council 7048 will also help renovate Life Connection's new facility, while South Milwaukee Council 1709 provided them with a new ultrasound through the Knights of Columbus Ultrasound Initiative.



Skip Lemire (left) of Msgr. Nolan B. McKeivitt Council 689 in Marquette, Mich., and his "pet" parrot visit with George LaChapell as part of the council's ongoing nursing home ministry. A team of Knights visits four area nursing homes on a monthly basis, meeting with residents and spreading good cheer.



Knights and their families from throughout Northern Virginia work to clean the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. About 30 Knights, along with their families and friends, traveled to the nation's capital to help maintain the memorial.

ROSARIES FOR SCOUTS

Father Tim Vakoc Assembly in St. Paul, Minn., donated 800 rosaries to the Archdiocese of St. Paul-Minneapolis Committee on Scouting. The rosaries will be distributed to Scouts participating in activities at various statewide camps.

CASINO NIGHT

Prince of Peace Foothills Council 9184 in Taylors, S.C., hosted a casino night that raised \$5,000 for Birthright of Greenville. The evening included casino-style games for attendees, along with silent and live auctions, and plenty of food.

BUILDING RENAMED

Cardinal Newman Council 5324 in Matawan, N.J., donated a plaque to St. Clement Church in honor of Father John Scully, who retired in

2015 after serving as pastor for 18 years. The plaque commemorates the parish's religious education facility being renamed after Father Scully.



Ed Loder (left) of Bishop Fenwick Council 2927 in Cincinnati stands with Jim Moody and the fish they caught during a council-sponsored Special Olympics fishing tournament. Knights assisted 30 athletes during the tournament, in addition to preparing lunch and dinner for all attendees. Every participant caught at least one fish.

BASEBALL OUTING

Prince of Peace Council 13457 in Flowery Branch, Ga., coordinated a charitable outing to a minor league baseball game. Knights sold 420 tickets to the event, which raised \$1,700 for Amigos for Christ, a program that coordinates water distribution projects in Nicaragua. In addition, Deacon Nicholas Johnson, a council member, threw out the game's first pitch.

ORANGE RIBBONS

Mater Christi Council 14284 in Chicago distributed orange ribbons at weekend Mass in remembrance of Christians — especially those in the Middle East — who have been persecuted and martyred for their faith. The color orange represented the color of the jumpsuits worn by 21 Coptic Christians who were martyred in Libya in February 2015.

BOWL-A-THON

Father Lopez Council 5737 in Pinellas Park, Fla., held its annual Special Olympics Bowl-A-Thon with the help of the Morning Star School for special needs students. The event drew more than 75 Special Olympics athletes and raised \$5,400.

HONORING VETERANS

Father Joseph T. O'Callahan Assembly in Johns Creek, Ga., sponsored a dinner honoring Vietnam War veterans. The event drew more than 100 people, including 30 veterans, and featured a military color guard from the Johns Creek Veterans Association.

NEW HOME FOR PEWS

St. Peter's Council 6735 in Merchantville, N.J., helped refurbish the chapel at Camden Catholic High School. Knights installed new drywall and traveled to Hazleton, Pa., to pick up pews from a church that was being demolished.

UTILITY SHED

Father Baraga Council 2934 in L'Anse, Mich., assembled a utility shed at an outdoor teaching site owned by Sacred Heart School. The wooded lot, which was donated to the school, is used as a teaching tool for science and environmental awareness. The new shed will store equipment required for classes.

FREEDOM TO BEAR WITNESS

St. Vincent Council 1111 in Cape Girardeau, Mo., participated in a "Freedom to Bear Witness" rally at a local park. The event included speeches and talks on the theme of being called to live out one's faith in the public and private spheres without intimidation, as well as time for



prayer. Signs, prayer cards and U.S. flags were provided to all in attendance.

MARIAN HOMES

Marian Homes, an organization founded by St. Mary of Sorrows Council 8600 in Fairfax Station, Va., to provide group homes to people with intellectual disabilities, opened its third facility in 2015. After obtaining this latest piece of property, council members formed three teams to demolish the inside of the building in preparation for making it compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

BIRD & SQUIRREL HOUSES

Msgr. Peter M.H. Wynn-Council 3091 in Westwego, La., worked with a local Boy Scout troop to build bird and squirrel houses. Knights and Scouts constructed 17 houses, which were later placed at Fountain Blue State Park.



Ed Trojanowski of All Saints Council 9485 in Mesa, Ariz., scrapes dirt from the bucket of a backhoe while helping to build a prayer garden at All Saints Church. At the request of the pastor, Father Robert Caruso, Knights built a prayer garden that includes the Stations of the Cross and a small pool and waterfall. The council plans to add benches and lighting in the future.

MCGIVNEY HIGH WINDOW

Tri Cities Council 1098 in Granite City, Ill., presented a \$6,000 check to Father McGivney High School to help purchase a stained-glass window for the chapel of the school's new building. The six-foot-tall window features a Celtic cross with the words "Charity" and "Fraternity" along the bottom.

WI-FI NETWORK

Holy Family Council 5547 in Silver Spring, Md., presented \$1,000 to St. Francis School to help with the completion of its Wi-Fi upgrade. The funds will help create an access point in every classroom so that all students have access to the school's network.

CHURCH TOUCH UPS

Heartland Council 7567 in Arcadia, Fla., performed repair work at St. Paul Church. Knights replaced the lock mechanism on the church's front door, painted the front of the building and placed a new bench at the parish's Sacred Heart grotto.

PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT

St. Patrick Council 10567 in Adamsville, Ala., donated more than \$1,200 to Adamsville Elementary School to help purchase new playground equipment. The funds were raised during the council's pork shoulder sale.

BUILDING PROJECTS

Father McKevitt Council 3492 in Richland Center, Wis., purchased a monument that features the Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes for the street corner in front of St. Mary's Church. The monument was placed following the completion of an addition to St.



An expectant mother views an ultrasound image of her unborn baby during a free ultrasound and health awareness project sponsored by Banal Na Sacramento Council 8753 in Quezon City. The program offered parishioners free medical and dental care, as well as various health-related treatments.

Mary's Elementary School and a building project that added an elevator to the church. Knights donated \$25,000 toward these projects, which was raised through the council's recycling program, tractor pulls and other initiatives.

CANDLEHOLDERS

Doctor Briggs Council 4597 in Courtenay, British Columbia, donated \$500 to St. Joseph Hospital to put toward the purchase of new candleholders for the hospital's chapel.

EASIER TRANSPORTATION

St. John XXIII Council 7302 in Cole Harbour, Nova Scotia, hosted a pig roast dinner that raised \$3,000 for a local woman with cerebral palsy. The funds were used to purchase a new wheelchair and van ramp so that the woman can more easily enter and exit a handicapped-accessible van. Previously, the woman's 70-year-old parents were lifting her in and out of the vehicle.

PREGNANCY RESOURCES

Sacred Heart of Jesus Council 13641 in Grand Rapids, Mich., joined with students at Sacred Heart Academy to collect donations for a local pregnancy resource center. The drive resulted in 2,600 diapers, several blankets and cases of formula, and a diaper bag.

MASS KIT

Father Vincent R. Capodanno Assembly in Gulfport, Miss., purchased a Mass kit and supplies to send to the Franciscan order for priests in Syria. Due to the perilous situation for Catholics in the Middle East, priests there need supplies that can be packed up quickly and transported easily.

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Father Mark Wagner, chaplain of St. Joseph Council 10644 in Modesto, Calif., blesses a highway patrol car with holy water following a Blue Mass. Knights welcomed representatives from the Modesto Police and Fire Departments, Stanislaus County Sheriff, California Highway Patrol and other first responders for a morning of prayer, the blessing of vehicles and a parish lunch. The annual Blue Mass, so named for the traditional color of police uniforms, was begun in honor of first responders in the months following Sept. 11, 2001.

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Leaving high school, I didn’t know whether or not I was called to be a priest. But prayer, spiritual direction and the encouragement of those around me led me to a deeper discernment, and I entered seminary. My parents, siblings, friends and local K of C council made my journey possible with their prayers and support.

I looked to stories of the saints and the example of my parents, and from these I knew that I had to trust that God had a plan. Then, during my novitiate, I experienced falling in love with Christ, which gave me purpose, zeal and above all peace in my vocation. I will spend the rest of my life trying to share my love for Christ with those around me.

In my six years in formation, the most important lesson I’ve learned is to *trust*. Taking things one step at a time requires trusting in providence. The peace and direction I now have in my life are a testament to that. Others trusted in me, which in turn allowed me to trust in Christ.

JOSH BATHON, CSC
*Vowed Religious and Seminarian,
Congregation of Holy Cross
Notre Dame, Ind.*

