



Knight Who Died of War-Related Injuries Honored at Supreme Convention



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In this 2007 file photo, Father H. Timothy Vakoc is greeted by well-wishers after he received the 2007 Distinguished Alumnus Award from the St. Paul Seminary School of Divinity at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minn. Father Vakoc died, June 20, after fighting to recover from war-related injuries for five years.

It is a tradition at the Supreme Convention to honor Knights who have been killed in action over the past fraternal year. The supreme master tracks information about brother Knights who have given the last full measure of devotion while serving in the conflict in the Middle East. Since the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, 33 Knights serving in the armed forces have lost their lives in combat, along with two Columbian Squires and one civilian.



The most recent Knight to die of war-related injuries was Father H. Timothy Vakoc, a U.S. Army chaplain who was severely wounded in Northern Iraq in 2004. Father Vakoc died, June 20, after a five-year struggle with injuries sustained in an roadside bomb explosion; at the time, he was returning to his barracks after saying Mass for soldiers on the 12th anniversary of his ordination.

Father Vakoc was in a coma for two years after the attack, but with support from many

friends and brother Knights, he fought to recover from his wounds. He was retired from the Army with the rank of major and was a retired priest of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis. He also received a Purple Heart, the Bronze Star Medal and the Combat Action Award.

Father Vakoc joined the Order at age 18 and was a member of Father William Blum Council 3656 in New Hope, Minn. To date, he is the only military chaplain to have been killed in action — or from wounds sustained in combat — in the Iraq War. He is the latest in a great line of Knight-priests who have died in wars of the past century while serving the men and women of the armed forces with courage and dedication.

Knights who have been killed in action are remembered in perpetuity at a daily Mass offered for all deceased Knights and their spouses at St. Mary's Church in New Haven, Conn., where the Order was founded in 1882.

Knights Observe 8th Anniversary of 9/11



Cpl. Justin Fortunato of Auburn (Wash.) Council 3598 speaks to a class at Holy Family School on the eighth anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Fortunato enlisted in the Marines after the attacks.

The anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks is a solemn time when K of C units remember the victims of this terrible tragedy and pay tribute not only to those in the armed forces serving abroad, but also to the men and women who keep our individual communities safe.

- Father Patrick Gregory Delahunty Assembly in Montgomery, Ala., hosted a Blue Mass in honor of local servicemen, veterans and first responders.
- Father Hugon Assembly in Tallahassee, Fla., donated a new U.S. flag to John Paul II Catholic High School. After being raised for the first time, the flag was lowered to half mast in observance of the attacks.
- Blessed Sacrament Council 13240 in Clermont, Fla., participated in a ceremony in which an authentic piece of steel recovered from ground zero at the site of the former World Trade Center was donated to the city of Clermont. The 60-pound piece of steel was acquired by Knight Peter Capece, a retired New York City Firefighter.



Battlefield Band-Aid

Portland doctor saves wounded soldiers with bandage he created.

by Ed Langlois, CNS

He rebuilds the blown-up and regenerates the maimed.

Someday, he hopes to restore the brain-damaged, all using designs from the Almighty — designs found in nature.

Dr. Kenton Gregory, a researcher at Catholic-run Providence St. Vincent Medical Center in Portland, Ore., has gained worldwide recognition for inventing a new bandage that quickly halts bleeding. On top of that, it seals the wound and kills bacteria. Compared to the cloth gauze that had been used from the days of Alexander the Great until the Gulf War, Gregory's bandage is a miracle.

Now, this Harvard-trained physician is getting grants from the U.S. Army to develop stem-cell therapies to heal wounded soldiers. He never uses embryonic stem cells, but only cells that come from the patient, snaring Mother Nature's latent healing powers.

"The most important cell is your own," said Gregory, 54. "It won't get rejected or cause cancer."

Hurt soldiers often write to Gregory and his colleagues, or even visit to give testimony about the new bandages. Many say they owe their lives to the Oregon lab.

"My top priority is taking care of injured ... soldiers with wounds that will haunt them for the rest of their lives," Gregory said. "They are risking their lives for us. It's something our country owes them."

The bandage is a good example of the work done at the Oregon Medical Laser Center, which Gregory founded at Providence St. Vincent. The material of the bandage is based on a design almost as old as life itself: the shells of shrimps and insects.

The compounds in the resilient bandages have a positive electrical charge, while red blood cells have a neg-

ative charge. The two bond like magnets, stopping the flow. The bandages also grab the membranes of bacteria, blotting out infection.

With the military's support in 2002, the bandage received the second fastest approval in the history of the Food and Drug Administration. Every U.S. soldier now carries the Oregon-made HemCon dressings, which they can apply to wounded comrades or even to themselves. Bleeding is the single leading cause of death among soldiers killed in action, and researchers say the HemCon bandages will prevent 20 to 30 percent of battlefield deaths.

In addition, the medical center is developing natural protein-based replacements for arteries, stomachs and intestines. Taking more lessons from the elegant designs of nature, Gregory and other researchers at the center are now focusing on ways to repair tissue damage in arms and legs, mostly due to roadside bombs. Extreme swelling from hard-fragment blows causes pressure that cuts off the blood supply and can lead to irreversible nerve and muscle damage.

The campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan have been characterized by such injuries, as opposed to bullet wounds. An estimated 20,000 U.S. servicemen and women have suffered this sort of limb damage.

"They will have disabilities for the rest of their lives if we don't find a way to help them," Gregory explained.

Gregory's "biggest thrill," he said, is when ideas leap from the lab to the pa-



In this undated photo, Dr. Kenton Gregory sits at a research station at Providence St. Vincent Medical Center in Portland, Ore. Gregory has been using designs from nature to create new healing techniques for wounded soldiers.

tient's bedside. Founded in 1991, the Oregon Medical Laser Center started by using lasers to repair serious wounds, and to halt strokes and heart attacks. Discoveries increased when the Army learned about the center in the late 1990s and started giving grants.

With the military asking for technology to instantly plug bullet wounds without needing to apply pressure, the lab is working on a sort of spray to inject into the wound. Also on the horizon are methods to regenerate lungs damaged by pneumonia.

The Army also has a strong interest in restoring damaged brain tissue, another common injury caused by bombs in Afghanistan and Iraq. Gregory described the method as "helping the brain heal itself," and the work may one day have implications for treating multiple sclerosis. ♦

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