

Address for the
30th Anniversary of
The Catholic University of America Council 9542
of the Knights of Columbus

Heritage Hall
Father O'Connell Hall
The Catholic University of America
Washington, District of Columbia
April 2, 2017

Your Eminence, Reverend Fathers, Worthy State Deputy and State Officers, Officers and Members of The Catholic University of America Council, Brother Knights, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am deeply honored to give this address tonight on the occasion of the 30th Anniversary of the chartering of The Catholic University of America Council 9542 of the Knights of Columbus. The organizers of this event asked me to speak about the origins of the Council. In some ways, this would be more ably done by my long-time friend and the founder of this Council, Tom Gallagher, who graces us with his presence this evening. In other ways, it might be for the best, since Tom is not one to talk about himself and his achievements, which are many and varied. The founding of this Council is one of them and it is a tale worth telling in this place in particular which has views of McGivney Hall and the Basilica (both near and dear to Knights) and in this room where from the time it was opened in 1914 until the opening of McGivney Hall in 2008 when it was moved there, a framed check from 1904 hung on that wall noting the donations from many of the councils of the Knights at that time to establish a chair of American History here at The Catholic University of America.

There were other councils that had their origins on this campus – Keane Council 353 in the early 20th century and Shrine of the Immaculate Conception Council 4944 in the early 1960s. Given their very names, one that of the first Rector of this University, Bishop John J. Keane, and one that of the great Basilica that adjoins the campus, it is not a surprise that they began here. They were not “college councils,” however, but did have many members from our campus community.

The college council program in the Knights of Columbus goes back to the founding of Notre Dame Council at the university of the same name in 1910. Seventy-six years later, a 1985 undergraduate alumnus and first year law student at CUA's Columbus School of Law, as if inspired, decided to pursue the idea of starting a council on campus composed primarily of students. His name was and is Thomas L. Gallagher.

Tom had become a member of his home council, Fr. Ambrose Dwyer Council 2953, in Johnson City, New York in the Syracuse Diocese. Interestingly, two large families, one Irish-American, the other Italian-American were well known there, each having a long line children in the local Catholic schools - the Gallaghers and the DeAngelos – the family of our University Chaplain, Fr. Jude!

In 1986, Leahy Hall was the home of the Columbus School of Law. It had a three-story library on the left-hand side of the building that had a glass front rising for two stories. The stacks for the Law Library were set back and between the floors and the two-story open area in front of it, meant for studying, were on either side large circular emblems of the Order. For years as an undergraduate walking by and as a first-year law student studying there, Tom saw the emblems and also the check on the wall in what was then the main dining hall on campus, but had a question – “Why is there no Knights of Columbus council on campus?” He then did the only thing he could think of doing – he called Supreme. The four-pillared tower in New Haven responded to his plea for a council at CUA. In the fall of 1986, Tom met with state officers – Ed Sullivan and Jim Toliver as well as General Insurance Agent, Bob Canter, Sr. They developed a plan of action and Tom placed notices around campus calling for an organizational meeting. I was a sophomore at the time and called the number on the notice asking to learn more. Already a Knight, a member of Pallotti Council in my hometown, I thought it would enhance my college experience greatly to be part of such a council on campus. Little did I know that a friendship of over thirty years would begin that way, one that has supported us both in times good and challenging.

The Council had more than enough members for a charter by the spring of 1987. The official charter date is April 13, 1987, but it was not presented until a ceremony honoring the new Supreme Chaplain at the time, Bishop Thomas Daily. Supreme Knight Virgil Dechant was present for the event and presented the charter to the Council. We were told by the administration of the University that it was that event that helped prompt the Supreme Knight to join the Board of Trustees of the University.

At that time, CUA Council, the second college council in the District of Columbia, was the only functioning college council. Georgetown Council which was started in 1976 was not functioning. A member and officer of CUA Council, Frank Nolan, transferred from CUA to Georgetown as an undergrad and with support from CUA Council re-started Georgetown Council. One of his early recruits was Jonathan Kalisch, now Fr. Jonathan Kalisch, OP, Director of the Chaplaincy Program for the Knights. Later, Stephen Feiler, Assistant to the Supreme Knight, became a member and Grand Knight of that Council. It was at the request of Tom Gallagher and Stephen Feiler that I became re-involved with CUA Council back in 2006 when I returned to the area.

In its early years, CUA Council grew quickly. In its first full year, the Council recruited over 100 members. The Council benefited greatly from the support of priests on campus and in the religious houses near by – Fr. Greg Salmone, OP, Fr. Rielly, and Fr. Columba Enright, TOR were very much involved. Fr. Columba served as Chaplain through the 90s and his calm and abiding presence was an inspiration to us all. Dr. John Ounan of the Economics Department became a long-time Financial Secretary, after yours truly. In the late 90s and early 2000s, Dr. Ronald Calinger of the History Department provided much guidance to the Council.

In the early 1990s, CUA Council continued to grow and be very successful. In 1994 it was named Outstanding College Council by the Supreme Council of the Knights of Columbus. The Grand Knight of that year, who is a Past D.C. State Warden, Louis Crishock, is with us this evening. The chair of the College Councils Advisory Board, who led the College Councils

Conference that year was Past Grand Knight, Michael Dosch. He is now Fr. Michael Dosch, OP, the Novice Master of the St. Joseph Province of the Dominicans.

Several Grand Knights and numerous former members are now priests and religious, including myself, or are in formation. Among the Past Grand Knights, Fr. John Orr who is currently State Chaplain of Tennessee, Fr. Ron Floyd, Fr. Jack Evans, and Fr. Kevin Kimtis are diocesan priests. Sean Philips is a student with my religious community, the Pallottines, and Joe Hubbard is a diocesan seminarian. Acting Grand Knight in a time of crisis for the Council, Alex Boucher, is also a diocesan seminarian. There are so many CUA Council members in formation at this point, that we need to have a separate page on our website to list them all. And there will be more to come!

Most of the other Grand Knights and members are dedicated family men who live their faith serving the Church, serving our country, building the domestic church, the family, and bringing Christ to the public square - being apostolic men, the apostles of Christ that they are called to be as Knights.

Now, CUA Council has seen periods of growth and of decline. At one point, it was near extinction, but particularly over the last decade or so the Council has seen a resurgence due to the dedication of its members to live well the principles of the Order – charity, unity, fraternity, and patriotism – and to be Catholic Gentlemen in service to the campus community, Campus Ministry, the Basilica, the St. John Paul II National Shrine, the larger Church and society through the Vigil for Life and March for Life, the Knights in the Fourth Degree Assembly and at the District and State levels as officers or directors, and at the Supreme level on the College Councils Advisory Board.

The Council's most important and necessary service, though, is its charitable work to those most in need – the poor, the elderly, the vulnerable, the unborn, the sick, and the suffering. The number of activities in this regard are too many to mention, but it is an impressive list of work in ways large and small.

In 2014, the Council was named again, Outstanding College Council by the Supreme Council of the Knights of Columbus. The Grand Knight of that year, the current State Program Director, Nicholas Shields, is with us this evening. The Council has been Double Star or Star Council for much of its history, particularly in recent years, and has won numerous awards for its programs, its service, and its leadership by its members, from both the Knights at the State and Supreme levels *and* from the University.

As profiled in last month's *Columbia* magazine, at the center of the success of CUA Council is its commitment to the faith formation of the members of the Council, through spiritual events such as its weekly Mass and Rosary, pilgrimages, its award winning OverKnight program, and formative presentations at meetings.

Finally, the fraternity of the Knights has built and continues to grow life-long friendships of men of differing ages and backgrounds. I, myself, am blessed with many such friendships. Today, CUA Council is one of the largest organizations on campus with members involved in leadership

in campus organizations, Campus Ministry, Residence Life, and numerous other ways. We are bound in unity with one another especially when we gather as a Council for our fraternal events. It is usually a time of spiritual renewal and fraternal fun.

Each brother Knight, learns from the others, deepens his faith in Christ and in service to the Church and community, and lives more fully what St. John Paul II said that all the baptized are called to do – “to live as apostles of Christ in the Church and in the world.”

Ad multos annos, CUA Council!

Vivat Jesus!