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From the Vatican, 27 July 2009

Dear Mr. Anderson,

His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI was pleased to learn that on 4-6 August 2009 the 127th annual Supreme Convention of the Knights of Columbus will be held in Phoenix, Arizona. He has asked me to convey his warm personal greetings to all in attendance, together with his prayerful good wishes for the occasion.

His Holiness is pleased to see in the theme of this year's Convention – *"We Stand in Solidarity with our Bishops and Priests"* – a timely reminder of the importance of a united and clear testimony to the Gospel on the part of all the baptized, based on communion in the apostolic faith and membership in the one Body of Christ which is the Church. During his Pastoral Visit to the United States last year, he held up this "unity of vision and purpose" as the secret of the growth of the Church in America (*Homily in Saint Patrick's Cathedral*, 19 April 2008) and an indispensable element of the new evangelization. The

Church is called to speak out with a unified voice not only in presenting the Christian message as the good news of salvation for all people, but also in working to renew and transform society by defending those unchanging moral truths inscribed on our hearts by the Creator (cf. *Rom* 1:19-20), discernible to right reason and essential to the building of a just, free and humane society. At a time of growing ethical confusion, and in the light of new and grave assaults on the right to life and the fundamental institutions of marriage and family, the Church's prophetic witness to those truths is ever more urgently needed as a genuine service to the common good. For this reason the Holy Father encourages the praiseworthy efforts of the Knights to promote knowledge of the rich body of the Church's social teaching, and, in union with the Bishops as "authentic teachers of the faith" (*Lumen Gentium*, 25), to let that teaching shape and direct their personal lives, their institutional decisions and their engagement in the life of society at every level. He likewise trusts that, as a respected and articulate voice of the Catholic faithful, the Knights of Columbus will continue to defend that teaching through reasoned argument and responsible participation in civic and political life.

In his recent social Encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*, His Holiness, following the tradition of his predecessors, pointed to the intrinsic relationship between truth, love and justice in the Christian vision. It is in love, as free self-gift, that we come to discover the deepest truth about ourselves and are inspired to work for the true good of the human family, and indeed, for that supreme human good which is our eternal destiny in the divine plan. Grounded in her experience of God's empowering love, the Church is convinced that "justice is the primary way of charity" (*op. cit.*, 6) and an essential part of her mission of drawing all men and women to the fullness of life and truth in Christ. The Knights of Columbus, founded as a fraternal and charitable association of Catholic laymen, have long reflected this essential union between charity and justice in their outstanding traditions of volunteer work in the service of others, especially those in greatest material and spiritual need. The Holy Father thus offers prayerful good wishes for the Year of the Volunteer which your Order is presently celebrating, and he encourages the Knights, in the vast network of their local Councils, to renew their zeal for charitable works, as a tangible expression of "the faith that expresses itself through love" (*Gal* 5:6) and directs all human activity to its ultimate fulfillment in the Kingdom of God.

On June 19 last, the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, His Holiness inaugurated a Year for Priests, inviting the whole Church to contemplate anew the mystery and gift of the priesthood. With deep appreciation for the unswerving commitment of the Knights to promoting priestly and religious vocations world-wide, he appeals to all the members of your Order to celebrate this Year by praying fervently for an increase in vocations, supporting priests in their sublime and demanding ministry, and encouraging young men to be generous and open to the Lord's call. During this Year may every Knight reflect with gratitude on the immense harvest of good reaped as a result of the pastoral vision and apostolic zeal of outstanding parish priests like the Servant of God Father Michael McGivney and the Curé of Ars, Saint John Mary Vianney, and pray that our Lord will continue to raise up new generations of shepherds after his own heart (cf. *Jer* 3:15). Echoing a constant concern of the saintly Curé, the Holy Father likewise asks the Knights, in their families and in their local Councils, to lay great emphasis on helping young people "to pray, and to pray well", for he is convinced that "young people, if they know how to pray, can be trusted to know what to do with God's call" (*Address to the United States Bishops*, Washington, 16 April 2008).

With these sentiments and with great affection in the Lord, His Holiness commends all assembled in Phoenix to the loving intercession of Mary, Mother of the Church. To the members of the Supreme Council, and to all the Knights and their families, he cordially imparts his Apostolic Blessing as a pledge of abundant heavenly graces.

With personal good wishes for the success of the meeting, I remain

Yours sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tarcisio Card. Bertone". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tarcisio Card. Bertone
Secretary of State