CHAPLAIN’S report
KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS In Service to One. In Service to All.

THE FAMILY IN GOD’S PLAN

The commandment to honor one’s father and mother reflects the family’s role in church and society

The Fourth Commandment reads, “Honor your father and mother.” How many times as youngsters did we confess that we had disobeyed our parents in ways great and small? Yet, we can understand this commandment more fully by examining ourselves honestly again and again. Challenge yourselves. Do not be content with what you are if you want to become what you are not yet. … Always add something more, keep moving forward, and always make progress.” (Sermon 169, 15-18).

In the fifth century, St. Augustine said: “Make progress my brothers and sisters; examine yourselves honestly again and again. Challenge yourselves. Do not be content with what you are if you want to become what you are not yet. … Always add something more, keep moving forward, and always make progress.” (Sermon 169, 15-18).

This is advice for all of us to keep in mind. It is as valid today as it was when it was written in the fifth century, and I believe it is fundamentally the reason why we have meetings, seminars and conventions. It is certainly the premise from which we have been working to rethink and reshape our position as chaplains to the Knights. We need to reshape our mentality so that we may better understand the formation that leads to a Christ-like and Church-like basis for our charitable endeavors and think about why we do charitable works.

With this in mind, we have endeavored to

See FAMILY, Page 2
‘The Posada: An Advent & Christmas Celebration’

THE POSADA IS A TRADITIONAL CHRISTMAS celebration that Franciscan missionaries developed in America with the goal of introducing the faith, and it continues to be popular throughout the southwestern United States and all of Latin America. St. Francis introduced the tradition of the Nativity set, and the Posada is an extension of his work. A mailing to councils included a copy of the booklet The Posada: An Advent & Christmas Celebration (#9898-E, S). Through distribution of this booklet, the Order hopes to bring the rich Posada tradition to all Knights and their families as a way of encouraging a sharing of cultures in the Americas around the celebration of the birth of our Savior.

This booklet provides all that is needed to conduct a Christmas Posada with your family and your Knights of Columbus council. Councils may wish to discuss this program with the parish pastor about possibly making the Posada a parish program.

Additional copies of the booklet can be ordered by mailing or faxing (800-266-6340) a Requisition Form (#1) to the Supply Department.

FAMILY, FROM PAGE ONE

taught and imparted, and the family is where children learn to pray. For these reasons, the family is called “the domestic church” (Compendium, 456).

In an age when civil authorities and cultural forces are trying to redefine the family, we must insist that the family, understood as the union of a man and a woman together with their children, is the “original cell” of human society. Existing prior to all human governments and to its recognition in law, the family plays a unique and irreplaceable role in transmitting virtues and values to young people and in helping them become good and productive citizens (457). For that reason, all governments have a duty to respect, protect and foster authentic marriage and family life. Except for serious reasons such as protecting spouses and children from harm, public authorities should not intervene in family life. At the same time, governments should defend “public morality, the rights of parents, and domestic prosperity” (458).

It would be a mistake for us to think of marriage and family as an easy, idyllic vocation. Mothers and fathers everywhere know better. It takes enormous dedication and energy to form one’s children so that they can accept and fulfill their proper responsibilities. They must be taught by word and example how to relate to God, their families and society at large.

Likewise, children should learn how to bring harmony to the family circle and to help themselves and the whole family grow in holiness. For example, I know young people whose strong faith persuaded their parents to resume regular attendance at Sunday Mass. Indeed, the duties of children toward their parents extend into adulthood. Adult children should continue to love and revere their parents and provide for them in their advancing years, not just materially, but also spiritually, such as by ensuring that they are receiving the sacraments (459).

FAMILY TIES

Parents share in God’s creative capacity to give life, and from this flows their responsibility to love and respect their children as persons created in God’s image and likeness. Accordingly, parents should educate their children and form them in the faith. They do so through prayer, religious instruction within the family and participation in the Church’s life, especially by taking part in the Eucharist each Sunday (461).

As the Rite of Baptism explains, “Parents are the first teachers of their children in the ways of faith.” They are to provide for their children’s material, physical and spiritual needs, especially their education. It is also important for parents to be open to the vocation God has in mind for their children — be it marriage, religious life or the priesthood — and help guide them toward it, as well as toward an appropriate profession (460, 462).

An old saying tells us that “blood is thicker than water.” Family bonds run deep, and there is widespread recognition of the need to strengthen them today. Families need to spend time together, share meals, talk with one another and pray together. At the same time, family ties are not absolute. The first obligation of every family member is to follow and love Jesus Christ. Our love for Christ must exceed even our love for our parents and children (see Mt. 10:37).

Within healthy and happy families an appropriate understanding of authority is more likely to develop, including that of teachers and civil authorities. We are to understand authority as a service to moral truth and the common good, a service that respects human dignity and rights, and seeks to create environments conducive to the authentic good of all (463-465). In a self-centered culture, this is often hard for people to understand. Furthermore, parents are to foster in their children habits of good citizenship, including the virtue of patriotism, the right and duty to vote, payment of taxes and the right to free speech (464). And most importantly, parents are to instill in their children a spirit of service for others and a readiness to volunteer and assist those in need.

Discussion/Reflection Compendium Questions: 455-465

1. WHY MIGHT WE REFER to the family as the “domestic church”? (See Compendium, 456)
2. WHAT SHOULD SOCIETY DO to support and strengthen marriage and the family? (458)
3. WHAT DUTIES DO CHILDREN have toward their parents? What special duties do adult children have toward their parents? (459)
4. WHAT DUTIES DO PARENTS have toward their children? (460)
5. UNDER WHAT CIRCUMSTANCES is a citizen not obliged to obey civil laws? (465)

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gather chaplains together throughout our Order. Some states have arranged seminars, some have gathered for an afternoon, and others have used their state convention as the most suitable time to come together.

As part of the annual College Council Conference, some of the chaplains of the attending councils met on Oct. 2 in New Haven to discuss their role as chaplains and the spiritual needs of college Knights.

The meeting was moderated by Father Frank Donio, a member of the Society of the Catholic Apostolate, Palottines. Father Donio is state chaplain for the District of Columbia and also chaplain of The Catholic University of America Council 9542. The chaplains in attendance were from various parts of the United States and Canada and from councils based at Catholic, private or state campuses, both large and small.

Father Donio summed up the encounter:

“Father Grace provided an overview of the role of the chaplain in the Knights of Columbus, emphasizing particularly the chaplain’s role as formator in the faith. The chaplains all agreed that this aspect of their role is of significant importance on college campuses. During part of the meeting, the chaplains reviewed the significant faith formation resources available from the Order in various formats (online, audio and printed) such as, Chaplain’s Report, Catholic Information Service and Headline Bistro.

Each Chaplain had the opportunity to share with the group his activity within his respective council. All were impressed by the desire and openness of college Knights to grow in their faith. They particularly see the Order as a means by which college men can become significantly active in the life of the Church and in their local communities, both on and off campus. They emphasized the need for college Knights to be united with their local campus ministry programs, just as other councils of the Order are closely affiliated with local parishes. They believe that college councils, when functioning optimally, assist greatly in the development of college Knights as Catholic gentlemen.”

I was invited to participate in a conference three days later in Maryland by Father Donald Grzymski, of the Order of Friars Minor Conventual, Conventual Franciscans. Chaplains came from across the state to gather at Annapolis Council 1384 in Edge water, Md. As a summation, Father Grzymski, state chaplain of Maryland, said:

“The day offered the chaplains the opportunity to better understand their roles and to provide a greater awareness of resource materials available at the Supreme and state levels. The afternoon also afforded Peter Davio, Maryland state deputy, an opportunity to address the chaplains and to hear from them. He and several other state officers and chairmen who were present fielded a number of questions and garnered several suggestions from the gathered chaplains.

“It was a very pleasant and fruitful afternoon. Thanks to all who prepared the lunch, organized the hall and participated.”

So, as we quoted in the opening paragraph: “Always add something more, keep moving forward, and always make progress,” I believe that there are definite signs of progress. We are encouraging chaplains to be hands-on at the grassroots level, because if the chaplain is involved, Knights become more active in supporting their priests as they share the parish burdens. In doing so, they take their rightful place in building of the Body of Christ, which is the Church.

God bless and keep you all.

REV. JOHN P. GRACE, O.S.A.
DIRECTOR OF CHAPLAIN PROGRAMS AND DEVELOPMENT
JGRACE@KOFc.ORG
(203) 752-4263
Salt + Light Television has released a new documentary on the life of St. André of Montreal, the first Canadian-born male saint and a good friend of the Knights of Columbus. The film, titled God’s Doorkeeper, coincides with a number of initiatives related to St. André’s canonization, which took place Oct. 17.

Directed by a team of filmmakers at Salt + Light, the documentary takes viewers into the heart of Brother André’s universal story of charity, holiness and hope. Shot and produced in the months leading up to his canonization, the film includes footage of the beatification and canonization ceremonies in Rome and celebrations in Montreal. Also included are exclusive interviews with those who continue St. André’s legacy and who were touched by his healing and compassion, as well as commentary by Basilian Father Thomas Rosica, CEO of the Salt and Light Catholic Media Foundation.

In addition to God’s Doorkeeper, Salt + Light Television on Oct. 19 began offering the broadcast of daily Mass in French from St. Joseph’s Oratory, the world-renowned shrine founded by Brother André in 1904.

Salt + Light Television shares a close relationship with the Knights of Columbus, and the Order has provided funding for several Salt + Light projects, including the film Road of Hope: The Spiritual Journey of Cardinal Nguyen Van Thuan. Knights also participated in a number of initiatives celebrating Brother André’s canonization, including a novena and an ongoing membership drive and first degrees in his honor. For more information on God’s Doorkeeper, to view the film’s trailer, to order copies of the film on DVD and to view additional material on St. André of Montreal, visit saltandlighttv.org/brotherandre. For more information on the K of C initiatives related to St. André, visit kofc.org/brotherandre.