



WHO ARE THE KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS?

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Fr McGivney's pastoral care included many Catholic men who worked in the coal mines, where they developed often fatal respiratory diseases. There were no social safety nets in those days. In the year 1882, Fr McGivney, no doubt with good advice, established an organization that had very high goals of services to God and country, and was protective of the faith of men who were already being enticed by other fraternal organizations such as the Knights of Pythius or Masons. The successes of this fraternal organization had been outstanding, particularly when he advised the Knights to purchase life insurance that has produced one of the world's largest insurance companies. Besides providing personal family benefits, the company had been most generous in sharing its profits with the universal Church, and donating to numerous international crises. By the end of 1885, there were 31 Councils in Connecticut. Fr McGivney himself died in 1890 at the age of 38. The order spread across the border into Montreal in 1897 with Council 284, and into BC in 1906 with Council 1081. Worldwide enrollment is now 1.6 million members.

Through providing financial services, members of the Knights of Columbus have individually benefited in their own growth in faith, in family, as well as community. As the need for care facilities for elderly citizens loomed as one of our most pressing social issues, the Knights of Columbus have responded in our jurisdiction by building a series of low cost seniors residences. The first was St Mary's in East Vancouver, followed by St Mary's, Chilliwack. The third was at the property of Immaculate Conception Parish in Delta, then a fourth, an initiative of Council 8319 and St Augustine's Parish at 12th & Arbutus, Vancouver. The latest effort of Columbus Charities, Columbus Millennium Tower, is due to open in June 2004, also in Vancouver, at Davie & Broughton in the West End. The crown jewel is Columbus Residence, where Fr Bill Summerville and I now live. And where Fr John Teague & Fr Tom Corcoran once called home.

This residence was built by Council 1081. The

moving spirit behind this effort was a wonderful and very generous man, Walter Nezil. Mr. Nezil died last year, but his was the spirit that saw the need, and led his fellow Knights through countless obstacles, carrying on to the day the Archbishop blessed the Columbus Residence as a combination care centre and independent living accommodation. They called Mr. Nezil stubborn, I like to think of him as dedicated, because nothing is achieved without a leader having the zeal and energy to stay the course and overcome opposition, whether from fellow members or City Hall.

We have 76 residents, all living with different levels of handicap of mind or body, or both. Some 23 independent residents live across the courtyard. Catholics make up 55% of the residents here, attending services in a beautiful chapel donated by the Archdiocese, where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved, and Mass said every Sunday. For the four years that I've lived here, we have been able to celebrate daily Mass, as the Knights believe that pastoral care is the most important service. Residents from different faiths also have the benefit of their clergies coming to administer to them, such as the United Church, the Church of England, and Baptists. Twice a year, a memorial is held, attended by friends and families of those who have died here.

On a lighter note, recreational activities are arranged regularly for all residents, the bus trips, entertainment, card games etc. are all part of the effort to help residents maintain active lifestyles.

In a quiet moment, we reflect on the good works started by Fr McGivney, and now carried on by every Knight of Columbus in the Archdiocese. This is exactly what Holy Mother Church wants - to have the laity share their mission of spreading the good news through words and actions. The many charitable deeds of the Knights of Columbus deserve to be trumpeted and appreciated. We say 'Thank You' to the Knights for Columbus Residence, and other safe havens for seniors.

THANK YOU! KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS.

July, 2004

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