

A Report from the 126th Supreme Convention

Our State Deputy Billy Hancock returned from the 126th annual Supreme Convention in Quebec City, Canada with numerous notes from the event and from the “Report of the Supreme Knight.” The following are some excerpts from that report.

HOST CITY:

- This year conventioners gathered in Quebec, Canada. The largest K of C jurisdiction in North America, and the second-largest overall. The city is celebrating the 400th anniversary of its founding. Just two months ago, the 49th International Eucharistic Congress met there.

CHARITY:

Overall, Knights raised \$143,911,781 for charity in 2007, a new all-time record. Supreme Council accounted for \$31 million of the total, and all of the rest -- \$113,676,561 – was raised by councils and assemblies around the world. In an organization where the first principle is charity, the Knights of Canada once again led the way with the Knights of Quebec taking top honors for raising the most money for charity, a record \$10,152,000. That is \$2.3 million more than the record they set last year.

- But Knights don't just write a check, we put our hearts and especially our time into acts of charity. Last year, individual Knights donated well over 68 million hours of volunteer time to helping our churches, our neighbors and our communities. The estimated dollar value of a volunteer hour in 2007 was \$19.51. That would make the dollar value of our volunteer efforts last year more than \$1.34 billion.

SUPPORT FOR VETERANS AND ACTIVE-DUTY MILITARY

- The wheelchair project of the year was a Veterans Day weekend event in which Knights of Columbus distributed 2,000 wheelchairs to veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces in four major cities: Los Angeles, Dallas, Chicago, and Washington, D.C. The logistics for this huge project were expertly handled by brother Knight Chris Lewis, of the Wheelchair Foundation, Supreme Master Joe Schultz and members of the Fourth Degree in each of the metropolitan areas, and our military affairs coordinator, Chuck Gallinas, along with large numbers of volunteers from local councils and assemblies.

MEMBERSHIP

- As of the end of the Fraternal Year on June 30, our membership reached a new all-time record of 1,763,182. That is a net gain of 21,894 members. In the U.S., Texas led the way with a net gain of 2,479 members. Luzon, in the Philippines, had a net gain of over 5,000 members.

We now have a total of 13,485 councils, including 244 new councils chartered during the past year.

YOUTH – SQUIRES AND COLLEGE KNIGHTS – EDUCATION

- One of our most important priorities is to recruit young men in their 20s and 30s into the Order, and to lay the groundwork for that growth among teenagers who are not yet old enough to be Knights.

Our Columbian Squires program scored a net gain of 21 circles this year, and as of June 30, we had 1,399 active circles, the highest number ever. The total number of Squires at year's end was 28,961. These are the future leaders of the Knights of Columbus.

- The Knights of Columbus Supreme Council provides a variety of scholarships for college students, and during the academic year just ended, we provided scholarships to 707 students, including 206 new scholarship winners and 501 returning students. Twelve of these are recipients of the Matthews and Swift Scholarship program, established in 1944 to provide college educations to children of Knights who were killed or totally disabled while serving in the military in time of war.
- Finally, one other aspect of our youth programming is worthy of mention: our sponsorship of local Boy Scout units. In the United States, there are more than 300,000 boys who participate in Scouting, and 34,238 of them are members of 1,388 units that are sponsored by the Knights of Columbus. In Canada, Knights sponsored 56 Catholic Scout units involving 1,088 Scouts.

INSURANCE

- When Father Michael McGivney gathered the first Knights of Columbus in the basement of St. Mary's Church, his first priority was putting in place a program that would protect the families of the men in his parish if they should suffer an untimely death. It would be three years before Knights of Columbus insurance would pay its first benefit of \$970.
- Last year, we paid out death benefits totaling more than \$205 million, and our life insurance program is one of the largest and most successful in the world. In 2007, our total insurance in force climbed above \$66 billion. We are number 967 on the Fortune 1000 list of America's largest corporations,. Our insurance sales growth over

the past five years is more than 46 percent, while the industry as a whole grew only 8.6 percent during that period. Once again last year, we ranked first among all fraternal benefit societies in the number of life certificates sold.

- **New Products:** Later this year, we will begin to offer a large new portfolio of life insurance products. We have spent the last year and a half designing and pricing these new products, and have worked hard to ensure that they do the best job of meeting the needs of our members in the 21st century.

INVESTMENTS

One of the things that makes our insurance so popular is our well-deserved reputation for paying out high dividends. Last year, we paid more than \$364 million to our insured members. Why do we pay out so much in dividends? Because the Knights of Columbus Insurance is a program designed by brother Knights for brother Knights.

MUSEUM

For the third consecutive year, we drew large crowds to the Knights of Columbus Museum during the Christmas season thanks to yet another extraordinary display of crèches from the land where the crèche was born. “A Christmas Journey: Nativities from across Italy” included 17 incredible works that were a wonder to behold. Later this year, we will present our fourth annual crèche exhibit. It’s one more way that we “Keep Christ in Christmas.”

VOCATIONS

Vocations are the life blood of the Church, and over the past several decades we have placed a growing emphasis on encouraging and financially supporting vocations to the priesthood and religious life. Since the RSVP program began in 1981, it has provided more than \$41 million to nearly 66,000 men and women to enable them to pursue their vocations. Last year, 4,731 seminarians, postulants and novices received a total of more than \$2.7 million in support from 2,500 councils, assemblies and circles.

- In addition, the Father Michael J. McGivney and Bishop Thomas V. Daily scholarship programs established by the Supreme Board of Directors in 1992 and 1997, support more than a hundred seminarians in their studies this year. McGivney scholarships are awarded based on need, and during the past academic year, we selected 34 new recipients and renewed 59 more. The Bishop Daily scholarships are based on merit and academic excellence, and during the year just ended, we chose 11 new recipients and renewed 20 who are continuing their studies.

CHURCH ACTIVITIES

We have always taken pride in our role as “the strong right arm of the Church,” and the past year has seen many examples of our support for the Church and our priests and bishops.

- If there is one Catholic church that stands out as a symbol of Catholicism in America, it is Mary’s Church in Washington, D.C. – the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate conception. The Knights of Columbus have been associated with the Shrine since World War I, when the very idea of a National Shrine to Mary was first discussed. The first pilgrimage to the site of the Shrine was conducted by Knights from Brooklyn in 1918 – two years before the cornerstone was laid. Thousands of individual Knights donated money to build the Shrine over more than three decades.
- The Knights bell tower, paid for entirely by the Order was completed in 1959.
- Last November 17, the Shrine dedicated our most substantial contribution to the church in 40 years – the Knights of Columbus Incarnation Dome, a beautiful new mosaic in the Great Upper Church. The Order pledged \$1 million towards the dome’s construction, with half to come from the Fourth Degree.
- Last December Pope Benedict XVI was presented with a gift of \$1.6 million, representing this year’s earnings from our *Vicarius Christi* Fund, which was established back in 1981. Since then, it has enabled us to provide the pope with more than \$43 million for his personal charities and causes.

PATRIOTISM

Members in the Fourth Degree surpassed 305,000 this year, helped along by 306 exemplifications. And we now have 2,787 assemblies around the world, an increase of 54 during this fraternal year.

- In 1954, after a three-year campaign, the Knights of Columbus persuaded the U.S. Congress to add the words “under God” to the Pledge of Allegiance. In 2004 the U.S. Supreme Court threw out a challenge to these words in the Pledge from a California atheist on a technicality. Since then new suits have been filed by the same individual and the courts have allowed the Knights to join the suit as “defendant intervenors.” We are still awaiting a decision in the cases.

FAITHFUL CITIZENSHIP – FAITHFUL FATHERHOOD

Ever since the U.S. Supreme Court preempted the democratic process in 1973 and forced abortion on demand on the American people by judicial fiat, the Knights of Columbus has been at the forefront of the pro-life movement. We have long been the backbone of the annual March for Life in Washington, D.C., where hundreds of thousands of people come in January

each year, in cold and wind, in rain and snow, to march up Constitution Avenue, past the Capitol Building, to the Supreme Court which committed this terrible injustice..

Thirty-five years after *Roe v. Wade*, opposition to abortion on demand in the U.S. isn't going away – it's getting stronger every year!

We will never waver in the cause to ensure legal protection for every human being, from conception to natural death.

As the Bishops of the United States recently stated, "The Church's obligation to participate in "Faithful Citizenship" shaping the moral character of society is a requirement of our faith"