

Knights of Columbus

An Interview with

Very Rev. David Carter, JCL, JV, Pastor and Rector of the Basilica of Sts. Peter and Paul
and

Adam Foster of Knights of Columbus Council 610

February 24, 2021

Full Transcript of Interview

On Feb. 24, 2021, Fr. Carter interviewed Adam Foster, Basilica parishioner and active member of the Knights of Columbus Council 610. The full interview can be found on the Basilica's website along with Fr. Carter's Pastor's Notes for March 7 and 14, 2021, accessible at stspeterandpaulbasilica.com/pastors-notes.

Fr. David Carter

Welcome, Adam Foster. We're glad to have you here and to answer a few questions for us. So, first of all, I'll introduce you. Adam Foster is recipient of this year's The Servant of God Father Patrick Ryan Service Award here at the Basilica. He has been heavily involved in lots of activities that help his fellow man in the name of Christ, and in particular, he belongs to the Knights of Columbus. And that's what I wanted to hear more from you about. What is this Knights of Columbus? Tell us what the Knights of Columbus is.

Adam Foster

The Knights of Columbus is a Catholic fraternal organization based on the principles of charity, unity, fraternity, and patriotism. They were founded by Blessed Michael McGivney in 1882. And there's currently around 2 million Catholic men who are members of the Knights of Columbus. Our council, Knights of Columbus Father Patrick J. Ryan Council 610, is the council that serves the Basilica. We are the second oldest Knights of Columbus Council in Tennessee, and we're the first Knights of Columbus Council in Chattanooga.

Fr. David Carter

Awesome. So we've got a venerable history here. And even a connection. You said the Father Patrick J. Ryan, Council is the connection to our own Servant of God, whose Cause for Canonization is being postulated from our parish. But you also mentioned the founder of the Knights of Columbus, and that's Blessed Michael J. McGivney. Tell me more about Blessed Michael J. McGivney.

Adam Foster

When he was a priest, life was pretty hard on Catholic immigrants in the United States. A lot of times, if the father died, the families would get busted up, the children would get put into foster care, and they wouldn't be able to practice their Catholic faith. So Blessed McGivney was thinking of ways how he could address this problem. And he came up with a fraternal benefit order, where everybody could kind of pitch in and help out families, if the breadwinner dies, to keep the kids in the home, to keep the kids Catholic. And his legacy lives on today, through the Knights of Columbus benefit program. He had a miracle approved. I think it was this past year. And on October 31, 2020, is when he received his - how do I say it, beatification?

Fr. David Carter

That's exactly it.

Adam Foster

At that point, he is now just one step away from becoming a saint of the Church. They need one more miracle, I think.

Fr. David Carter

We'll be sure to pray for that miracle. Along with a miracle for our own Father Patrick Ryan. There's a lot of parallels there, you know. In the late 1800s, we had very little understanding of biology and things like that, as compared to now. And Father Ryan was involved in ministering to people with a pandemic. There's a parallel with our day with Coronavirus, that he ministered to people who are dying from a disease, and now we are trying to imitate his values. But in a parallel way, Father Michael J. McGivney was ministering to migrant workers who had no safety net, had no way of caring for their families if they were to lose their income or even lose their lives. Do you see parallels in our migrant community now?

Adam Foster

Yes. Most recently, we've had a lot of members from the Spanish speaking community at the Basilica join. And, you know, I assume that a lot of those people don't have access to the type of benefits that English speaking Americans have. We have more access to benefits. So, the Knights of Columbus can offer benefits to those families. I personally carry a term life policy for myself, so that if something were to happen to me and I died, my children would be taken care of. Also, I carry policies on my children. If something were to happen to them, the Knights of Columbus would pay for their funerals, if something bad were to happen. And there's also investment opportunities with the Knights of Columbus now. If you want to make sure that the money that you invest represents your Catholic morals, they make sure their investment company, that anything they put money into, follows Catholic social teaching. So it provides Catholics with an opportunity to invest morally.

Fr. David Carter

Yes, conscientious investment. Good. I think a lot of people think that the Knights of Columbus insurance program is some kind of gimmick just to make money. But it seems to be that it was part of the heart of the original mission of caring for the widows and orphans of the men. It was a men's fraternal benefit society, whose purpose was to care for the widows and orphans, should the man die and not be able to sustain his family, and that can take the form now of the life insurance program.

Adam Foster

Right. And it's not just life insurance. They have annuities. They have outright investing. now. It's separate; you have to go to a different - not your regular - insurance rep, but there's other investments like your more traditional retirement investing options.

Fr. David Carter

So they give more opportunities, then, to mutually benefit together from a Catholic perspective. We bind ourselves together for the sustenance of our families. That's beautiful. Besides all this insurance talk and investment talk, what's the kind of meat and potatoes of the Knights of Columbus nowadays? What do the Knights of Columbus do?

Adam Foster

Again, we're founded on the principles of charity, unity, fraternity, and patriotism. A lot of the activities and programs we carry out around our councils fall under one of those categories. We're very active in the pro-life movement. The Knights of Columbus has been involved with the March for Life since there's been a March for Life. We fund ultrasound machines for pregnancy help centers, because we know that often when women can see the ultrasound they realize the life that is there. Locally with our council, we do a Habitat for Humanity build every quarter. We've got one coming up on March 13. We recently started our Food for Families program. That's a program that the Supreme Council, which is in New Haven, Connecticut, encourages all the councils to be a part of, to raise money or to get food donations for local food banks and community kitchens. So we have launched our food for families program this year. We're doing 40 cans for Lent that benefits the community kitchen. Parishioners at the Basilica can bring canned food, and there is a bucket or a box or something in the vestibule they can put their canned food in. We are also raising money for the Community Kitchen. Our goal is to raise \$2,500 and we will match \$100 for every \$500 raised. And the Supreme Council pays that matching fund. So far, the last I checked, between the Facebook fundraiser and donations through Venmo, we were at \$2,035.

Fr. David Carter

So you're pretty much there.

Adam Foster

Yes, almost there. In the coming year, we plan to do some fundraisers in support of the Under One Roof initiative at the Basilica. Something that I've been talking about doing for a while now is a Father's Day fishing tournament at our private campground, Camp Columbus. It's out across from Chester Frost Park on Lake Chickamauga. Any member of our council has access to both Camp Columbus and our clubhouse, which now we call Father Patrick Ryan Hall, which is located in North Chattanooga. If any Catholic man wants to join our council, they get access to those great facilities. Also, on the first Friday of every month, we provide a meal and go eat with the residents of the Catholic Charities Home Place. And if any listeners are unfamiliar with Catholic Charities Home Place, it provides people who are experiencing homelessness and AIDS with a safe place to live. Donate to Catholic Charities, and get involved with the Knights, and that's a great program that we are currently doing. Annually we provide help with parking for the Special Olympics. Pretty much anytime a need arises at the Basilica, we help. We have around 200 members in our council, and not all are Basilica parishioners. Originally there was just one Knights of Columbus Council in Chattanooga, and we served all the churches and then in recent years, there's been a push for every parish to have their own Council. We still have members of other parishes. But we are definitely trying to grow our membership from Basilica parishioners, and since I've joined, we've had maybe over 20 men from the Basilica join our council, and it's really becoming more of a Basilica Council.

Fr. David Carter

It sounds like the Knights of Columbus are like the strong right hand of any parish. They do a lot of the charitable work, but they also provide a lot of fraternal opportunities for men to have social time with good like-minded/valued Catholic men to grow in their faith, and to have opportunities again, to serve and to do acts and works of charity. Sounds like a pretty awesome thing. How would a man join the council? And what kind of man is the council looking for? What does it mean to be a "practical Catholic"? I believe that's what the Knights of Columbus asks for.

Adam Foster

To be able to join the Knights of Columbus, you have to be a practical Catholic man over the age of 18. To be a practical Catholic, you have to observe the five precepts of the Church. And if you are in good standing with the Church - if you're able to receive Communion, if you go to church when you're supposed to - if you're a good, practical Catholic man, you can join online now. They have online membership. I'm old school. The Exemplification is what it's called when you join the Knights of Columbus. And there's a lot of good information. It's really a nice rite of passage for men to be able to join this fraternal organization of like-minded men. I would encourage people to actually come to an exemplification in person, you can join online, and then come to the next exemplification. I was trying to find out the date before this meeting.

Fr. David Carter

Where would you go? If somebody were to be looking, is there a website or something?

Adam Foster

Yeah, you could just go to the Knights of Columbus website.

Fr. David Carter

What's it called?

Adam Foster

I think it's KnightsOfColumbus.com. Actually, I should have done that homework before this.

Fr. David Carter

Maybe KnightsOfColumbus.net. I might be looking at it before I share it. There it is. All right, so I'm going to share the screen. Look - it sounds like it.

Adam Foster

Yes, there you go.

Fr. David Carter

There's KnightsOfColumbus.net; KofC.org also. I think it redirects there. And I'm sure that there are places where you can sign in and find your local council. There it is. Find a council and you can type in your address or whatever. Look, there's a nice... oh, there we are - Father Patrick Ryan. Look, there was even contact information. If you wanted to get online, you can find it at KofC.org or KnightsOfColumbus.net. It redirects to that page. There we go. We got some information.

Adam Foster

Additionally, we have a group in the myParish app. I posted in there yesterday. I was not as good about transferring information into the myParish app, but we are going to be using the group in the myParish app for people that are not on social media, because more and more people are leaving social media. So that is a good way to stay informed on council 610: to join the group in the myParish app. We also have a group on Facebook. Knights of Columbus 610 is the group on Facebook. And we have wives that join too. It's not just men that are in the Facebook group. Any wives that want to kind of keep up with what we're doing, any parishioners that need to ask for help - they could come to the Facebook group and say, "Hey, a tree fell in our yard. Is anybody able to help?" and we could get a group of guys out there to help them out with whatever they need. We haven't done any of our major fundraisers this year. We usually do a Labor Day picnic. And that is the most important fundraiser we do every year. We fund seminarians with it. We're currently helping out Nicholas Hickman. He was an altar server at the Basilica. He is currently in seminary. We make financial donations to seminarians. And we do all sorts of stuff. We've helped people with their power bills, literally tons of stuff.

Fr. David Carter

I've called upon the Knights of Columbus on several occasions, and y'all have answered the call and gone out there. And most recently, I was just very impressed -Well, not most recently, I guess a whole year ago, coming up on it, when we had those tornadoes come through Chattanooga - very impressed by the response of the Knights of Columbus to go out and help people clear trees and fallen limbs and things so they can get back to their properties and start the cleanup and reconstruction of their homes that had gotten destroyed. So y'all jump right in. Like I said, that kind of the right arm of the parish and of the community.

Adam Foster

That Labor Day picnic is really important, like any parishioners at the Basilica. Even if you don't have a family member who's a member of the Knights of Columbus, please come out to our Labor Day picnic. There's great barbecue. We stay out there at Camp Columbus all weekend and smoke the meat. It's delicious. There's a cake walk. There's all kinds of Bingo, different games, activities for kids, usually some sort of live music. The Labor Day picnic is a big fundraiser, and then also our July 3 fireworks show, are our two big fundraisers.

Fr. David Carter

Is the July 3 one going to go on this year?

Adam Foster

I have not heard about it yet. We did not do it last year. I haven't heard anything about it.

Fr. David Carter

We'll stay tuned.

Adam Foster

I believe the Labor Day picnic is for sure happening this year.

Fr. David Carter

We're here to advertise that and let everybody know about the opportunity to have fun, have social time with their family, enjoy a good wholesome environment that the Knights of Columbus can provide, but also, through it, help fund the charitable activities of the Knights of Columbus order and help so many people beyond their own small group or community. So that's awesome. Well, Adam, thanks for taking the time to talk to us about the Knights of Columbus. I was just thinking about the history since the founding of the Knights of Columbus, a lot of stuff has happened in the world. I think about the history of the order. During World War One, they were known to help the troops that were over there, to give them respite for when they came off the front lines, and to give them a warm plate and a cool drink and a place to relax. During the Mexican Revolution, during the cristero movement, they were very involved in helping those Catholics who were caught up in the midst of that political turmoil to help alleviate the suffering there. And, like you mentioned, the right to life issues in the second half of the last century, the protecting of the sanctity of life. I mean, the list goes on. And the Knights of Columbus have just been involved in the life of faith and serving our fellow human beings in the name of Christ. And it's a great thing that we want to see continue.

Adam Foster

Yes, it's been a great experience for me. I've made a lot of great friends. Since I've joined the Knights, when I've hit some hard times in my life, I've had great men there to help support me through it. And I think any Catholic man should join the Knights. It's been a great experience for me.

Fr. David Carter

Well, you've been a great witness to that and a testimony just by the way you live your life, and you're definitely showing forth and exemplifying yourself the ideals of the order. Thank you for joining us, God bless you and keep up the good work.

Adam Foster

Thank you, Father.

Following the interview, Mr. Foster added that the Council 610 is a member council of the Traditional Knights Latin Mass Network: <https://www.latinmassknights.org/> The full video of the interview is available on the Basilica's website.