

Charity

Lent is a time of reflection, a time for prayer, and a time for spiritual preparation for the greatest of all joys, which comes with the promise of eternal life in Easter. Amid this reflection and prayer, we thank God for the many gifts he has given us, and we gain understanding of the fact that others are not as fortunate as us. As Knights of Columbus, our first lesson is in charity, the first principle of our order. We learn that, since we are all God's children, we should not turn a blind eye to a brother in need, but rather have the strength to pick him back up and help him in whatever way we are able.

Although almsgiving is at the core of Lent, it is not the only way to help those in need. The most apparent way our council has been charitable is through sheer manpower, a donation of time. We also have raised money for many causes, such as Relay for Life (coming this next weekend). These are, of course, the most visible forms of charity, but charity is so much more. During Lent, as we pray in thanks to God to help prepare us for Easter, we also pray for others. Whether a family member, a close friend, or a person you don't even know, we all pray for someone else. This is also a form of charity; asking God, in all his kindness and his power, to help these people to get healthy, to be safe, or to help them in any other way. This form of charity should not be substituted in for a more visible form, but its importance cannot be overlooked. One of the greatest lessons I have learned in my time in college, and especially through my involvement in this council, is that God listens to prayers and acts upon them. Not always in the way we would expect, but God always makes his presence known. When we act with charity by donating time or money, we must remember prayer because time and money provide a temporary comfort, but prayer, a relationship with God, and life after death are eternal.

Fraternity

Faith is what unifies the Knights of Columbus as a brotherhood. We are all Catholic gentlemen, united by our common faith and our devotion to the Church. This is why we are here tonight, why we celebrate mass at our overnights, why we take a pilgrimage as a counsel each year. If not for our common faith, we are nothing more than another student organization or another charity in the world. This is why we center so many of our activities around faith, with the rosary, mass, adoration, et cetera. It is through these activities that our brotherhood becomes stronger.

With this in mind, we must call to mind the Year of Faith and the New Evangelization. The need for reflection and prayer in Lent intensify the callings of these two events in the Church. We as a council thrive when we are a close brotherhood, and stagger when we are not. Participation in worship and practice of faith with others builds a bond stronger than almost anything else, bringing our brotherhood closer together. As the old saying goes, "The family that prays together, stays together." That is exactly what we are: a family, and our family is strongest

when we are praying together. The New Evangelization, the Year of Faith, and Lent all call for renewal of faith and an invitation to worship. With this calling in mind, it is our duty as Knights of Columbus, or as Catholics, to be a part of this, helping to invite people to share in our faith and to renew theirs. At as small a level as our council, we have built a very strong brotherhood through consistent participation in our faith events, but imagine how much stronger we could be if we had more. We could do anything we put our minds to. There would be no limit to what our council could do. As a Church, we are a strong family, but imagine how much stronger that family could be if there were more people sharing in our bond of faith. Fraternity is the third principle of our order, and the strong bonds of fraternity are what guide us to work together for the good of our council, our order, our Church, and our world. We must all strive to build these bonds of fraternity through the prayer, reflection, and renewal that are all part of Lent, the Year of Faith, and the New Evangelization, and we must not be afraid to invite others to share these bonds with us.

Unity

Habemus Papam! We have all heard the news, saw the vans on campus yesterday, heard the bells ringing for what seemed like hours. There is no doubt that this is a very exciting and pivotal moment in the history of the Church. The election of a new pope and all the tradition and history that comes with it is an incredible thing. Just the fact that people welcome a new pope so readily and with such love is astounding, especially for people familiar with any other political system or governing body in the world.

We have all experienced elections of some sort in our lives, whether it was for class president or for United States President. The fact of the matter is that not everyone is always happy with the outcome. In our national politics, parties immediately conspire, searching for ways to undermine each other when an election has gone the other way. This is a sad fact of human nature. That is one thing so incredible about the Church: when a new pope is elected, there is rejoicing. We hear basilica bells ringing for hours, people shouting in excitement, and as a Church feel joy. The Church unites under its new leader, waiting to see what change he will bring and how he can strengthen the faith of the world. Unity is the second lesson that we as Knights of Columbus learn, and it is a lesson cannot be more appropriate here. The fact that 115 cardinals decided in five ballots to cast at least 77 votes for one man is absolutely shocking. The College of Cardinals showed a unity far beyond that of any other body made up of many leaders, all carrying different opinions. The Church, the Cardinals, and the new Pope all show a deep unity with and trust in God, that he has made his decision and that the best choice has been made.

This trust and unity with God is a perplexing thing; something that goes hand-in-hand with the traditions of Lent. Ever since we were small children, we were taught to give something

up for lent, from a certain type of food, or a video game, or whatever else. Through this personal sacrifice, and through prayer and reflection, we build our relationship and unity with God. Unity with God translates into unity with each other, as was discussed earlier, building a strong family. This sacrifice, prayer, and reflection in the name of God is what separates the Church from other political or governing bodies. The Cardinals attended mass and prayed heavily before their votes were cast, building unity with God and allowing him to work through them, bringing them together in their decision. The people prayed for the Cardinals and for the Church, bringing them closer to God, and bringing them great joy when their prayers were answered in the form of Pope Francis. Unified as one body, the Church greeted the new Pope with joy and excitement, eagerly anticipating his work over the coming years. This is possibly the most profound example of unity in the modern world, and it is all made possible by sacrifice and prayer. When we are unified with God, we are unified with each other. When we are unified with each other, we are most capable of doing God's work on earth.