

## **FOURTH DEGREE EXEMPLIFICATIONS**

EARLIER WE WATCHED AS A GROUP OF THIRD DEGREE KNIGHTS ADVANCED TO THE HONORS OF THE FOURTH DEGREE. THEY GIVE WITNESS TO THEIR PERSONAL WILLINGNESS TO FOSTER THE VIRTUE OF PATRIOTISM IN THEIR LIVES.

I OFFER MY PERSONAL CONGRATULATIONS TO EACH OF THEM, AND ECHO THE GOOD WISHES CONVEYED ON THIS HAPPY OCCASION BY THEIR FAMILIES AND FRIENDS.

THE VIRTUE OF PATRIOTISM – THE LOVE OF AND DEVOTION TO ONE'S COUNTRY – HAS ITS ROOTS IN THE VIRTUE OF PIETY, A TWIN OF THE VIRTUE OF RELIGION. SO IT IS THAT, AS PRACTICAL CATHOLIC MEN, THE KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS ARE LOYAL SONS OF THEIR COUNTRY AND THEY ARE ALSO LOYAL SONS OF THEIR CHURCH.

THIS LOYALTY WAS EMBEDDED IN THE FABRIC OF COLUMBIANISM MORE THAN A CENTURY AGO, ON (WASHINGTON'S BIRTHDAY), FEBRUARY 22, 1900, WHEN, FOR THE FIRST TIME, MORE THAN 1,100 KNIGHTS WERE EXEMPLIFIED IN THE NEWLY ESTABLISHED FOURTH DEGREE.

FROM THAT DAY TO THIS, KNIGHTS HAVE ASPIRED TO BE

WORTHY OF THIS DEGREE, KNOWING, IN CONCERT WITH THE RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS ESTABLISHING THE DEGREE, THAT IT SHOULD BE CONFERRED ONLY ON WORTHY AND PERSEVERING MEMBERS OF THE ORDER.

THESE ARE EXCITING TIMES TO BE A KNIGHT OF COLUMBUS. THE FOURTH DEGREE IS CELEBRATING MORE THAN A CENTURY OF FAITH AND A LIFETIME OF LOYALTY, 113 YEARS OF DEFENDING LIBERTY, WHILE PERPETUATING FREEDOM. THE FOUNDING OF THE FOURTH DEGREE LAUNCHED A PART OF OUR ORDER THAT PROVIDED OPPORTUNITIES TO EXERCISE GREATER COMMITMENT TO GOD AND COUNTRY.

IT HAS BEEN SAID THAT THE FOURTH DEGREE IS THE VISIBLE ARM OF THE ORDER. WHAT AN AWESOME RESPONSIBILITY RESTS ON YOUR SHOULDERS WHEN YOU PUT ON THAT CAPE AND CHAPEAU AND MARCH INTO A CHURCH OR IN A PARADE, PRESENT THE FLAG OF OUR COUNTRY AT A MEETING, OR STAND GUARD AT A WAKE. WHEN YOU DO, YOU REPRESENT NOT JUST THE FOURTH DEGREE, BUT THE ORDER OF THE KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS.

HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED WHY THE BALDRIC YOU WEAR CARRIES THE EMBLEM OF THE ORDER AND NOT THE EMBLEM OF

THE FOURTH DEGREE? THE ANSWER IS BECAUSE YOU ARE PART OF, NOT APART FROM, THE ORDER OF THE KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS. YOU DO NOT COMPETE WITH COUNCIL PROGRAMS. YOU COMPLEMENT THEM AND THEIR ACTIVITIES. YOU ARE THE VISIBLE ARM OF THE KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS.

IT IS ESPECIALLY PLEASING TO WELCOME THESE MEN TO THE RANKS OF THE FOURTH DEGREE TODAY, AT A TIME WHEN THERE IS A RESURGENCE OF PATRIOTISM.

BUT EVEN WHEN THE IDEA OF PATRIOTISM SEEMED OUTMODED; WHEN SOME TOOK THE OFFENSIVE AGAINST THE NOTION OF THE LOVE OF COUNTRY; WHEN BURNING AND/OR DESECRATION OF THE NATIONAL FLAG BECAME THE PARAMOUNT ACTION OF PROTEST, UNDER THE GUISE OF FREE SPEECH; THE KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS NEVER FALTERED IN THEIR DEDICATION TO THE PRINCIPLE OF PATRIOTISM. AND TODAY WE STAND STEADFAST IN OPPOSITION TO EFFORTS TO REMOVE THE WORDS "UNDER GOD" FROM THE PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE.

TODAY, OUR NEWEST FOURTH DEGREE MEMBERS BECOME HEIRS TO THAT TRADITION. IN CONCERT WITH THEIR BROTHERS THROUGHOUT THE ORDER, THEY WILL STRIVE MIGHTILY TO

ENSURE THAT THE FLAG AND GOD WILL ENJOY THE RESPECT THEY DESERVE.

AS I EXPRESS MY CONGRATULATIONS TO YOU NEW SIR KNIGHTS, I ALSO ENCOURAGE YOU AND YOUR BROTHER SIR KNIGHTS OF LONGER STANDING, ALWAYS TO BE CONSCIOUS OF THE NEED TO INVITE ELIGIBLE THIRD DEGREE MEMBERS TO JOIN.

I ALSO WANT TO EXPRESS MY GRATITUDE TO THE DEGREE TEAM WHOSE OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE IN EXEMPLIFYING THE VIRTUE OF PATRIOTISM HAS MADE THIS A DAY WE WILL LONG REMEMBER.

I TRULY APPRECIATE THE OPPORTUNITY TO SHARE IN THESE MEMORABLE EVENTS, AND WISH OUR NEW SIR KNIGHTS GODSPEED.

VIVAT JESUS!