



To the Knights of Columbus

On the occasion of the 115th Annual Convention of the Supreme Council of the Knights of Columbus I send cordial greetings to you and your families. This year's meeting, to be held in Montreal, Quebec, commemorates the centenary of the establishment of the Knights in Canada. It is my hope that the anniversary celebrations will confirm you in fidelity to the Christian and fraternal ideals which have distinguished your Order since its foundation. I take this opportunity to express once more my profound appreciation for the ready support which the Knights of Columbus have always given me in my ministry as the Successor of Peter, charged with being the "permanent and visible source and foundation of unity of faith and fellowship" (*Lumen Gentium*, 18).

As the Church continues her journey towards the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, I urge the Knights to intensify their participation in the program of spiritual preparation set forth in the Apostolic Letter *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*. These years of preparation are an opportunity to discern the signs of God's Kingdom already present among us and to intensify our expectation of its future fullness. In a society marked by the spread of messages opposed to the revelation in Christ of the Father's redemptive love, the spirit of your Order calls you to bear clear and active witness to the final victory of God's Kingdom over the power of sin and death. Your lives should be filled with the certainty of the hope announced by the Gospel of Jesus Christ (cf. Rom 5:5).


It is clear that if the Church is to bring about successfully the renewal envisioned by the Second Vatican Council, her members need more intense catechesis and formation in the fundamentals of the faith. They should be ever more conscious of their baptismal dignity, more assiduous in prayer and in the search for holiness, and more courageous in defending moral truth. For this reason, I encourage the Knights to provide old and new members alike with an appropriate catechetical formation aimed at deepening their knowledge of the faith and their commitment to the Church's life and mission. Central to this effort should be the use of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Only on the basis of a clear and firm understanding of Christian doctrine will you be able to meet the spiritual and moral challenges of our age. I am confident that the Knights will find practical ways to make the *Catechism* more widely known and used.

One of the most pressing tasks facing society and the Church in our day remains that of resisting the culture of death and working for the establishment of a new culture of life (cf. *Evangelium Vitae*, 77). I am aware of many initiatives which the Knights are undertaking in defence of God's gift of life, helping to mobilize consciences to respect the dignity of the human person and the truth of God's creative and redemptive plan (cf. *ibid.*, 95). I warmly commend you for your strong support of the vocation to family life and your resistance to attempts to weaken the family's role as the foundation of society. I am likewise appreciative of the consistent encouragement and support which the Knights have

given to young people discerning God's call to the priesthood and the religious life. This concern, which "should be at the heart of the love which each Christian feels for the Church" (*Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 41), is of extreme importance for the Catholic community. Many young men and women continue to feel the Lord's call and would find it easier to respond with all the generosity of their hearts if they knew that the community of faith values and appreciates their decision.

With gratitude for the many ways in which the Knights of Columbus assist the Church's mission, I invoke upon you and your families the loving protection of Mary, Mother of the Redeemer. To all of you I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing as a pledge of joy and peace in the Lord.

From the Vatican, June 24, 1997

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Joannes Paulus II". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long, sweeping tail on the final "I".