

For my last lecture, I would like to start out by telling a short personal story:

Many of you know I spent most of my childhood growing up in middle Tennessee. Tennessee, and most parts of the south, doesn't really stand out as an area with a huge Catholic population. The city of 150,000 I lived in had one Catholic church, just to give you an idea of how small it is. For one reason or another, my parents decided to part ways with this church and to drive an hour to Nashville each week to go to mass sometime during my freshman year of high school. They eventually got tired of this, and we stopped going altogether. My senior year of high school I probably went to mass fewer than ten times.

This sudden drop off from practicing my faith had a strong effect on me, having been raised in Catholic schools, going to mass every Sunday at least. It led to my college applications. All but one school I applied to was Catholic. After this time without going to mass, I had a strong urge to find my faith again, and I found my way here, to the national university of the Catholic Church.

Freshman year here a CUA was a difficult transition from growing up in a town where Catholics are few and far between. One of the first groups on campus I joined, however, was this council; the Knights of Columbus. I wanted to get reacquainted with my faith, and thought what better way than through the group of guys I used to see with cool hats and swords at special masses when I was growing up.

Joining the knights, however, wasn't enough. I was pretty active with the council then, but I didn't have the faith transformation I was looking for. I went to mass more often than I did in high school, but one thing that stands out to me in retrospect is that I didn't go to mass at all during Lent except for Ash Wednesday. Lent is a pretty big time in the liturgical year, as we are getting ready for Easter, but I just gave it a miss.

It wasn't until my sophomore year that I started becoming more active in the church aspect of the knights. I started going to the Knights' Mass and rosary periodically. That led to me going to Sunday masses more consistently, and I finally found myself where I wanted to be: I had regained what I lost in that year without going to church at all. It was a big change, making the habit of setting aside time in a busy college student's life to attend mass, but it has been very rewarding, helping me to grow my faith again.

Some of the best friends I have at this university are people I know through the Knights of Columbus. Many friendships either started here or grew stronger here, and that support network, seeing the same familiar faces at meetings, at fraternal events, at weekly mass, is a big reason behind this self-improvement I have experienced.

I'm not saying all of my problems have been solved; nobody is perfect, but rather that I feel as if I have been set on the right path, or at least a better one than I was on before. I owe much of it to my involvement with the Knights of Columbus. Since we are at The Catholic University of America, we have many opportunities to live out and grow our faith, but this council is, in my opinion, the best. Living out Charity, Unity, and Fraternity in this council is the best way I have experienced to both grow in faith and to grow lasting friendships. Patriotism, of course, is also important because faith both in God and in the world can grow when expressing or seeing others express patriotism. Who didn't tear up a little more or have a little more faith after watching the national anthem at the Bruins game Wednesday night? Activity

in the council and participation in events put on by every committee, not just the church committee, is vital in the growth that is possible through involvement with the Knights of Columbus. I'm not just saying this; I have experienced it, as my story shows.

Since my time as lecturer is coming to an end, I would like to charge everyone to stay involved and to make an attempt to increase activity within the council in all different areas. I have loved my time here, and would love to see how we can grow with more active members. The teachings of our order make a strong statement, yet they mean nothing without strong members to uphold them. The teachings can help us grow in faith, but only if we are courageous enough and willing to take the next step, and that next step is much easier to take with your brother knights at your side. None of us is perfect. Accepting that and embracing that, along with the opportunities that this brotherhood offers, allows us to help each other to grow, both in faith and character.