



WHO ARE THE KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS?

(I)



My first encounter with the Knights of Columbus was from a fellow seminarian Fr Gordon McKimmon, now retired, who told us about his brother's initiation as a Knight, how happy they were to join, and how excited and proud they were of the noble goals of this Catholic fraternity. Frank, his elder brother, has served with distinction on all state offices. We were not allowed to hear details of the initiation, but it must have been first class material. I myself joined the Knights of Columbus shortly after I was ordained in 1942. I was invited by one of the officers, and though I was happy throughout the initiations to the Third Degree, I must confess I did not attend any of the meetings of Council 1081 even though Council Chambers were right across the street. I was busy, I thought, as a priest, and did not realize what I was missing.

I met many Knights in the following years but did not become fully aware of their good works as organized members of our Church's laity. Many Knights helped us at Latona Beach Camp during the 50s, but it was only when I was Pastor of Precious Blood Parish in Cloverdale that I became Chaplain to Council 7276. I was faithful to attend every meeting and began to realize how the men who joined and were active, were growing in their faith and services to the Church and their community. I met many other Knights when they participated as Fourth Degree, in their attractive regalia at celebrations, and again when they helped with sports days for our Catholic school children. I was also with Fr Fagan, happy to go on the bus to Kelowna to participate in the familiarization program they have to help priests understand the Knights and their works. I have been to several Padre Nights at Council 1081 where they put on a very pleasant dinner and to which they invited all the clergy.

I've always participated in the Columbus Charities Lottery. This Lottery is a major contribution to the works of Columbus Charities. It involves all 119 Third Degree Councils and 18 Fourth Degree Assemblies in our BC and Yukon jurisdiction. The Lottery gives away five brand new vehicles, and is the main source of raising money for the seniors housing initiatives.

Finally, with the benefit of medical handicaps, I was privileged to become a resident of Columbus Residence, a project of Council 1081. Here, in the atmosphere of quiet meditation and reflection, I began to appreciate how much the Knights have done for the Church, particularly for seniors in need of advanced care.

The founder of this fraternal order was a young priest of Irish extraction whose family had immigrated to America, Fr Michael McGivney was ordained to the priesthood for the Diocese of Hartford, Connecticut. He had gone to the seminary at the age of 16, and studied at the College of St. Hyacinthe, Quebec. Two academic years followed at Our Lady of Angels Seminary, attached to Niagara University in Niagara Falls, New York. Young McGivney moved next to Montreal to attend seminary classes at the Jesuit-run St. Mary's College. At the request of the bishop of Hartford, he entered St. Mary's Seminary in Baltimore, Maryland in 1873. After four years, he was ordained in Baltimore's historic Cathedral of the Assumption by Archbishop James Gibbons.



Fr. Michael McGivney

(to be continued)