



SECRETARIAT OF STATE

No. 497.002

From the Vatican, 14 July 2020

Dear Mr. Anderson,

His Holiness Pope Francis was pleased to be informed that the 138th Supreme Convention of the Knights of Columbus will be held this year both in person and virtually on 4-5 August next. He has asked me to convey his warm greetings to all taking part, together with the assurance of his closeness in prayer.

The theme of the Convention – *Knights of Columbus: Knights of Fraternity* – is a timely reminder of the vision that guided the foundation of your Order. At this time, when the world faces the challenge of the Covid-19 pandemic and its far-reaching effects on people's economic and social lives, the Church as a whole feels the urgent need "to reawaken and put into practice that solidarity and hope capable of giving strength, support and meaning" to our brothers and sisters (*Extraordinary Moment of Prayer*, Saint Peter's Square, 27 March 2020). The principle of fraternity has always inspired in the Knights that "creativity of charity" inculcated by the Gospel. In these days, your Order has provided charitable support on the local, national and international level to individuals and communities suffering because of the pandemic or otherwise often forgotten or marginalized. His Holiness is grateful for these and for the many other countless ways in which the Knights of Columbus continue to bear prophetic witness to God's dream for a more fraternal, just and equitable world in which all are recognized as neighbors and no one is left behind.

This spirit of Christian solidarity marked in a special way the life and activity of your Founder, the Venerable Michael McGivney. His Holiness joins you in giving thanks for Father McGivney's forthcoming beatification and trusts that this celebration will be a stimulus for Knights to deepen their commitment to live as missionary disciples in charity, unity and fraternity. He is confident that Father McGivney's heroic virtues and example of faith will inspire you to seek each day in prayer the wisdom and strength to practice "a fraternal love capable of seeing the sacred grandeur of our neighbor, of finding God in every human being" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 92). As a parish priest, your Founder knew well and wished to impress on his flock the urgency of the Gospel mandate, "Whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me" (*Mt 25:40*).

Since its earliest days, care for the family has been a priority for the Knights of Columbus. Indeed, your Order was established in the late nineteenth century as a direct result of Father McGivney's concern to promote the material and spiritual welfare of working men and their families. Today your strong and courageous defense of the inviolable dignity of human life from its conception, and your commitment to strengthen family life thanks to such initiatives as the *Into the Breach* video series and the *Leave No Neighbor Behind* program, offer the Knights and their families "a true path to daily sanctification" (*Amoris Laetitia*, 316) and Christian witness. Through the building up of family life, individuals and societies grow in solidarity, mutual respect, truth, mercy and love. At a time of social unrest, these virtues are all the more necessary in the promotion of peace, reconciliation and justice, a mission which the Knights of Columbus are pledged to advance by serving as a leaven of the Gospel both within their local communities and the wider society.

On this occasion, His Holiness renews his profound gratitude for your Order's historic contribution to the Church's mission of evangelization and its unswerving solidarity with the Successor of Peter in his concern for all the

Churches (2 Cor 11:28). In a particular way, he offers heartfelt thanks to the Knights for their steadfast support of our Christian brothers and sisters persecuted for the sake of the Gospel.

With these sentiments, His Holiness commends your deliberations to the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church. Assuring all the Knights and their families of a constant remembrance in his prayers, he cordially imparts his Apostolic Blessing as a pledge of joy and peace in the Lord.

Please accept my own prayerful good wishes for this occasion.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Pietro Card. Parolin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "P" and a long, sweeping underline.

✠ Cardinal Pietro Parolin
Secretary of State

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