



SECRETARIAT OF STATE

N. 540.816

From the Vatican, 22 July 2021

Dear Mr. Kelly,

His Holiness Pope Francis has asked me to convey his warm greetings and the assurance of his closeness in prayer to all taking part in the 139th Supreme Convention of the Knights of Columbus, to be held virtually from 3 to 4 August next.

The theme of this year's Convention – *Called to Creative Courage* – takes up a challenge presented by the Holy Father in his recent Apostolic Letter *Patris Corde* on the figure of Saint Joseph, Patron of the Universal Church. Saint Joseph's example of "creative courage" in the fulfilment of his vocation as father of the Holy Family makes him a particularly good model for all those men who, in these times of uncertainty and unrest, seek to persevere in fidelity to our Lord and his Church, entrusting their lives and the lives of their families to his providential guidance and care.

Indeed, it was creative courage that characterized the life and ministry of Blessed Michael McGivney, who in 1882, with a small group of Catholic men, laid the foundations of the Knights of Columbus in response to the pressing spiritual and material needs of working men and their families. From seeds planted in a small but vibrant local parish, your Order expanded throughout the world in subsequent years, enriching the lives of countless men and contributing in signal fashion to the development of the modern lay apostolate in service to the Church's universal mission. The joyful event of Father McGivney's beatification, celebrated this past year in Hartford, marked a significant

milestone in this distinguished history and represents a summons to renewed fidelity to the founding principles of faith, fraternity and charitable assistance to those in need.

It is appropriate, then, in this Year of Saint Joseph, that the Knights of Columbus look to the Guardian of the Redeemer as a model of that *parrhesía* or apostolic courage (cf. *Acts* 4:29-31) which, as the Holy Father has often insisted, flows from the prophetic mission entrusted to each of us at our baptism. In an age of epochal change, our societies need the courageous witness of men of faith and integrity, who can serve as a leaven of Christ's kingdom of justice and peace, holiness and truth. Men committed to building up rather than tearing down, promoting healing and reconciliation in place of hatred and recrimination, and inviting all to undertake the "journey of fraternity" that can lead to a world ever more in accord with God's saving plan for our human family (cf. *Fratelli Tutti*, 278).

The Knights of Columbus, as a premier Catholic organization of men and fathers, have chosen to celebrate this Year of Saint Joseph with an emphasis on his role as "Guardian of the Family". Throughout its history, your Order has distinguished itself, not only by its efforts to support and assist families in their God-given role as the primary educators of their children in the faith, but also by its principled public defense of the nature of marriage and the family, the inviolable dignity of human life, and the right to religious freedom. That witness remains today more precious than ever. As Saint John Paul II frequently reminded us, the future of our world depends on the family (cf. *Familiaris Consortio*, 86), and families need the strong presence and example of men who, "with a father's heart", take responsibility for the lives entrusted to them, teach the dignity of work and the importance of self-sacrifice, and thus quietly contribute to the good of their local communities and of society as a whole.

The Holy Father once more thanks the Knights of Columbus for their manifold charitable activities, especially those carried out in this past year, when the global health crisis aggravated the needs of so many of our brothers and sisters throughout the world. He greatly values this witness of universal fraternity, born of

our spiritual communion in the Body of Christ. His Holiness is likewise mindful of your Order's tradition of unfailing devotion to the Successor of Peter and generous cooperation in the fulfilment of his apostolic ministry. As always, Pope Francis is profoundly grateful to the Knights for their unfailing support of our Christian brothers and sisters experiencing persecution for the sake of the Gospel.

With these sentiments, His Holiness sends prayerful good wishes for your new responsibilities as Supreme Knight, and to the members of the Supreme Council. Commending the deliberations of the forthcoming Convention to the intercession of Mary Immaculate and Saint Joseph, Patron of the Universal Church, he cordially imparts to the Knights and their families his Apostolic Blessing as a pledge of joy and peace in the Lord.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Pietro Parolin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Pietro" and the last name "Parolin" clearly distinguishable.

Cardinal Pietro Parolin
Secretary of State

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