

New Jersey State Council
Knights of Columbus
172 Main Street
West Orange, N. J. 07052
Jim Stoever, State Deputy



May 15, 2021

My Brother Knights,

This past Fraternal Year has been one of many challenges, none greater than the one we are continuing to face due to Covid-19. No one had hoped more than I had that we would today be meeting in Wildwood where we would recognize those who've made significant contributions to enhancing our reputation through programs and events, conduct our business, see old friends and make new ones. Instead, we are forced for the second year in a row to meet in a virtual world devoid of personal contact. All of us have been challenged in one way or another, and, although it was one spent by many in almost absolute seclusion, I am very impressed by what I have seen over this past year. You, brother knights, have never slowed down or given up but instead have shown our brothers, along with our families, friends, neighbors and parishes, just what the Knights do. It is not an exaggeration to say that our church and the world needs us now more than ever.

In spite of the inability to meet together physically to plan and hold events and activities, we have had 1,028 men join our ranks. This should be viewed positively as it means that men are still looking for what we offer them – the ability to grow spiritually in their faith and to be a positive Catholic force in an increasingly secular world. Another point to reinforce those thoughts is that we have had 263 members join our Order through the online process, they came to us!. As great as these numbers are, unfortunately, we have also lost 996 members this year. I am more than a bit concerned by the fact that to date 182 councils have not recruited a single member this year. I am hoping that is due to the challenges being presented by the social distancing measures enacted to prevent the spread of the virus. It is my hope that as these social restrictions are eased we will be able to right the ship and resume recruiting others so as to allow them to become better men, husbands and fathers.

Recalling that the first principle of the Order is charity here is a short list of some of the ways we held true to it thanks to our council leaders and their members who found amazing ways to overcome the obstacles placed in their paths:

- Our annual Fraternal Giving campaign was a great success enabling us to make donations in excess of \$65,000.00 since July 1, 2020.
- We awarded over \$9,000.00 through the Bishop Dougherty Scholarship program.
- We awarded \$4,000.00 through the John Attardo Scholarship program.
- Our Fraternal Assistance program allowed us to give financial aid to our brothers in need by donating \$10,000.00 to them and their families.
- Over \$9,000.00 was raised for Alzheimer's respite care to provide relief to families who are

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dealing with the difficulties and stress brought about by caring for a loved one afflicted with this disease.

- Following the recent disaster in Texas which left thousands without electrical power during a rare cold snap, our brothers in the Diocese of Camden donated \$9,600.00 to the Texas State Council which was used to provide assistance to those affected.
- We provided wheelchairs to several who, without our help would be immobilized and unable to participate in society.

None of these and the many other things accomplished this past year could not have been possible without the steadfast leadership of the Membership and Programs team put in place by our late State Deputy. I offer them, our District Deputies and all the many staff members who work tirelessly week after week to push the bar higher and make our reputation greater my most sincere thanks and deepest gratitude.

As we proudly proclaimed in several of the advertisements we placed this past year in our diocesan newspapers, "even a pandemic can't keep us down!". I see a bright future for us in the coming months as we return to our programs and activities. Borrowing from the old Exemplification of Unity I say that by locking arms and working together there is nothing we cannot, nay will not accomplish. Mary and her Knights, a team beyond compare.

As I said in my opening remarks, Covid-19 has left a searing imprint upon all of us. In it's merciless and indiscriminate grasp it has taken many of our family, friends, neighbors and brother Knights, most notably our State Deputy, Vincent Tavormina, from us. I ask you to pray daily for the repose of the souls of all those lost to this insidious disease.

In closing, I will say that it has been a bittersweet honor to be entrusted with the responsibility of acting as New Jersey State Deputy to complete the term of Vincent Tavormina. At the outset I made it very clear that he and his hopes for this year would guide me to its conclusion. I hope that I have done both him and you proud in my decisions and actions thus far. Your support has made the task bearable. Thank you for all that you've done, our Order is stronger and better because of each of you.

God bless you all.

Vivat Jesus!

Jim Stoeber, State Deputy

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