



Knights of Columbus

The Knights of Columbus trace their origin to an Irish-American priest now being proposed for sainthood, Father Michael J. McGivney, in New Haven, Connecticut, well over a century ago. In a mere fifteen years their ranks expanded across the border to Canada and not long thereafter to Mexico. In the last quarter-century or so the Knights have put down roots in the Philippines, Chile, Poland, and Ukraine. This increasing international growth was a prominent theme at the 134th Supreme Convention this August in Toronto.

Local, not international, reasons prompted my attendance, however. First, I wanted to express appreciation for the innumerable good works Knights faithfully do *here*, in our parishes, month after month, year in and year out. Secondly, I wanted to express my gratitude as bishop to the Knights of Columbus as an organization for their memorable generosity to the Diocese of Baker this past year. Their goodness to us is something you need to know about, so let me give a word of explanation.

Not quite a decade ago, as the Great Recession took hold and the nation's financial underpinnings seemed about to collapse, the Diocese of Baker found itself in need of major funding for several costly construction projects: the Retreat Center in Powell Butte and newly built churches in Hermiston, Redmond, and Bend. Given the nervousness of bankers then, the search for a loan took place under exceedingly unfavorable conditions. The terms

of the loan that was ultimately obtained severely limited diocesan flexibility for pastoral initiatives and financial support to parishes, but no better options were available.

Last year, mindful that the loan was scheduled for renegotiation by October 2016, we (that is, the Diocesan Finance Council) approached several lenders in search of better terms. A number of options presented themselves. Just as we were about to select one of them, we learned that the Knights of Columbus, with considerable reserves from a century's sales of insurance policies, had devised a loan program for dioceses like ours. We worked through the application process and came to agreement. Around the first of this year the Knights of Columbus assumed our loan under terms that considerably lighten the formerly restrictive burdens of indebtedness. We still have to pay it off, of course; but our new creditors have made it much easier for us to do so. In effect, the Knights have restored to us the freedom to set our own course financially.

In Toronto Supreme Knight Carl Anderson reported on the Knights' Coats for Kids program (80,000 new winter coats distributed last year); on their involvement with the Global Wheelchair Mission (over 57,000 people made mobile thus far); and on their support for the Special Olympics (\$14,000,000 in 2015). These are but a few of the notable national and international initiatives by which the Knights of Columbus extend a hand of friendship to those in need. This year that hand reached out to each and every one of us in the Diocese of Baker and lifted us up financially. Remember that the next time the Knights ask for help in your parish. May the Lord bless them who have blessed us so well.