

History



A painting by Italian artist Antonella Cappuccio depicts Venerable Michael McGivney, founder of the Knights of Columbus. In the background are 19th-century Irish immigrants outside St. Mary's Church in New Haven, Conn.

1882-1899: The Founding



Late-19th century Connecticut was marked by the growing prevalence of fraternal benefit societies, hostility toward Catholic immigrants and dangerous working conditions in factories that left many families fatherless. Recognizing a vital, practical need in his community, Father Michael J. McGivney, the 29-year-old assistant pastor of St. Mary's Church in New Haven, Conn., gathered a group of men at his parish on Oct. 2, 1881. He proposed establishing a lay organization, the goal of which would be to prevent Catholic men from entering secret societies whose membership was antithetical to Church teaching, to unite men of Catholic faith and to provide for the families of deceased members.

As a symbol that allegiance to their country did not conflict with allegiance to their faith, the organization's members took as their patron Christopher Columbus — recognized as a Catholic and celebrated as the discoverer of America. Thanks to Father McGivney's persistence, the

Knights of Columbus elected officers in February 1882 and officially assumed corporate status on March 29.

In addition to the Order's stated benefits, Catholic men were drawn to the Knights because of its emphasis on serving one's Church, community and family with virtue. Writing in *The Columbiad* in 1898, a year before he was elected supreme knight, Edward L. Hearn wrote that a Knight should live according to the virtues of loyalty, charity, courtesy and modesty, as well as "self-denial and careful respect for the feelings of others." Fraternity and patriotism were added to the Knights' founding principles of charity and unity in 1885 and 1900, respectively.

1882: The Knights of Columbus is born on Feb. 6, 1882, when the first members choose Columbus as their patron. Immediately after the Order's March 29 incorporation, Father McGivney sends the first diocesan-wide appeal for new members to his fellow priests.

1886: By the end of his four-year tenure as supreme knight, James T. Mullen personally presides at the institution of 22 of the first 38 councils. John J. Phelan is elected to succeed him and is the first supreme knight to sense the Order's destiny as a national society.

1890: Father McGivney dies Aug. 14, 1890. His funeral Mass is celebrated in Thomaston, Conn., four days later.

1892: The Order passes laws allowing noninsurance or associate members to join.

1892: 6,000 Knights march in the New Haven Columbus Day parade to celebrate the 400th anniversary of Columbus' discovery of the New World.

1895: The Vatican's first acknowledgment of the Knights comes when Archbishop Francesco Satolli, apostolic delegate to the United States, writes a letter extolling the "merits of this splendid Catholic organization" and giving the Order his apostolic blessing.

1897: On Nov. 25, 1897, Canada's first council — Montreal Council 284 — is chartered.

1900-1910: Early Growth



Along with the addition of "patriotism" to the Knights' principles came the first Fourth Degree exemplification, which took place Feb. 22, 1900, in New York City, with 1,100 Knights participating. A similar event took place in Boston in May with another 750 candidates taking the patriotic degree.

By the beginning of the 20th century, the fledgling Order was growing dramatically. Councils had been chartered throughout the United States and Canada, and international expansion continued to Mexico and the Philippines in 1905, along with Cuba and Panama in 1909.

The Knights also turned their attention to college campuses, and in more ways than one. In 1904, more than 10,000 Knights and their families attended ceremonies at The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., in which the Order presented the school with a grant for more than \$55,000. The funds, used to establish a K of C chair of American history, began a long history of support for CUA. In addition, students at the University of Notre Dame in Indiana soon organized their own K of C council. Chartered in 1910, Notre Dame Council 1477 was the Order's first college council, launching a subset of the Knights that today includes councils at 244 schools worldwide.

1900: The first exemplification of the Fourth Degree takes place on Feb. 22, 1900, in New York City; 1,100 Knights receive the degree. The following May, another 750 Knights take the degree in Boston.

1904: More than 10,000 Knights and their families attend ceremonies at The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., in which a check for \$55,633.79 is presented to the school for the establishment of a K of C chair of American history. From 1909 to 1913, Knights raise \$500,000 to establish a permanent endowment for CUA.

1905: The first council in the Philippines — Manila Council 1000 — is chartered by U.S. citizens after the Spanish-American War. The same year, the Order expanded to Mexico, establishing Guadalupe Council 1050 in Mexico City.

1909: U.S. workers in the Canal Zone institute Balboa Council 1371 in Panama City. A degree team from Mobile, Ala., then visits Cuba and institutes San Agustin Council 1390 in Havana.

1909: A reported 5,000 Knights meet James A. Flaherty's train in Philadelphia in 1909 when he arrives at the annual convention where he is elected supreme knight.

1911-1918: “Everybody Welcome, Everything Free”



As membership in the Knights of Columbus grew, the Order became increasingly known as a force for public good. Following the dedication ceremony for the Christopher Columbus Memorial Fountain in Washington, D.C., in 1912, a reporter for *The Washington Star* noted that the large number of Knights in attendance “marked anew the important position of the Knights of Columbus as an order in the social fabric of the United States.”

In response to growing anti-Catholic hostility and the rise of socialism, two Knights, David Goldstein and Peter W. Collins, embarked on an extensive, 27,000-mile lecture tour throughout North America in 1914. Later that same year, the Order established the K of C Commission on Religious Prejudice. The commission's work concluded in 1917, when the United States entered World War I.

During the Great War, the Order provided rest and recreational facilities and social services to Allied servicemen of all faiths. K of C Huts throughout the United States and Europe provided religious services, supplies and recreation under the motto, "Everybody Welcome, Everything Free."

Everybody meant everybody. Whatever your race or creed, you were welcome at K of C facilities. In fact, the Order was praised by a contemporary African American historian of World War I, because "unlike the other social welfare organizations operating in the war, it never drew the color line."

As a result of the Order's wartime work, which earned high praise from Pope Benedict XV, nearly 400,000 men joined the Knights between 1917 and 1923.

1910: Notre Dame Council 1477 is chartered in the spring of 1910, becoming the first of nearly 250 college councils worldwide.

1912: With support from the Knights, the Christopher Columbus Memorial Fountain is dedicated in Washington, D.C. Some 20,000 Knights attend the ceremonies, which are overseen by President William H. Taft.

1914: Tens of thousands of copies of a "bogus oath" are circulated to defame the Knights of Columbus. The Knights, in turn, lay the groundwork for a lecture series and educational programs to combat anti-Catholic hostility. Between 1914 and 1917, the number of anti-Catholic publications drops from 60 to fewer than five.

1916: When National Guardsmen are sent to the U.S.-Mexico border to prevent Mexican Gen. Francisco "Pancho" Villa from raiding towns in New Mexico, Arizona and Texas, K of C councils in those states spontaneously respond to the religious and social needs of troops serving there.

1917: When the United States enters World War I, Supreme Knight Flaherty writes President Woodrow Wilson telling him that the Order plans to establish centers to provide for the troops' "recreational and spiritual comfort." The Knights' services, he says, will be offered "regardless of creed."

1917: By the summer of 1917, the Order opens service centers, or "K of C Huts," in training camps and behind the lines of battle. The Knights and independent fund drives raise nearly \$30 million to finance the huts.

1919-1929: In Search of Liberty



After the Great War, the Order continued its charitable work, offering education and employment services to returning servicemen. In less than two years, the Knights of Columbus Bureau of Employment placed some 100,000 people in jobs. The Order's presence in Europe continued as well. In August 1920, when a delegation of 235 Knights made a pilgrimage to Rome, Pope Benedict XV invited them to build several recreation centers for Roman youth. In response, the Knights constructed five playgrounds throughout the city. The architect, Count Enrico Galeazzi, went on to serve as the Knights' representative in Rome for more than six decades.

Throughout the 1920s, the Order's anti-defamation work also continued on several fronts. When the Ku Klux Klan and other "nativist" and anti-Catholic groups launched campaigns to make students attend public schools, Church leaders enlisted the Knights' support. The K of C Historical Commission, meanwhile, worked to overcome racial prejudice in American society, publishing books on the contributions of African-, Jewish-, and German-Americans.

Finally, when the Mexican government began enforcing the anti-clerical provisions of its 1917 Constitution, the Knights responded with one voice. Under President Plutarco Elias Calles, who took power in 1924, priests and religious were exiled and the free exercise of religion was forbidden. In *Iniquis Afflictisque*, his 1926 encyclical on the persecution of the Church in Mexico, Pope Pius XI praised the Knights' tireless work, which included a major public education campaign, diplomatic efforts and charitable support for refugees.

1920: Two years after launching educational, vocational and employment programs for World War I veterans, more than 50,000 students are enrolled in K of C-sponsored evening school programs across the United States and Canada. The Order also launches a correspondence school.

1920: 235 Knights sail from New York City to France. In Paris, they are greeted by Church and civic authorities, who thank the Knights for their WWI work. In Metz, a large equestrian statue of the French patriot Lafayette, funded by the Knights, is unveiled. The K of C delegation continues to Rome, where it is received in a private audience with Pope Benedict XV on Aug. 28, 1920.

1923: In response to the passage of laws in Oregon prohibiting children under 16 from attending private schools, the Knights work to overturn the law. In 1925, the Supreme Court declares the Oregon law unconstitutional.

1924: In response to a request from Pope Benedict XV, the Knights opens St. Peter's Oratory, the first K of C recreation center for youth in Rome. Four more are established between 1924 and 1927.

1924: The Order's anti-defamation work resumes after World War I. The K of C Historical Commission publishes the Knights of Columbus Racial Contributions Series. Three monographs highlighting the positive contributions of African-, Jewish- and German-Americans are published.

1925: The Knights' Rome youth work stimulates interest in similar projects in North America, and the Columbian Squires program is established. Brother Barnabas McDonald consults with the Knights on the creation of the Squires. The institution of the first Squires circle takes place at the Supreme Council meeting in Duluth, Minn.

1926: Supreme Knight Flaherty, Deputy Supreme Knight Martin H. Carmody and other officers meet with President Calvin Coolidge about the persecution of the Catholic Church in Mexico. The Order launches a \$1 million educational campaign to influence American public opinion on the need for a strong stand against the Mexican government's attacks on the Church. It takes more than 10 years for the tensions to ease.

1930-1940: Helping Our Neighbors



The Great Depression initially had a detrimental effect on the Order's membership and finances, but it also led to a renewed sense of volunteer service. The success of an extensive membership campaign in 1935, titled Mobilization for Catholic Action, led to the establishment of the Order's Service Department, which subsequently launched a "Five-Point Program of Progress." The program encouraged councils to play a more active role in the life of the local parish and community, and included five categories: Catholic activity, council activity, fraternal protection, publicity and maintenance of manpower.

Also in the early 1930s, violent persecution resurfaced in Mexico, prompting the Order's leadership to strongly urge the U.S. government to take action. Tensions in Mexico eventually eased in 1937, but the threat of atheistic communism was growing in Europe. In response, the Knights organized anti-communist rallies in early 1937. When Pope Pius XI's encyclical on the subject, *Divini Redemptoris*, was released in March of that year, the Order printed and distributed a million copies. The Knights also sponsored a new lecture tour and expanded its anti-communism program to include a Crusade for Social Justice. "Injustice to man is the seed of communistic growth," Supreme Knight Martin Carmody said. "With Truth and Charity as your weapons, go forth as a Crusade."

1932: The 50th anniversary of the Knights is celebrated with Commemoration Week, June 24-30, 1932. Among the highlights is the unveiling in Washington, D.C. of a statue of Cardinal James Gibbons, an early supporter of the Knights who had ordained Father McGivney.

1935: On July 8, 1935, Supreme Knight Martin Carmody and other K of C officials meet with President Franklin D. Roosevelt about the ongoing situation in Mexico.

1936: Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli, Vatican secretary of state, visits the Knights of Columbus headquarters in New Haven; in 1939, Cardinal Pacelli becomes Pope Pius XII.

1939: In response to Pope Pius XII's petition for prayers for peace, the Knights of Columbus sponsors an international prayer for peace program on Armistice Day 1939 and a radio prayer for peace broadcast on May 19, 1940.

1939: Less than two weeks after World War II is declared, Canadian Knights establish a welfare program for soldiers comparable to the KC huts program that operated during World War I. Within a year, Canadian Knights raise nearly \$250,000 to support troops.

1941-1950: War & Peace



By the time Pearl Harbor was attacked and the United States entered World War II in 1941, a K of C welfare program for servicemen had been well established by Canadian Knights, built and modeled on the Knights' World War I work. In the United States, the Order's outreach to soldiers was conducted through the National Catholic Community Service organization, which itself modeled many of its programs on the Knights' war efforts.

At the Supreme Convention in 1944, the Order established a \$1 million trust fund for the children of members who died or became disabled in World War II. Following the end of the war in 1945, the Order turned its attention to the growing threats of communism and fascism. To combat these dangers, the Knights launched in 1946 the Crusade for the Preservation and Promotion of American Ideals, which published books and pamphlets to educate the public on "the perils of communism."

Meanwhile, the postwar years saw a membership boom for the Order in the Philippines. Jesuit Father George J. Willmann envisioned the Knights as the premiere lay society in the Philippines and set about establishing new councils and recruiting new members. He appealed to the Supreme Council in 1947 for permission to establish three new councils there and served as the country's first district deputy. By the time Supreme Knight Luke E. Hart visited Manila in 1955, the Order had expanded to include 50 Filipino councils.

1941: When the U.S. enters World War II, the Order's outreach to soldiers is conducted via the National Catholic Community Service organization. The NCCS models many of its programs on the Order's successful WWI efforts.

1944: The Order creates a \$1 million trust fund for the education of children of members who lost their lives in or as a result of World War II. This evolves into the current scholarship fund for use at Catholic colleges and universities in the United States and Canada.

1945: John E. Swift is elected supreme knight. Among his first initiatives is to authorize funding for full-page advertisements in 12 major U.S. newspapers and five Canadian papers highlighting the dangers of communism. The ad offers a free copy of Msgr. Fulton J. Sheen's pamphlet, "Communism, the Opium of the People."

1946: The Order launches its Crusade for the Preservation and Promotion of American Ideals. Educational pamphlets on communism and the dangers of secularism are published and distributed. By August 1948, there are more than 1,300 K of C discussion groups.

1947: Several hundred radio stations broadcast K of C-sponsored programs with the titles "Safeguards of America" and "Foundations of Our American Ideals."

1951-1960: "One Nation Under God"



The Knights of Columbus initiated a campaign in 1951 to lobby for the public adoption of the phrase "under God" in the U.S. Pledge of Allegiance. The Order's Board of Directors had amended the pledge's recitation at Fourth Degree assembly meetings and encouraged congressional representatives to adopt the same language nationwide. One year after Supreme Knight Hart took office in 1953, President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed a law that officially added the words "under God" to the pledge.

In the following years, the Knights made significant contributions to the Catholic Church in America. In 1953, a Catholic advertising program launched by Knights in Missouri was officially adopted by the Order as the Religious Information Bureau. Through the bureau, which later became known as the Catholic Information Service when its operations moved to New Haven in 1969, the Knights printed and disseminated brochures and pamphlets about the Catholic faith. The program also included a correspondence course in which subscribers could learn about or clarify their knowledge of Church teachings.

Finally, the close of the 1950s saw the completion of the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C. The Order contributed \$1 million toward the completion of the church's bell tower, known as the Knights' Tower, and more than 1,000 Knights formed an honor guard for the shrine's dedication.

1951: The Order votes to fund the microfilming of irreplaceable documents from the Vatican Library, some dating to the pre-Christian era. The library at St. Louis University is named as the repository for the microfilm. By the 1956 opening of the Knights of Columbus Vatican Film Library at St. Louis University, 9.5 million manuscript pages have been microfilmed and made available for scholars.

1953: Luke E. Hart becomes supreme knight; he is the first supreme knight to move to New Haven to assume his duties, reflecting the development of the Knights as a corporation.

1953: The Knights of Columbus purchases for \$2.5 million the land on which Yankee Stadium is built. When news breaks of the Knights' acquisition, councils and members send congratulatory telegrams to New Haven.

1953: A Catholic advertising program launched by Missouri Knights in the 1940s is adopted nationally by the Order during Hart's administration. The ads encourage readers to learn more about Catholic teaching by contacting the Religious Information Bureau, later the Catholic Information Service.

1954: On June 14, 1954, Flag Day, President Dwight D. Eisenhower signs a law that adds the words "under God" to the U.S. Pledge of Allegiance, completing an effort that Knights began three years earlier.

1959: On May 10, 1959, Pope John XXIII becomes the first pope to visit a K of C playground in Rome.

1959: On Nov. 20, 1959, the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C., is dedicated with more than 1,000 Knights forming the honor guard. Knights contributed \$1 million, via a \$1.25 per-capita assessment over five years, for construction of the 329-foot bell tower.

1961-1978: Into the Mainstream



The early 1960s marked a period of transformation and upheaval for the Church and society, as the Second Vatican Council convened and the civil rights movement emerged in full force. Both the universal call to holiness and the call for dialogue and justice in civic life found open ears in the Knights of Columbus. By embracing the challenge of authentic ecclesial and societal reform, while remaining faithful to timeless truths and traditional values, the Knights transcended the political divide.

At the 1966 Supreme Convention, Supreme Knight John W. McDevitt said it was time to see the Order as more than just “a fortress” for its members in a world hostile to the Catholic faith. In revising its admission policies and supporting a number of social justice initiatives, the Order took positive steps to eliminate racial discrimination within its ranks and in society at large. Recognizing the potential to share the Gospel through modern technology, the Knights also began a long history of support for the Church’s social communications initiatives, providing a shortwave transmitter for the Vatican radio station and funding the Vatican’s satellite “uplink” transmissions for worldwide broadcasts.

During this time, the Order’s insurance program also began a period of dramatic growth. The amount of insurance in force tripled from \$1 billion to \$3 billion from 1960 to 1975. And in 1969, the Knights built its seventh national headquarters, its current location, to better serve the Order’s members and their families.

1961: On Oct. 11, 1961, Supreme Knight Hart visits President John F. Kennedy — the first Catholic president — in the White House. Kennedy, a Fourth Degree Knight, reportedly greets Hart by saying, “Hello, Chief.”

1963: The Order finances installation of the carillon of 56 bells at the National Shrine.

1963: In the spring of 1963, Hart attends a special White House meeting of religious leaders to discuss civil rights.

1964: Supreme Knight John W. McDevitt takes office. His first priority is to amend the Order’s admission policies to counter charges of racial discrimination.

1964: The Knights provides funding for the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, which has conducted social scientific studies on the Church since its founding.

1965: In April 1965, the Order co-sponsors with the Archdiocese of Hartford a Conference on Human Rights at Yale University in New Haven. More than 2,000 people attend the conference on interracial justice.

1965: At the Supreme Council meetings of 1965 and 1966, McDevitt addresses how the Knights will respond to the Second Vatican Council and its call for renewal and reform within the Church and its organizations.

1966: Supreme Knight McDevitt visits the Vatican Transmitting Center for the blessing of a new shortwave radio transmitter donated by the Knights. Pope Paul VI blesses the transmitter.

1969: The present Supreme Council headquarters is completed. Its four 320-foot towers symbolize the Knights’ four principles of charity, unity, fraternity and patriotism.

1969: The Order contributes \$75,000 to the U.S. Catholic Conference's Task Force on Urban Problems to help address poverty and discrimination. The Order publishes a booklet on *Humanae Vitae*, Pope Paul VI's 1968 encyclical affirming the Church's teaching on marriage and procreation.

1971: The Order marks the achievement of \$2 billion of insurance in force; today that figure is nearly \$86 billion.

1975: The Order agrees to fund "uplink" transmissions for major worldwide satellite telecasts from the Vatican; the program continues to this day with audiences estimated in the billions for Midnight Mass from St. Peter's Basilica.

1977: Supreme Knight Virgil C. Dechant begins his administration with a visit to the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, where he places his work under the Virgin Mary's protection.

1978: Beginning this year, each new First Degree Knight receives a rosary blessed by the supreme chaplain, a practice that continues to this day.

1978: Pope John Paul I receives Supreme Knight Dechant and other K of C representatives in the pontiff's first private audience after his election.

1979-1999: One Christian Family



In his 1981 apostolic exhortation *On the Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World*, Pope John Paul II wrote, "The future of humanity passes by way of the family" (*Familiaris Consortio*, 86). The pope's emphasis on the central importance of the family for the health of the Church and society reinforced the Knights' mission. Likewise, when John Paul II published an apostolic exhortation on the role of the laity in 1988 and an encyclical on the Gospel of Life in 1995, the Order urged Catholics everywhere to embrace these teachings and even published study guides to accompany the documents.

During John Paul II's pontificate, the Knights also strengthened their ties to the universal Church through increased support of the Vatican. In 1981, the Order established the Vicarius Christi Fund, annual earnings of which are presented to the pope for his personal charities. The Knights then underwrote a series of major restorations at St. Peter's Basilica in anticipation of the Jubilee Year.

In *Evangelium Vitae*, the pope called the Church "a people of life and for life," a description that the Knights sought to live up to through personal witness and efforts to build a pro-life culture. The Order also furthered the work of re-evangelization within the Church through several initiatives in Catholic education: support of Catholic schools, scholarship funds for Catholic

seminaries and universities, and the establishment of a North American campus of the Pontifical John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family.

In addition to celebrating the fifth centenary of the evangelization of the New World, the Order also honored contemporary models of holiness. Supreme Knight Virgil C. Dechant presented Mother Teresa with the inaugural Gaudium et Spes Award in 1992, and the Archdiocese of Hartford officially opened the cause for Father McGivney's canonization, with the Knights' support, in 1997.

1979: The Order holds its first Marian Hour of Prayer program. Images of Our Lady of Guadalupe circulate among the Order's councils.

1979: In cooperation with the U.S. bishops, the Order underwrites the filming of Pope John Paul II's first pastoral visit to the United States.

1979: The Knights establishes a \$1 million Father Michael J. McGivney Fund for New Initiatives in Catholic Education to be administered by the National Catholic Educational Association. Annual proceeds are used to this day to finance programs that advance Catholic schools.

1981: The Order establishes the Vicarius Christi Fund, with annual earnings used for the pope's personal charities. The initial fund of \$10 million is increased to \$20 million in 1988.

1981: The Order begins a four-year restoration of St. Mary's Church, the birthplace of the Knights. The renovations include work on the organ, floors, pews, ceilings, statues and more. The project is capped by the placement of a 179-foot steeple atop the church.

1982: The Knights of Columbus celebrates its centennial. President Ronald Reagan attends the Order's 100th annual convention. Also in attendance is Cardinal Agostino Casaroli, who is sent by Pope John Paul II as the pope's personal envoy.

1982: The Order establishes several funds to help finance studies for priests and seminarians in Rome at pontifical colleges. These funds have been increased over the years to support seminarians and priests from the United States, Canada, Mexico and the Philippines.

1984: In recognition of the Order's volunteer service, President Ronald Reagan awards the Knights a President's Volunteer Action Award at White House ceremonies.

1985: The Order presents a mobile television production unit to the Vatican Television Center for the taping, recording and transmission of papal ceremonies. It is used during Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev's historic visit with Pope John Paul II that same year.

1985: The Order agrees to underwrite the restoration of the 65,000-square-foot facade of St. Peter's Basilica, the first time it has been cleaned in more than 350 years. Several subsequent

projects have taken place at St. Peter's, including the restoration of chapels and of the Holy Year Door.

1988: Mother Teresa visits the Supreme Council office. The Order agrees to print copies of her Constitutions of the Missionaries of Charity, prayer cards and other religious items, a project that continues to this day.

1988: The Pontifical John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family opens a North American branch in Washington, D.C., with funding from the Knights. Carl A. Anderson is the institute's first vice president and dean.

1989: The Bicentennial of the U.S. Hierarchy Fund is established in the amount of \$2 million to benefit The Catholic University of America. Earnings from the fund pay for projects at the university each year.

1992: The Knights celebrates the fifth centenary of evangelization in the Americas. Replicas of the Cross of the New World presented to Pope John Paul II on his pastoral visit to Santo Domingo in 1984 are distributed by the Knights and used in dioceses throughout the Order in prayer services highlighting the theme of evangelization.

1992: Mother Teresa is presented with the Order's first Gaudium et Spes Award at the 110th Supreme Convention in New York. The "Joy and Hope" award acknowledges her contributions to the Church and the world.

1995: The Order co-sponsors with the Diocese of Brooklyn, N.Y., Pope John Paul II's Mass at Aqueduct Racetrack during the pope's pastoral visit to the United States.

1997: The Archdiocese of Hartford officially opens the cause for canonization of Father Michael J. McGivney with support from the Knights of Columbus. The Father McGivney Guild is established to promote the cause.

2000-2012: The New Millennium



On May 21, 2000, Pope John Paul II canonized 25 martyrs of Mexico, including six members of the Knights of Columbus. Less than one year later, Carl A. Anderson was installed as the 13th supreme knight in Mexico City and dedicated the Order and his administration to Mary under her title Our Lady of Guadalupe. As Patroness of the Americas and Star of the New Evangelization, Our Lady has inspired the Order's efforts, just as she inspired the steadfast faith of the Knights of Columbus martyrs.

In the past decade, the Order has continued to build upon its rich tradition of charitable work and spiritual formation. Various new charitable initiatives, as well as ongoing partnerships with

organizations such as Special Olympics, have given Knights countless opportunities to practice what John Paul II called “a charity which evangelizes.” Organizing increased outreach to pregnancy resource centers, providing greater spiritual support for men and women in the military and playing a significant role in World Youth Days are just some of the many ways that the Order has worked in recent years to promote a true culture of life.

Pope Benedict XVI, in his first encyclical, *Deus Caritas Est*, wrote that a Christian must have “a heart which sees” — that is, which “sees where love is needed and acts accordingly.” For Knights, this often means recognizing where people are most in need and responding with material or volunteer support. After the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, the Order delivered immediate assistance to the families of fallen first responders. And when natural disasters struck, such as Hurricane Katrina in 2005 and the Haitian earthquake in 2011, Knights similarly responded with immediate aid.

Finally, just as they responded to the forces of secularism and prejudice in the past, Knights have stood by their bishops and have witnessed to the importance of religion and religious liberty for society. As the cause for canonization of Venerable Michael McGivney moves forward, so too do his Knights, seeking to build a civilization of love.

2000: Pope John Paul II canonizes six Mexican priest-members of the Knights of Columbus who were martyred during the era of Church persecution there in the early 20th century. The following year, John Paul II beatifies Blessed Carlos Rodríguez, a layman from Puerto Rico. Three additional members from Mexico have since been beatified, and one canonized.

2001: The Knights of Columbus Museum opens in New Haven. In addition to a permanent exhibit on the Order's history, the museum has featured numerous temporary exhibits and priceless works of art, such as Michelangelo's 16-foot wooden study model for the dome of St. Peter's Basilica.

2001: In response to the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, the Knights on Sept. 12 establishes its \$1 million Heroes Fund. Checks for \$3,000 are presented to the families of all full-time professional law enforcement, firefighters and emergency medical personnel who lost their lives at the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Forty-five Knights were killed on 9/11.

2002: The Order establishes a \$2 million Pacem in Terris Fund to promote peace and education initiatives in the Holy Land and provide support for the Christian community there.

2003: 100,000 copies of a pocket-sized prayer book, *Armed With the Faith*, are printed by the Order and the Archdiocese for the Military Services, USA, and sent to troops in Iraq and Afghanistan, along with 10,000 rosaries.

2005: The Knights send 2,000 wheelchairs to land-mine victims and people with disabilities in Afghanistan and elsewhere. Through its partnership with the Global Wheelchair Mission, Knights have since distributed nearly 25,000 wheelchairs around the world.

2005: Villa Maria Guadalupe, the Order's pro-life retreat center in Stamford, Conn., operated by the Sisters of Life, opens.

2006: In its first international expansion in almost a century, the Order charters its first councils in Poland, beginning with John Paul II Council 14000 in Krakow.

2006: In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in the U.S. Gulf, Knights donate more than \$10 million and 100,000 volunteer hours to help rebuild Catholic churches and schools.

2007: The Knights of Columbus Incarnation Dome, a 3,780-square-foot mosaic depicting mysteries of Christ's life, is constructed at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception.

2007: Represented by the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, the Knights and K of C families are defendant-intervenors in a case challenging the words "under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance. Court decisions in 2009 and 2010 uphold the words' constitutionality.

2008: On March 16, 2008, Pope Benedict XVI approves a decree of heroic virtue for Father Michael J. McGivney, declaring him "Venerable."

2008: The Order is present throughout Pope Benedict XVI's pastoral visit to the United States. A K of C-commissioned plaque commemorates the pope's Mass at Yankee Stadium. It accompanies two similar plaques, which commemorate Masses that Pope John Paul II and Pope Paul VI celebrated there.

2008: McGivney Hall, the new home of the Pontifical John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family at The Catholic University of America, is dedicated Sept. 8.

2009: The Knights of Columbus Ultrasound Initiative launches Jan. 22, 2009. To date, more than 250 ultrasound machines have been purchased for pro-life pregnancy centers using matching funds from the Order's Culture of Life Fund, established in 2008.

2009: The Order hosts a "Neighbors Helping Neighbors" summit on volunteerism in New York and designates 2009 as the Year of the Volunteer. The Knights of Columbus Coats for Kids program launches; to date, the initiative has provided more than 45,000 winter coats to children throughout the United States and Canada.

2009: Giovanni Alemanno, the mayor of Rome, presents Supreme Knight Carl A. Anderson with "Lupa Capitolina" award for the Order's 90 years of service to the Eternal City. The following year, the city hosts an exhibit about the 90-year relationship at the Capitoline Museum.

2009: Following the 127th Supreme Convention in Phoenix, the Order hosts the first International Marian Congress and Guadalupe Festival, gathering about 20,000 participants.

2010: Following the devastating Jan. 12 earthquake in Haiti, the Order provides immediate assistance to Catholic Relief Services, establishes a relief fund and purchases 1,000 wheelchairs

for Haitians suffering disabilities. In partnership with Project Medishare, the Knights' "Healing Haiti's Children" program provides prosthetics and two years of physical therapy for children who lost limbs in the earthquake.

2010: Cardinal Jaime Ortega y Alamino, archbishop of Havana, receives the Gaudium et Spes Award, and with assistance from the Knights, the first new seminary in Cuba in more than 50 years is opened. Two years earlier, a delegation of Knights from Cuba attended the Supreme Convention for the first time in 60 years.

2011: To address the severe shortage of military chaplains, the Knights established a new scholarship program for the Military Archdiocese's Co-Sponsored Seminarian program.

2011: Building on the success of their collaboration at World Youth Day 2008 in Sydney, the Knights and the Sisters of Life co-sponsor the Love and Life Centre, the official English-language catechetical site at World Youth Day 2011 in Madrid, Spain.

2011: The Order establishes a Shrine of Blessed John Paul II in Washington, D.C., at the site of the former John Paul II Cultural Center. Supreme Knight Anderson announces the initiative will include permanent exhibits celebrating the life and teachings of the late pope and the 500-year Catholic heritage of North America.

2012: The Knights supports the efforts of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and its Ad Hoc Committee on Religious Liberty, under the leadership of Supreme Chaplain Archbishop William E. Lori of Baltimore, in addressing contemporary challenges to religious freedom and conscience in the United States.