



# Knights of Columbus Council 9542

## THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA

Washington, DC 20064  
*In Service to One, In Service to All*

To begin my “lecture series”, if you will, I wish to call your attention to a particular item recorded in The Acts of the Apostles: “All who were sitting in the Sanhedrin looked intently at Stephen, and they saw that his face was like the face of an angel” (Acts 6:15). Specifically, that they looked *intently* at Stephen, not quite knowing what to think of him. Surely they had heard of the great wonders and signs he had performed or the wisdom with which he spoke (see Acts 6:8, 10). And, as Stephen was rebuking the council for “resisting the Holy Spirit”, they also marveled at the angelic face before them... much like we do with that of our new Grand Knight (see Acts 7:51).

Obligatory joke aside, at the start of this new academic and fraternal year, Council #9542 of the order of the Knights of Columbus once again presents itself to the Catholic University of America campus community. Now entering our 29<sup>th</sup> year, the strong legacy of service, faith, and leadership established by our brother Knights passes onto us. How shall we continue the noble work of dedicating ourselves “in service to one, in service to all”? How shall we present ourselves to those who have never encountered the Knights or the Catholic Church before, especially those who believe the slander and conspiracy theories about us? How shall we distinguish ourselves from mere fraternities or other student organizations to the students seeking to join something larger than themselves?

Permit me to now remind us that “all the good works we do are informed by our four core principles” as defined by our Order:

**Charity** - Our Catholic faith teaches us to “Love thy neighbor as thyself.” Members of the Knights of Columbus show love for their neighbors by conducting food drives and donating the food to local soup kitchens and food pantries, by volunteering at Special Olympics, and by supporting, both spiritually and materially, mothers who choose life for their babies. Knights recognize that our mission, and our faith in God, compels us to action. There is no better way to experience love and compassion than by helping those in need, a call we answer every day.

**Unity** – None of us is as good as all of us. Members of the Knights of Columbus all know that – together – we can accomplish far more than any of us could individually. So we stick together... we support one another. That doesn’t mean that we always agree or that there is never a difference of opinion. It does mean that— as a Knight of Columbus— you can count on the support and encouragement of your brother Knights as you work to make life better in your parish and community.

**Fraternity** – The Venerable Michael J. McGivney founded the Knights of Columbus, in large part, to provide assistance to the widows and children left behind when the family breadwinner died— often prematurely. The Order’s top-rated insurance program continues to do this today, as do individual Knights, who last year gave more than 10 million hours of their time to assist sick and/or disabled members and their families. In the Knights of Columbus, we watch out for and take care of one another.

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Patriotism – Members of the Knights of Columbus, be they Americans, Canadians, Mexicans, Cubans, Filipinos, Poles, or Dominicans, are patriotic citizens. We are proud of our devotion to God and country, and believe in standing up for both. Whether it's in public or private, the Knights remind the world that Catholics support their nations and are amongst the greatest citizens. (<http://www.kofc.org/un/en/about/principles/index.html>)

Next, let us remember that we are Knights! And Catholic knights at that. Like the knights of old we dedicate ourselves to prayer and hope to gain the favor of a particular lady as we commit ourselves to just and noble causes in the loyal service of a great kingdom. As Knights of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we face new enemies who threaten our world with increasing viciousness, including the attacks against the dignity of the human person and family, the barbaric religious persecutions being levied and suffered abroad, the curtailing of religious liberty in our own Nation, and what I like to call the “frost-your-own cupcake” mentality of moral relativism. Of course, as Knights, we have never been more resolved to come to the defense of the besieged: we wield not swords— especially in the Archdiocese of Washington— but rosaries as we continuously seek to make ourselves worthy of being champions of Our Lady, the blessed Mother of God and Queen of Heaven. In the words of St. Bonaventure, “Men do not fear a powerful hostile army as the powers of hell fear the name and protection of Mary.” We never give up upon experiencing setbacks, but rally at cry, “Vivat Jesus!”, enduring to fight the “good fight of the faith” (1 Timothy 6:12, cf. 2 Timothy 4:7-8) so that upon our judgment in the Kingdom of God we may be embraced with the words “well done, good and faithful Knight!”

Pope St. John Paul II hailed the Knights as a “strong right arm of the Church”, but let us never become complacent in our accomplishments! For those who only seek worldly recognition for their deeds— in our case a coveted mention on our social media accounts— scripture tells us “they have received their reward” (Matthew 6:2). Remember that our identity as Knights— or Christians— does not cease whenever we leave CUA or take off our Knights gear/swag. There is always a cause for Knights to take up, and to take up well! I remind you of the entreating of Brazilian Cardinal Cláudio Hummes to his “great friend” Jorge Bergoglio after he was elected Supreme Pontiff: “Don’t forget the poor!” How can we when all around us the poor are crying out, in the words of one man I encountered during my summer commute, “Please, help me!”?

Ultimately, the only thing that truly matters in this life is whether we faithfully followed God’s will (see Mother Teresa’s “The Final Analysis”). As Venerable Fulton Sheen noted:

Have you ever noticed, in the Creed, how quickly we pass over the life of our Lord? “Born”, what’s the next thing? “Suffered under Pontius Pilate.” Suffered. Nothing about the Beatitudes, nothing about His miracles, nothing about His conflicts with the fundamentalists and modernists of His time, just “born” – “suffered”. Why does the Creed pass over His Earthly life? Because there’s only one thing to be told about a human life: do we or do we not do the Father’s will? The tiny little details, whether it’s the office of a priest, of a nun, a mother, a secretary, a doctor, a lawyer, it makes no difference. The details we can skip! Everything can be said about life if we did the Father’s will. He did it, therefore, omit the details. (see *Through the Year with Fulton Sheen*, 78)

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What are some ways to accomplish this? “Pray, hope, and don’t worry,” Padre Pio suggests. “Spread love everywhere. Let no one ever come to you without leaving happier,” says Mother Teresa. “Be holy in the way God asks you to be holy... He wills that you sanctify the world and your everyday life... In every movement of [your] body, and every act of [your] mind, intend to give God infinite glory,” challenges St. Vincent Pallotti. He continues, “Remember that the Christian life is one of action; not of speech and daydreams. Let there be few words and many deeds, and let them be done well.” Also stand up for the truth— always “Tell it like it is!”

Finally, no matter how difficult our noble duty of loving evangelization and service becomes, let us take comfort that we are never truly alone in our convictions. At each Mass we greet each other with the words *Dominus vobiscum*— the Lord is with each of us! Remember the crowds gazed intently upon St. Stephen as he spoke to them in Jerusalem before picking up stones to drive him out with murderous intent. Yet he never wavered in his mission, gazing raptly into heaven at our Lord as he received the glorious crown of martyrdom. Recalling the words frequently attributed to another martyr, the Most Reverend Blessed Óscar Romero of El Salvador, we must not doubt the effects of the good we commit ourselves to achieving in the face of difficulty:

It helps, now and then, to step back and take a long view. The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts, it is even beyond our vision. We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is God’s work. Nothing we do is complete, which is a way of saying that the Kingdom always lies beyond us. This is what we are about. We plant the seeds that one day will grow. We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise. We lay foundations that will need further development. We provide yeast that produces far beyond our capabilities. We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that. This enables us to do something, and to do it very well. It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord’s grace to enter and do the rest. We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker. We are workers, not master builders; ministers, not messiahs. We are prophets of a future not our own. (The Most Reverend Kenneth Edward Untener’s “The mystery of the Romero Prayer”, see *Laudato Si’* §212)

At every moment of our lives, the world looks intently to us as men, as Christians, and as Knights of Columbus. Many a cause lies before us ready to be taken up... shall we begin?

God bless you and God love you!

Fraternally,

SK Thomas Wong

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