



KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS

Dear Brother Knight:

This week, more than 2,000 Knights and their families gathered in St. Louis for the 135th Supreme Convention, which was a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the achievements of the last fraternal year, and to chart the course for an even brighter future for the Knights of Columbus.

A [Papal Message](#) to the convention conveyed the prayers and good wishes of Pope Francis who praised the Order's efforts to strengthen family life and provide relief to persecuted Christians in the Middle East. Just days before the convention, the Board of Directors authorized a \$2 million effort to [save Karamdes](#), a predominantly Christian town in the Nineveh Plain region of Iraq, which was liberated from ISIS late last year.

During my annual report, I announced the "Knights of Columbus Campaign to Save 1 Million Children." Through our [Ultrasound Initiative](#), we have already provided 829 ultrasound machines and this new campaign aims to reach the goal of 1,000 machines as quickly as possible, so that by 2019 — the 10th anniversary of the initiative — we will have saved an estimated total of 1 million lives.

The Order reached new heights in its charitable works, donating more than \$177 million and 75 million hours to charitable causes. Our industry-leading program of insurance "by brother Knights, for brother Knights" continues to provide the finest protection to our families, issuing a new record of more than \$8.54 billion of new life insurance last year. We also celebrated the achievements of our fraternal leaders and insurance field force, and presented the Order's highest honor, the Gaudium et Spes Award, to a courageous Maryknoll priest, [Father Gerard Hammond](#), who has travelled to North Korea more than 50 times to provide humanitarian aid.

The convention was also the occasion for a historic announcement: the introduction of the new uniform of the Fourth Degree. After careful consideration, the Board of Directors took this action motivated by the best interests of the Order as whole and of the Fourth Degree in particular. The new uniform is part of a comprehensive and necessary effort to keep our Order relevant and attractive to men, particularly younger men.

In light of this significant change, I thought it would be helpful to address some of the questions that have been asked about the new uniform.



1. The cape and chapeau, while popular among some Fourth Degree members, have become dated and are increasingly cited as a reason that eligible Catholic men, especially young men, do not join the Knights of Columbus.
2. Today there are nearly 2 million members of the Order, but only 358,000 of them are Fourth Degree Knights — less than 20 percent. The old regalia was one reason often given by brother Knights for why they did not want to advance to the Fourth Degree.

3. We understand that some Fourth Degree members are fond of the old regalia. The cape and chapeau regalia will still be allowed, for a time, in those assemblies and districts that wish to use it, though the preference is for the new uniform.
4. Ceremonial swords will continue to be part of the Fourth Degree.
5. The new uniform is designed to be much more versatile than the older regalia and can be worn at a much wider range of functions.
6. Our choice of uniform, while important, has always been ancillary to the work we do carrying out the principles of charity, unity, fraternity and patriotism, and this should always be the case.

We have been testing the new uniform over the past year with key groups of Knights, including those brother Knights who participate in our annual Warriors to Lourdes Pilgrimage. The feedback we received from these groups has been very positive.

During the convention, the Good of the Order Committee spoke in words I wish to make my own:

“We commend all of the faithful Sir Knights who have proudly worn the Fourth Degree regalia, bringing much respect to the Order. With the new Fourth Degree uniform, recently approved by the Board of Directors, this honor and respect associated with Sir Knights will remain, and it will open the door more widely for a new generation to join their ranks. In a spirit of unity, let us assist with a smooth transition to this new uniform and encourage it to be worn with great dignity and pride.”

Fraternally,

Carl A. Anderson
Supreme Knight



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