

I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

How the words “UNDER GOD” came to be added to the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag

The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States originated on Columbus Day, 1893. It contained no reference to Almighty God, until in New York City on April 22, 1951, the Board of Directors of the Knights of Columbus adopted a resolution to amend the Pledge of Allegiance as recited at the opening of each of the meetings of the 800 Fourth Degree Assemblies of the Knights of Columbus by the addition of the words “under God” after the words “one nation”. The adoption of this resolve by the Supreme Board of Directors had the effect of an immediate initiation of this practice throughout the aforesaid Fourth Degree Assembly meetings.

At their annual State Meetings, held in April and May of 1952, the State Councils of Florida, South Dakota, New York and Michigan adopted resolutions recommending that the Pledge of Allegiance be so amended and that Congress be petitioned to have such amendment made effective.

On August 21, 1952, the Supreme Council of the Knights of Columbus, at its annual meeting, adopted a resolution urging that the change be made general and copies of this resolution were sent to the President, the Vice President (as Presiding Officer of the Senate) and the Speaker of the House of Representatives. The National Fraternal Congress meeting in Boston on September 24, 1952, adopted a similar resolution upon the recommendation of its President, Supreme Knight Luke E. Hart. Several State Fraternal Congresses acted likewise almost immediately thereafter.

At its annual meeting the following year, on August 20, 1953, the Supreme Council of the Knights of Columbus repeated its resolution to make this amendment to the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag general and to send copies of this resolve to the President, Vice President, Speaker of the House, and to each member of both Houses of Congress. From this latter action, many favorable replies were received, and a total of seventeen resolutions were introduced in the House of Representatives to so amend the Pledge of Allegiance as set forth in the Public Law relating to the use of the flag. The resolution introduced by Congressman Louis C. Rabaut of Michigan was adopted by both Houses of Congress, and it was signed by President Eisenhower on Flag Day, June 14, 1954, thereby making official the amendment conceived, sponsored, and put into practice by the Knights of Columbus more than three years before.

In a message to Supreme Knight Luke E. Hart at the meeting of the Supreme Council in Louisville, August 17, 1954, President Eisenhower, in recognition of the initiative of the Knights of Columbus in originating and sponsoring the amendment to the Pledge of Allegiance, said:

“We are particularly thankful to you for your part in the movement to have the words ‘under God’ added to our Pledge of Allegiance. These words will remind Americans that despite our great physical strength we must remain humble. They will help us to keep constantly in our minds and hearts the spiritual and moral principles which alone give dignity to man, and upon which our way of life is founded. For the contribution which your organization has made to this cause, we must be genuinely grateful.”

In August, 1954, the Illinois American Legion Convention adopted a resolution whereby recognition was given to the Knights of Columbus as having initiated, sponsored and brought about the amendment to the Pledge of Allegiance; and on October 6, 1954, the National Executive Committee of the American Legion gave its approval to that resolution.



Distributed by the Knights of Columbus

