EVERYDAY HEROES
- PROFILES -

#1 - Not your average ‘Joe’

Name: Joseph Mario Reali
Location: Long Island, N.Y.

“Each time he brought a soul to Christ, it was a touchdown.” – Lisa Reali

During his short life, Joe lived life to the fullest, touching thousands of people with his faith, love of life, devotion to charity and care of others. The youngest of four children, Joe grew up in a faith-filled environment. As a charismatic football player and role model, he merged Catholic spirituality and the best of society to inspire people of all ages and walks of life. He invited his friends to teen bible study and brought children to church. Each time he brought a soul to Christ, it was a touchdown. When his mother learned she had stage 3 colon cancer, he left the field to take care of her. Then, one day, Joe died unexpectedly, but peacefully, in the family home at the age of 25.

“He died there, in our home, without any warning; just laid on the floor, and closed his eyes,” Michael Reali, Sr., said in the video

Thousands of people showed up at his funeral. People waited hours to come into the church and share stories of how Joe had touched their lives.

Today, Joe’s legacy lives on through the work and members of “Joseph Mario Reali Council 16261”, a local council of Knights of Columbus on Long Island, NY.

Catch a glimpse: https://vimeo.com/330774860/cfeccff0d1

See online newsroom at: KofC.org/heroesfilm
Name: Capt. Julian Gluck

Location: Barksdale Air Force Base, La.

“Today more than ever we need men who are dedicated to charity, unity, fraternity and patriotism.” - Capt. Julian Gluck

Inspired by the combat service of his father, Julian has nurtured a personal motto of ‘service before self’. When the opportunity arose to go overseas, Julian put forth his name as quickly as he could. At the young age of 25, he took part in multiple operations to help the people of Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan.

For Julian, combat was an opportunity to be part of something bigger than himself; to help. It’s this mindset that has driven him to serve others throughout his career, including delivering care packages to persons and groups in need.

Air Force Times chose Gluck out of nearly 500,000 members of the Air Force, Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard as its Airman of the Year for 2018 in recognition of his charitable work, duty to country and service to humanity.

He joined Knights of Columbus Our Lady of the Skies Council 8200 at the Air Force Academy, in Colorado Springs, Colo., in 2009. He served as chairman of the Knights of Columbus College Council Advisory Board in 2011. The Knights of Columbus also awarded him its inaugural College Councils Distinguished Alumnus Award in 2018.

Catch a glimpse: https://vimeo.com/330774929/4ff3ea1366

See online newsroom at: KofC.org/heroesfilm
#3 – The singing seminarians

Names: Fathers Michael Connolly, Michael Plona and John Wachowicz

Location: Archdiocese of New York, (Michael Connolly) and Diocese of Rockville Centre (Michael Plona and John Wachowicz)

“Music, at its best, really cracks open the door to your heart.” – Fr. Michael Plona

“These little actions, God can take them and do amazing things with them.” – Fr. Michael Connolly

Members of this trio, from different walks of life, honed their gifts after leaving college and enrolling in the seminary. As young men studying for the priesthood, they fell into a mission of touching lives through the power of song. They believe music opens the heart, allowing listeners to connect with a deeper sense of spirituality and teaches the virtues of patience and perseverance. The seminarians’ courage, faith and commitment to charity embody the mission of Knights of Columbus.

Ultimately, they hope their passion for music will help people from all walks of life experience the love of God.

Catch a glimpse: https://vimeo.com/330774990/c0197f45d0

See online newsroom at: KofC.org/heroesfilm
#4 – Grace in the eye of the storm

Name: José Lebron-Sanabria

Location: Las Piedras, Puerto Rico

“Dad, we need to give them water.” – Marco Lebron, José’ son

Category 4 hurricane Maria devastated the island of Puerto Rico, Sept. 20, 2017. José’s home, equipped with two gas stoves, a propane gas generator and a working refrigerator — the only one in his neighborhood — became a center from which supplies donated by Knights of Columbus members were distributed to the affected communities on the island. He and brother field agents hauled and distributed 20,000 lbs. of emergency supplies to 35 councils on the island in only four days.

The catalyst to his heroism: his son and his words, “Dad, we need to bring water to the priests”. In the aftermath of the hurricane, José and his team delivered some 500-600 dinners daily.

Today, José is a different person. In his testimony, he recalls asking the late Venerable Father Michael McGivney, founder of Knights of Columbus, for guidance and hearing, in his heart, the response: “take care of my members”.

Catch a glimpse: https://vimeo.com/330775076/7b4627d119

See online newsroom at: KofC.org/heroesfil
#5 – Sacrifice and brotherhood

Name: Army Spc. James Richard Wolf

Location: Scottsbluff, Neb.

“Little did we know how much this community would come together for us in the events of losing our son.” – James’ mother

Described as a caring, selfless person, James "Jamie" Wolf was known for his infectious smile and positive influence on others. His family remembers, “he loved building things for people.”

He joined the U.S. Army at 18 and, by 19, he was thousands of miles from his home, working side by side with the Iraqi people to help rebuild their country.

During his eight months in the war zone, he helped build an orphanage, a school and housing for Iraqis and Kurds. As a Third Degree Knight alongside his father, he helped with council fund drives and pancake breakfasts in between his assignments abroad. A specialist with the Army’s 52nd Engineer Battalion, Jamie was killed in action Nov. 6, 2003, when an improvised explosive device exploded near his convoy in Mosul.

Throughout his life, the one thing he could rely on was his faith.

Catch a glimpse:  https://vimeo.com/331034718/744baf88d1

See online newsroom at: KofC.org/heroesfilm
#6 – Warrior for Christ

Name: 1st. Sgt. Sompol Vorapanich

Location: Fort Bragg, North Carolina

“You’re not by yourself. We all need help.” – 1st. Sgt. Sompol Vorapanich

The son of a refugee mother and a U.S. marine, Vorapanich felt a deep desire to give back to his country. In retrospect, he’s done just that – and more.

As part of the U.S. Army Special Forces, Vorapanich served his country with heroism, virtue and courage in Afghanistan. Once back at Fort Bragg, Vorapanich decided to use his downtime wisely and generously by taking on the challenge of leading military personnel to the “Warriors to Lourdes Pilgrimage, held annually by Knights of Columbus.

Also on his downtime, Vorapanich spends time with fellow knights collecting food items, clothing and other basic necessities, which they donate to local orphanages and coming up with new ways to positively impact his community and fellow veterans around him.

What will you do with your downtime?

Catch a glimpse: [https://vimeo.com/331034599/d42134b2da](https://vimeo.com/331034599/d42134b2da)

See online newsroom at: KofC.org/heroesfilm
#7 – Going for gold

**Name:** Chris Dooley  
**Location:** Easton, Md.

“The power of our movement has always been to give the opportunity to a person who is labelled in society a chance to relabel themselves on the playing field - an athlete, a striker, a three-point shooter, a swimmer, a marathon runner.” – Tim Shriver

Chris Dooley was diagnosed with an intellectual disability early on in his life. In 2010, his mother, Peggy Dooley, enrolled him in a Special Olympics program after realizing he had a passion for competition.

In 2015, Chris was chosen to participate in the Special Olympics World Games in Los Angeles, where he competed as a kayaker. Chris’ paddle broke during the competition, yet he finished the race. With bravery and resilience, Chris perseveres past adversity and obstacles, giving back through talks to various groups, recruiting athletes and volunteers for Special Olympics and raising awareness and spreading the message and vision of the Special Olympics movement. He lends his service to others with great joy and dedication. He is a parishioner and active knight who has overcome immense challenges, inspiring others with disabilities to see beyond their limitations.

“The greatest test for any society is the way it treats its weakest and most vulnerable members. Heroes stand in the gap, serving those without a voice, the marginalize and forgotten.” – Carl Anderson

**Catch a glimpse:** [https://vimeo.com/331034534/cfbc1be0b7](https://vimeo.com/331034534/cfbc1be0b7)

See online newsroom at: [KofC.org/heroesfilm](https://KofC.org/heroesfilm)
#8 – Blessed are the persecuted

Name: Parishioners of Holy Redeemer Church
Location: Ottawa, Ont.

“Despite all they’ve gone through, they’re filled with hope.”
Parishioner, Holy Redeemer Church, Ottawa

The Al Dakhils come from the ancient city of Daraa, some 60 miles south of the Syrian capital of Damascus. There, they led peaceful lives. In the spring of 2011, the outbreak of civil war forced them to flee their homeland after fights between terrorists and the military left 40 bullet holes in their car. They believe they were targeted because of their religion.

Parishioners of Holy Redeemer parish in Kanata, Ottawa, sponsored the family as refugees after they fled to Lebanon. The parishioners, along with their local Knights of Columbus council, raised funds to support the immigration process and helped this refugee family in the face of adversity. They also sponsored the brother of the Al Dakhils and gave them a similar support system and sense of family. They helped them apply for jobs, enrolled the children in school and put the adults in English classes. With newfound hope and support from the community, the Al Dakhils have been able to adjust, adapt and become more acclimatized to their new environment and culture in Canada.

“As soon as we landed, you could feel the welcoming air,” Yasar Al Dakhil.

Catch a glimpse:  https://vimeo.com/331034649/b5e1fd1c57

See online newsroom at: KofC.org/heroesfilm
Name: Mike Sweeney
Location: Orange, Calif.

“The thing I’m most proud of: I honored God with my career.” – Mike Sweeney

Born more than two months premature, Mike’s parents were told he had a 50 per cent chance at survival. His dad put a baseball bat inside his incubator and prayed for a miracle. The next morning they received the good news – Mike would be okay.

A five-time American League All-Star first baseman and captain of the Kansas City Royals, Mike was voted the "Good Guy in Sports" by The Sporting News in both 2003 and 2004. Throughout his 16-year career, Sweeney tenaciously maintained his integrity, values and a devotion to his faith.

Love has been at the center of his career: love of God, family and all those around him. And the results have far exceeded any of the stats he could earn on the field.

“Christ has appointed me to be the priest of my domestic church, which is my wife and children.”

A committed man of faith and Knight of Columbus, Mike shares his powerful testimony of faith, character and the true meaning of fatherhood with others, making him a role model for his family and kids.

Catch a glimpse: https://vimeo.com/331136698/7976536d35

See online newsroom at: KofC.org/heroesfilm
#10 – The heart of a champion

**Name:** Darrell Miller, Sr.

**Location:** Washington, D.C.

“We have to use sports to help develop our young people; to be major league contributors in society.” – Darrell Miller Sr.

A former professional baseball player, Darrell hails from one of the most famous sports families in the country. His sister, Cheryl, is widely regarded as the greatest women’s basketball player of all time and his brother, Reggie, is an NBA Hall of Famer.

Today, Darrell serves as the director of Major League Baseball’s first Urban Youth Academy, which opened Feb. 28, 2006 on the campus of Compton (Calif.) Community College. The facility provides free instruction in both baseball and softball to Southern California youth between the ages of 8-17 and features a 10-acre complex operated year-round by Miller. The academy’s mission is to break down barriers facing youth interested in baseball and sports-related professions and providing them, at no cost, with support and expert instruction in their areas of interest.

Darrell’s vibrant role in his parish gives him the spiritual strength and guiding principles needed to encourage young men and women to become better athletes and leaders.

His story, and that of his son, remind us the value of keeping God at the center of our lives.

**Catch a glimpse:** [https://vimeo.com/331136743/00c70ae545](https://vimeo.com/331136743/00c70ae545)

See online newsroom at: [KofC.org/heroesfilm](http://KofC.org/heroesfilm)
#11 – From Soccer to Priesthood

Name: Fr. Chase Michael Hilgenbrinck

Location: Quincy, Illinois

“My whole world was built around soccer. I went to Chile to feel great; but I was in despair. It was then I heard loudest voice that I had ever heard – the one that’s never audibly spoken.”

Chase was a soccer star. He seemed to have it all – the talent, popularity and momentum to take him up the ladder of professional sports. Still ascending in his career, a Chilean soccer coach suggested Chase travel to play in Chile. After four seasons in the South American country, Chase was a well-known star player.

At the height of his career, Chase faced the reality that worldly glory left him empty inside and yearning for more. In front of the Blessed Sacrament, one day, he heard his calling, “be my priest”.

And so, in 2018, Chase entered the seminary (in Emmitsburg, Maryland) to become a priest. He dedicated his life to service.

Through his ministry, Father Chase now gives audiences spiritual direction and encouragement to discover God’s purpose for their lives. His goal is to see people reach heights of personal greatness through a deeper connection with God and their community.

Catch a glimpse: https://vimeo.com/331136726/6aa3862017

See online newsroom at: KofC.org/heroesfilm