

REFLECTIONS ON THE KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS SPIRITUAL RETREAT

My Brother Knights:

During the weekend of October 21-23 I was blessed to attend the 2011 Knights of Columbus Spiritual Retreat held in Sedalia at the Sacred Heart Jesuit Retreat House. This retreat weekend was intended for the Knights of Colorado for a time of prayer and as a reflection on the 4 principles of the order: Charity, Unity, Fraternity, and Patriotism. I wanted to share with you some of the messages and images that struck me, particularly the first day of the retreat. I pray you find these words both inspirational and eye opening. My hope after you read this is that you get a new perspective on our role as Knights of Columbus and plant a seed in your heart to consider making next year's retreat. Our retreat director was Father Ed Kinerk and he joined our order within the last year. I will share his points and comment on how his messages impacted me personally. The first thing that struck me as I entered the center for the first time was the quiet. In our world today of radio, television, iPods, and the noise of everyday life we don't experience quiet very often for long periods of time. It was refreshing and restful to my spirit. As the retreat began, we spent two sessions on the first Principle of our Order, Charity. As Knights we perform many acts of charity and our programs promote this as well. We were asked to think of charity as more than the giving of money or performing an act that promotes charity. We were asked to equate charity to love. For when we give of ourselves totally and unconditionally for the sake of another, that is true Charity that is true love. The image Fr. Ed made for the order of the Knights of Columbus is that we are indeed Knights to Christ (and the meditation book was used throughout the weekend). He created the image of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table. We as Knights are an extension of the king, Christ the King who is the King of kings. We share in our King's mission and we are an extension of the King's mission and vision where ever we go. The King thinks of us as his friends. He shared this passage from John's gospel:

*You are my **friends**, if you do what I command you. I shall no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. I call you **friends**, because I have made known to you everything I have learnt from my Father. My command to you is to **love** one another. (John 15:14-15, 17)*

Doesn't that make you rethink your membership in the Knights of Columbus? We are Knights that are called to Christ's mission to love. We are an extension of Christ the King and we are called, as Knights, to spread that mission and to represent our King in the world. And it is through our many acts of charity that we spread His love. For me it changes how I perform my acts of charity. It calls me to participate more fully, to participate with love in my heart for those I serve. As brother Knights, when we come together we are more than we are individually. As we give up a part of ourselves in a common cause we become stronger and more effective than we can individually. The example that Fr. Ed used was Hydrogen and Oxygen. Individually they are gases but when 2Hydrogen molecules join with Oxygen molecule it creates water. They give of themselves to form a new powerful element, water.

The Gospel of John offers another insight into our mission as Knights to Christ the King: *Father, **may they be one in us**, as you are in me and I am in you, so that the world may believe it was you who sent me. I have given them the glory you gave to me, that they may be one as we are one. With me in them and you in me, may they be so completely one that the world will realize that it was you who sent me and that I have loved them as much as you loved me. (John 17:21-26)*- Kind of paints a mission statement for our Order, doesn't it? That is part of our Principle of Unity. Through our actions as a Brotherhood of men serving Christ, our church, and our community; we show the world Christ's love for them. Brothers, we are called to action. We are called to fulfill the mission of Christ as his Knights. This is why active participation in our council's activities, events, and meetings is so important. Our presence together and the work we do changes hearts to Christ...don't you want to be a part of that? Here's a quote from Knights to Christ, page 70:

Albert Schweitzer became a doctor and missionary to Africa. He once said, "It's not enough to say, "I'm a good father. I'm a good husband."...You must do something...for those who have need of help,

something for which you get no pay but the privilege of doing it. For remember, you don't live in a world all your own. Your brothers and sisters are here too".

We don't have to go to Africa to serve others. We serve so many of our brothers and sisters right here in our community. Our presence with a smile, a warm hello, and a listening ear can touch hearts in the deepest way. Not only for those we have we come in contact with but between us as Brother Knights. In order for us to accomplish the mission we have to sacrifice part of ourselves for the benefit of others through our love. The following is another passage from Knights to Christ (page 297) and Father Michael reinforced this in his homily this past Sunday, October 23rd:

Gale Sayers, who played for the Chicago Bears, was one of the greatest running backs of all time. Around his neck he wore a gold medal. On it were inscribed three words: "I am Third". Those words became the title of his best-selling autobiography. The book explains the meaning behind the words: "The LORD is first; my friends are second; and I am third". Sayers is the first to admit that he does not always live up to the motto, but wearing it around his neck keeps him from straying too far from it.

Based off of the greatest Commandment, God is first; our neighbor second; then I am third. This is terrific guidance for living our lives as Knights. Following these priorities Christ **will** work through us to fulfill his mission and make a difference in our world.

Brothers, I hope these reflections have moved you to rethink what our mission is as members of the Knights of Columbus. It is through our loving participation in serving others that we spread the good news of Christ. Look for those opportunities within our council, serving in our church, and in those you encounter each and every day. We can make a difference as Knights of Columbus in service of Christ the King!

I hope this puts a seed in your heart to consider making next year's retreat. It is a very easy retreat to make, very low key with ample time for you to reflect, read, pray, and relax. It will be the same weekend in October 2012. I believe you will be blessed by participating in it and your spirit will be renewed.

I would like to leave you with this prayer:

Christ, my Lord and King, thank you for your many blessings and for counting me as a trusted friend and Knight. Strengthen me Lord and fill me with your grace so that I can go and serve you in the world. Send your Holy Spirit to guide me so that I can be an instrument of your love to all those I encounter. Make me worthy to serve you in my Knighthood and to perform my duties with a charitable heart.

Vivat Jesus!

Jesse H. Taitano

May the favor of the Lord our God be ours.

Prosper the work of our hands!

Prosper the work of our hands! (Psalm 90:17)