

The Founding of the Knights of Columbus

In the late 19th century Connecticut was marked by the growing fraternal benefit societies, anti-Catholic prejudice and dangerous factory working conditions that left many families fatherless. Recognizing a need in his community, Father Michael J. McGivney, the 29-year-old assistant pastor of St. Mary's Church in New Haven, Conn., gathered a group of men at his parish on Oct. 2, 1881. He proposed establishing a lay organization to prevent Catholic men from entering secret societies antithetical to Church teaching, uniting Catholic men and helping families of deceased members.

To demonstrate their loyalty to their country as well as their faith, these men took Christopher Columbus — recognized as a Catholic and celebrated as the discoverer of America — as their patron. The Knights of Columbus elected officers in February 1882 and assumed corporate status on March 29. Catholic men were drawn to the Knights because of its emphasis on serving one's Church, community and family with virtue. Fraternity and patriotism were added to the Knights' founding principles of charity and unity in 1885 and 1900, respectively.

The Birth of St Mary's Knights of Columbus

In 1979, Father Bayer, a recently retired Polish Priest, moved to Korona and assisted Father Julien at St. Mary. His hard work helped make St Mary a self sustaining parish. In 1997, through the efforts of Henry Kisselring, Council 11961 was presented with its Charter. Henry Kesselring became our first Grand Knight and Father Bayer became our first Chaplain. By 1998, the council grew to 60 members.

Today's St Mary's Knight of Columbus

Although we are a small council with 72 members, we have been able to follow Father McGivney's principles of charity, unity, and fraternity. Our council annually supports two seminarians, awards college scholarships to qualified students, and donates to Whispering Meadows Ranch, an organization that provides assistance to challenged children. We arrange blood drives through the "Big Red Bus" and hold Fish Frys during Lent. We have held monthly Movie Nights, all with a religious theme. The Knights have sponsored, "THE HOLY SHROUD: NEW EVIDENCE OF AUTHENTICITY," presentation for our parish. When asked to provide a lawn mower, we secured a "ride-on" professional mower to cut the parish lawns which is in use today. We donated two defibrillators installed in the Church and Parish Hall. We spent many, many days and man hours clearing out overgrown weeds, shrubs, and trees and cleaning headstones at St. Mary's Cemetery. Our "Hot Smoken Knights" continues to have events "in the fire. That is not the end.. we strive to do more and will when more Catholic men join our ranks.

Tomorrow's St Mary's Knights of Columbus

Our Council has been blessed with a number of new enthusiastic Brothers. With their help, dedication, spirit and ingenuity, this council will flourish. We look forward to more Catholic men joining our ranks, and helping us support our Parishioners and worthy charities. Today we are actively working to upgrade St. Joseph Carmelite Monastery pavilion, our council's new home.