

**Knights of Columbus Alberta-Northwest Territories  
Formation Program-January 2021**

**You shall love your neighbor as yourself, (Mt. 22, 39) I offer you and your families God's most beautiful blessings this coming year of 2021, my dear worthy Brothers in the Lord.**

***Opening Prayer***

Lord, teach us to pray:  
"Our Father..."

***The Reading***

*(To be read by the Leader)*

Despite the circumstances we find ourselves in nearly a year later, I believe we have much to be grateful for, and much to look forward to as we begin this New Year. Brothers, challenging as 2020 has been, I encourage you to look back at what you have accomplished, as individuals, as families and Councils. I am sure none of us would ever have envisioned the year we have just completed. This past year has been one of thinking outside the box for sure. Because our circumstances have been so unique, we have found unique ways of accomplishing many of the things we have taken for granted in the past. We have been blessed to use more of our brain power and more of our God-given imagination to overcome challenges. The Alberta-Northwest Territories have accomplished unprecedented milestones Order wide. Brothers, we are on track to do great things again this Columbian year despite covid-19.

I would say that there is a general gratitude for being able to celebrate the Holy Mass publicly. Many of us would never have imagined not being able to receive Holy Communion or going to Mass when and where we wanted. But indeed, for almost three months this was exactly the case. No Mass, no Eucharist. I know there are many of you who are profoundly grateful for once again being able to receive the gift of the Eucharist. Challenging as the protocols are for appropriate reception of the Eucharist. Two things that stand out for me that I give thanks to God for:

1. The people of God, young and old alike who are presently attending Mass have made a discerned, intentional decision that the Church is where they wish to be. This does not diminish those who are not yet ready to return. It does however magnify the thought and prayer that has been part of the process for those who have returned to the physical Church.

2. Because of the protocols in place for reception of Holy Communion, there is truly a great degree of reverence expressed by the faithful as they come forward to receive the Eucharist. The Eucharist is God's most efficacious and profound gift to us His children, as we continue our pilgrim journey to the Promised Land, (Heaven). The beautiful reverent reception of this gift from the Lord, by the faithful, is very inspiring to me on my own faith journey.

***The Reflection***

*(To be read by the Leader)*

Brothers, I know that at the Council level we are feeling a bit stymied. Zoom Council meetings, and the very basic business of the order has been compromised to a large degree. This does not make us any less fraternal Brothers. Please encourage your Council to continue its phone program to our many Brothers who we do not see at meetings and who perhaps are weathering this journey with far more difficulty, because of age or pre-existing health conditions. Promote the "Leave No Neighbor Behind" campaign in your parish and in your Council. Our Brothers and our seniors need to know that we care. Perhaps it is you who must kick-start this initiative. So be it, let it be you Brother.

My final item of gratitude, as we begin 2021, is the **gift of faith**; faith that our Lord has blessed us with. Faith, that allows us to believe that which we cannot fully understand, that which we cannot see. Faith even when things were at their darkest, allows us to know that we will get through this. Faith, God's gift to us, His children, the necessary help we all need on our pilgrimage here in our local parishes, our local Councils, and our communities, on our journey to the Promised Land. As we begin this New Year, we give thanks for many blessings, in a special way for our families and extended families. Thank you dear Jesus, for so much, thank you for our faith. Thank you, dear Lord, for allowing us to see that we have so much to be grateful for, today and always. My dear Brothers, may our loving God bless you, your families, and your Councils with a happy, healthy, and holy New Year of our Lord, 2021.

**You shall love your neighbor as yourself, (Mt. 22, 39)**

***Meditation Period***

*(The Leader now invites the members to spend a few moments in silent reflection, as the above text is not meant to be a ready-made answer but a starter for personal reflection on the theme.)*

***Fraternal Sharing***

*(The leader now invites the members to share with their Brother Knights any relevant thoughts that came to them during the meditation period.)*

***Closing Prayer***

*(Recited by all)*

Let us pray:

"Almighty ever-living God, grant that we may always conform our will to yours and serve your majesty in sincerity of heart. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

**Knights of Columbus Alberta-Northwest Territories  
Formation Program-March-2021  
Hope does not disappoint us. (Rom 5, 5)**

***Opening Prayer***

Lord, teach us to pray:  
“Our Father...”

***The Reading***

*(To be read by the Leader)*

My dear Worthy Brothers in the Lord. I first wish to apologize for not getting a February Formation program out to you. It is a long story, and I am full of good excuses, none of which negate my monthly obligation to my Brothers. I want to speak about a timely topic, Vaccinations. I have heard from a number of Brothers, and some of the faithful in general, that they are concerned about receiving the vaccination for Covid-19. This, for a number of reasons but the area I will focus on will be the moral issue. The reality that some vaccines have been derived from what we know to be the tissue of aborted fetuses. My support material for this writing comes from the Catholic Bishops of Alberta whom I can assure you have done their homework regarding this issue.

So, the Question. Is it okay for a Catholic to be vaccinated against Covid-19? The short answer is “yes, it is.” We know that the death toll is over a million people world-wide. Millions more have been affected in a negative way whether it be spiritually, emotionally, physically, or economically. The moral issue at question with the Covid-19 vaccine stems from the fact that vaccine development and testing often “make use of cell lines derived from either the tissue of aborted fetuses, or destroyed human embryos.” This brings into focus the Churches absolute affirmative stand on the sanctity of life from conception until natural death. To summarize, the dilemma; on the one hand we know that vaccinations have and do save lives. On the other hand, arises the question; does receiving the vaccine make us complicit in the moral evil of abortion?

The reality of our society and medical research is that cell lines stemming from abortion are very widely used in the biopharmaceutical industry. The grim truth is that a vaccine that will be effective against the novel corona virus may not be available from other than vaccines derived from aborted fetal tissue. So, then the question; Is it morally permissible to receive a vaccine that has been produced unethically when an ethical alternative is not readily accessible?

The Church teaches that there are various degrees of cooperation in the evil that constitutes abortion. 1. The most serious affront of course is the actual abortion itself. 2. This is followed by the derivation of cell lines for research purposes. 3. The process of vaccine development using these cell lines. 4. The production of the vaccine and sale of the vaccine. 5. Finally, the use of the vaccine. My point in numbering these steps is to illustrate how far-removed reception of the vaccine is from the actual grave sin of the abortion. “With respect to someone simply receiving the vaccine, the degree of

connection with the original evil act is so remote that, when there also exists a proportionately grave reason for vaccination, such as the current urgent need to halt the covid-19 pandemic, then the Church assures us that it is morally permissible for Catholics to receive it for the good of personal and public health.” The Bishops remind us clearly that the advice to be vaccinated does not diminish the seriousness of the evil that is the source of cell lines that are used to develop some vaccines. Evil is evil for sure. By the grace of God in this situation, we find ourselves many degrees removed from the source of this evil, that being the sin of abortion itself.

***The Reflection***

*(To be read by the Leader)*

Brothers, we are all blessed with good minds, and the ability to become informed about different facets of life in general. We are all obligated to come to an informed conscience by the best means possible. Particularly when it comes to matters of faith. It is my considered opinion, that when it comes to matters of the Church, of morality, of good and evil, there is no more orthodox and accurate source of information than our Catholic Bishops. These shepherds have done their homework on this subject. There is so much at stake here when they speak with a united voice, you can be sure you are not receiving an opinion, but a pure well researched orthodox Catholic teaching. On November 23, the U.S. Bishops doctrine and pro-life committee issued the following statement. “Some are asserting that if a vaccine is connected in any way with tainted cell lines that it is immoral to be vaccinated with them. This is an inaccurate portrayal of Catholic moral teaching.” It is possible you may not agree with this permission and advice, but it will need to be for reasons other than moral concerns. The Holy Father has said get vaccinated. Brothers, for me, I do not think that I am more intelligent than the great and holy minds that are responsible for shepherding our Church in this modern-day world. We do have to trust in something. I place my trust in my God and my Church.

**Hope does not disappoint us. (Rom 5, 5)**

***Meditation Period***

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***Fraternal Sharing***

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***Closing Prayer***

*(Recited by all)*

Let us pray:

“Almighty ever-living God, grant that we may always conform our will to yours and serve your majesty in sincerity of heart. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen

**Knights of Columbus Alberta-Northwest Territories  
Formation Program-April-2021  
Hope does not disappoint us. (Rom 5, 5)**

***Opening Prayer***

Lord, teach us to pray:  
“Our Father...”

***The Reading***

*(To be read by the Leader)*

My Brothers, by the time you read this, I pray that many of you have already been vaccinated. You are men of faith, but you need to remain healthy in order to continue to be the Catholic witnesses that God has called to be those men they call Knights. Last month we spoke about the fact that it is morally justifiable to be vaccinated against the Covid-19 virus. We came to understand that it is “morally permissible given the remoteness of the recipient from the original act of abortion, the scarcity of ethical alternatives, and the grave threat that Covid-19 poses to public health.” The Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales stated: Each of us has a duty to protect others from infection with its danger of serious illness, and for some, death. A vaccine is the most effective way to achieve this, unless one decides to self-isolate.” Further they noted: “Catholics may in good conscience, refuse a particular vaccine but continue to have a duty to protect others from infection.”

For the purpose of information, the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines are both Messenger RNA vaccines in which molecules are chemically synthesized. The Oxford and AstraZeneca vaccines are sourced from cell lines that were originally abortion-derived. This according to the Lozier Institute, a pro-life institute based in the U.S., which have studied a number of vaccines under development. Dr. Moira McQueen, the executive director of the Canadian Catholic Bioethics Institute has been a key advisor to the Catholic Bishops, regarding the morality of the vaccine. Dr. McQueen states the following: “The official teaching is saying then, if ethical (synthetic) vaccines are not truly available, then take this vaccine...The level of moral cooperation by people in 2020 is what the Church would call remote. Here we are talking about a pandemic. The idea is because of two factors, lack of personal responsibility for an original action, yet facing serious illness and needing to protect yourselves and your children. They will not say the action is right in the fullest sense, but they do say it is justified. If an ethical vaccine comes along, you have to choose to use that one.”

Catholic teaching on the “common good” needs also be a factor in our thought and conscience process when making vaccination decisions. It may seem to be acceptable to refuse a vaccination, providing that the individual plans to stay at home

and continuously self-isolate. Certainly, this would not seem a very viable alternative. Alternately it would seem unreasonable to not vaccinate and go out into society when one does not know if they are a carrier or not. “There is very much the reality of an individual conscience decision, which should always be respected. But that person always has to be thinking about her or his responsibility to everybody else.” Hence the importance of the common good principal. When I consider the average age of my Brother Knights, and the potential severity of the outcomes, should they become ill with the Covid-19 virus; I would not wish to be sitting at a meeting with them not knowing if I was a potential source of life and death infection for them.

***The Reflection***

*(To be read by the Leader)*

Brothers, for two months we have spoken about the pros and cons of vaccines, of being vaccinated or not. There is one other inoculation we will not have to pre-book or stand in line for. That is the prayer vaccine our Lord provides all of us with. Praying for an end to the pandemic, praying for our family members during these difficult times many not prevent the spread of the virus in a practical way. Prayer will give us the graces we need to sanitize regularly, to social distance at all times and to wear a mask when and where appropriate. We are all tired of this Covid journey, but our faith is what gives us hope, and **hope does not disappoint us**. Let us as Brother Knights, pray ourselves to clarity of conscience, understanding and acceptance. Let us pray ourselves to the light that is shining at the end of this long tunnel. That light of course is our Lord Jesus, who is “**the way the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father accept through Him, (Jn. 14, 6)**”

**Hope does not disappoint us. (Rom 5, 5)**

***Meditation Period***

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***Fraternal Sharing***

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***Closing Prayer***

*(Recited by all)*

Let us pray:

“Almighty ever-living God, grant that we may always conform our will to yours and serve your majesty in sincerity of heart. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

**Knights of Columbus Alberta-Northwest Territories  
Formation Program-September-2021  
“God’s grace is sufficient for us” (2 Cor 12, 8). Masks are Back.**

***Opening Prayer***

Lord, teach us to pray:  
“Our Father...”

***The Reading***

*(To be read by the Leader)*

My dear Brothers in the Lord, as I write this, (Friday Sept 03, 2021), masks are now again mandatory inside public buildings within the city of Edmonton. I am sure that you are aware, the County of Strathcona has followed suit, allowing us until September 10, to don our masks at all indoor public buildings. The exception in both situations, is when one is eating or drinking. Though other jurisdictions have not followed this lead yet, I feel safe writing in specifics because I am sure we will all be masked up sooner or later.

Brothers, I expect that it is not so much the challenge of wearing a mask that causes us the unsettledness that many are likely feeling. We, for the most part, have become semi-comfortable with carrying a mask, asking if masks are required, and of course wearing one in public situations. I can tell you in all honesty that your “rednecked, bull collared” State Chaplain, at one time, was of the mind that I would never buy into wearing masks as a common part of my daily life. Well apparently, all things are indeed possible with God. Yes, that is an understatement. Of course, all things are possible with God, including the overcoming of foolish (I think I know better) pride. Most of us have come to know and understand that masks are an effective mode of minimizing the spread of the airborne respiratory virus that we refer to as Covid. Over the course of many months, we have come to a degree of comfort with the concept of a mask as a necessary part of our daily lives. For me, this once again amplifies just how resilient, flexible, and adaptable, our God-given bodies, minds and spirits are. We have accepted and implemented much change into our daily lives in the past eighteen months and we have adapted well. I am not sure what the long-term effects of this major glitch, on the radar screen of our lives will have on humanity, but short-term we have adapted well.

My supposition is that that the reason these localized mask bylaws seem like such a downer, is that implicitly we appear to be taking a step backwards on our journey to the pre-Covid freedom that most of us simply took for granted. Well, the numbers are up, dramatically, hospitalizations are up and ICU beds are filling up. We needed to do something to stem the spread of this very challenging virus. The experts tell us that vaccination is the key overcoming this scourge we call Covid. The other side of the coin is that just because almost eighty percent of Albertans have at least one shot, this does not preclude me from spreading the virus to someone else. We know that once I am fully vaccinated, my contact with the virus will not likely result in severe outcomes for me. However,

it does not mean I am unable to transmit the virus to others. And for those others, severe outcomes are still a very real possibility. There is a good reason that prudence is a hard-fought virtue. Sometimes it is challenging to do or not do the right thing.

***The Reflection***

*(To be read by the Leader)*

During the Covid era, I did hospital visits to anoint folks who had succumbed to the Covid virus. I anointed a couple of young people whom I did not think would come out of the hospital. This is when the devastating potential of covid-19 became reality for me. Strong relatively young people (one, a Brother Knight), laying in a state of comatose helplessness. Things became very very real for me at that time, particularly because in a couple of situations, I knew the individuals personally. Yes, they both came out of the hospital, (by the grace of God and great health care), but when I visited them I did not have high hopes for their recovery. I am not an alarmist; I am a realist, and I have been at many bedsides in my time as a Catholic priest.

So Brothers, if the wisdom of the experts suggest that we need don our masks once again in order to stem the spread of this Covid virus, then so be it. We have received the gift of life from God. We need to live in awareness, not in fear and if we need to take a step back to regroup and continue moving forward, so be it. My dear Brothers, times like this require leadership. Though we may not be in full swing as Knights, as practical Catholic gentlemen we can certainly lead in our families our parish and our communities by example. I must admit, I am getting a little tired of one of the outcomes of my wearing a mask on a regular basis. Too many of my dear parishioners are telling me; “Father, I like what you have done with your face.” Yes, that was meant to be funny. Together, with our cooperation and God’s good grace, we will prevail, because:

**“God’s grace is sufficient for us” (2 Cor 12, 8)**

***Meditation Period***

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***Fraternal Sharing***

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***Closing Prayer***

*(Recited by all)*

Let us pray:

“Almighty ever-living God, grant that we may always conform our will to yours and serve your majesty in sincerity of heart. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

**Knights of Columbus Alberta-Northwest Territories  
Formation Program-October-2021  
Conscience and Religious Exemptions**

***Opening Prayer***

Lord, teach us to pray:  
“Our Father...”

***The Reading***

*(To be read by the Leader)*

Happy Fall 2021 my dear Brothers. The recent morning coolness reminds me that it is only a matter of time, until we see some of that hard water stuck to our windshields as we go out the door in the mornings. Yikes.

I know that we are all aware of the challenges facing Alberta’s health care system presently, and of course of the new restrictions that have been mandated by our Provincial Government. Some may think too much (to hot), some too little, (to cold) and perhaps there are even a few of us who think the restrictions are (just right). OOOps, forgive me, I slipped into the Goldilocks and the three bears fairy tale. With the mandated restrictions, there has also been presented what is referred to as a “restriction exemption”. Basically the “restriction exemption” states that for non-essential services, to be exempt from the one third code capacity limits, every one entering the facility, needs to present proof that they have received the double jab Covid vaccination. There is a significant number of the faithful who have chosen not to be vaccinated and this is for several reasons. Most prominent among these is a lack of evidence on the long term effects of the vaccine. The other is the moral objection to the sourcing of these vaccines and their distant though real connection to the sin of abortion. I am sure there are others as well, but those are the concerns I have been hearing about.

So, the implicit message presented by businesses, cities, organizations, who are implementing the “restrictions exemption” is that if you wish to participate in what they have to offer, recreation, movies, funerals, I must be able to show proof of double vaccination. This may well appear to some to be an assault on our freedom of conscience that the Catholic Church upholds as an elementary and pivotal right. The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches that a person: “has the right to act in conscience and in freedom so as personally to make moral decisions. He/she must not be forced to act contrary to his/her conscience. Nor must he/she be prevented from acting according to his/her conscience, especially in religious matters, (1782 CCC)”.

The caveat or preamble to this statement is that there is a presumption that the person’s conscience is well formed, in the light of God’s Word, assisted by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Guided by the light of reason, and the authoritative teaching from legitimate sources of specific expertise. God gave us great rational intelligence and we need to use these gifts to form our conscience and perspective on many different elements of our society. The formation of our conscience is really a lifelong endeavor, as more and more learning comes into the light of understanding. We all have an obligation to understand the morality, the good or the bad of any act or event in which we anticipate participating in, or not. We must remain diligent in forming our conscience lest the “moral conscience remains in ignorance and makes erroneous judgements about acts to be performed or already committed, (CCC 1790).” Let’s face it, a well-formed conscience is essential to our journeys of faith, and it is the vehicle to a successful and joyful culmination of our earthly journeys to the Promised Land.

***The Reflection***

*(To be read by the Leader)*

I and many of my Brother priests have received requests from individuals who are requesting letters of religious exemption (based on religious beliefs) from being required to follow the “restriction exemptions” that are now in place throughout Alberta. My Brothers, the Church will always respect and promote the freedom of a person’s individual conscience.

However, the reality is that the Church and her clergy are unable to objectively assess and or attest to an individual’s process of discernment in coming to their decision of conscience. What does this mean pragmatically? I respect and support your freedom and your conscience. I, however, have no way of knowing the process, the sources of information and learning that you pursued, in order to come to your stance of conscience. I can and must respect your conscience, but I have no way of knowing how you came to your conscientious stand. **Therefore, it would be inappropriate for me or any other clergy, to write a letter requesting that you be exempted from these particular requirements.** I don’t know your conscience or your heart. (I may think I do, but that is only a subjective opinion and not helpful). We can stand together on issues where there is not a question on moral righteousness, where there is not, and can be no wiggle room. For example, the dignity of all life, from conception until natural death.

Brothers, my heart goes out to those of you who are being negatively affected by your conscience decisions as they are affected by the rules and mandates now in place in our Province. I can and do pray for you, and for resolution to the challenges we face together. However, I cannot in good conscience write a letter supporting a religious exemption for you, when I have no way other than subjectively, of knowing your conscience formation and the steps you have taken to form it.

I will continue this conversation next month under the topic of, Considerations in the Formation of Conscience, and the Common Good. My Brothers, if we desire resolution to our present dilemma, we need above all else to pray for one another and for our community. Prayer allows God His correct place of influence and inspiration that is rightfully, and only His.

***Meditation Period***

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***Fraternal Sharing***

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***Closing Prayer***

*(Recited by all)*

Let us pray:

“Almighty ever-living God, grant that we may always conform our will to yours and serve your majesty in sincerity of heart. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

**Knights of Columbus Alberta-Northwest Territories  
Formation Program-November-2021  
Conscience and the Common Good.**

***Opening Prayer***

Lord, teach us to pray:  
“Our Father...”

***The Reading***

*(To be read by the Leader)*

In October we stated that the formation of one’s conscience is an ongoing part of our successful journey to the Promised Land. My comments this day refer to, but are not limited to the present dilemma, a not insignificant number of the faithful find themselves dealing with. Well-formed conscience is essential to each and every one of God’s children, regardless of what side of the particular discussion they find themselves. In the case of our present-day question, to vaccinate or not to vaccinate, the Alberta Bishops have noted several considerations that should be part of all our process of conscience formation and decision making.

In the case of whether to be vaccinated or not, have I read the most recent and relevant medical data and scientific information offered by the medical experts in their field of expertise? It is important that I explore both sides of the discussion objectively. If I read only material that I agree with, (that experts have written), this is not an objective formation of conscience exercise. Are my sources ethical, accurate and above reproach in their truthfulness? Brothers, the internet is a very scary place. Anybody can post anything and there is no process in place to empirically verify that the information presented has truth and integrity to it. From a moral perspective, this is why it is important to trust what our Bishops offer. They are our shepherds, and their sole purpose is to assist us in getting to heaven. They have access to a far greater array of expertise than you or I do in most areas that concern us.

What gives me peace in following the leadership and direction of our Bishops is that it is very much their own salvation that is part of this process. “Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him if a great millstone were put around his neck and he were thrown into the sea, (Mk. 9, 42).” Our Bishops have absolutely nothing to gain and everything to lose by misleading the faithful in the area of conscience and morality. As previously stated, they also have the ways and means to a far greater and more competent panel of advisors and expertise than we as everyday faithful parishioners have access to.

***The Reflection***

*(To be read by the Leader)*

I am not an advocate of the “pray, pay and obey” cliché. However, we do need to trust in something. When push comes to shove, I choose to trust in the teaching of the Church and our Bishops when it comes to matters of grave importance, particularly when they revolve around the areas of morality and conscience formation. Finally, we need to avail ourselves of the expertise that is available and coming from a source we trust. Do we understand the information we are being presented? If we do not, we need to be humble enough to ask assistance from sources, friends, people; whom we trust. We need to understand the information/data we are reading, in order to make good well-formed conscience decisions.

As Catholics, as men and women who live in an ordered society, we are obligated to adhere to the social teaching of the Catholic Church in collaboration with the law of the land. Particularly as it pertains to acting in good, well-formed conscience, and for the common good of the society that we are all part of. “Our concern must always be for the welfare of both others and ourselves. A proper balance between rights and responsibilities is essential to a well-ordered society, which upholds the common good, (ABS).” In a family situation, sometimes we make difficult decisions because though they may require sacrifice on our part, we know that the decision made will be for the betterment and overall good (common good) of our families.

We need to respect our civil authorities within this context. “Authority is exercised legitimately if it is committed to the common good of society, (CCC 1903, 1921).” “Then repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God, (Mt. 22, 21).” Our government authorities may not quote scripture when they lead us, or make decisions that govern us, but the common good is the moral imperative that should guide them. My Brothers, I write what I write not to convince you that one way is better than another way. I write to ensure that we are using the proper tools to come to informed decisions that are for our good and the good of the greater community. We truly are, all in this together.

***Meditation Period***

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**Knights of Columbus Alberta-Northwest Territories  
Formation Program-December-2021  
Communion, Communion, Communion**

***Opening Prayer***

Lord, teach us to pray:  
“Our Father...”

***The Reading***

*(To be read by the Leader)*

Brothers, about six weeks ago we celebrated Thanksgiving weekend, hopefully with family and those we love. Certainly, we were prone to a more rigid protocol once again, regarding gatherings in general. We are now in the process of preparing to celebrate the Nativity of the Lord. This experience and a recent Gospel got me thinking about the reality of how God made us, and who He made us to be. It also allowed me to reflect on how this time of Covid has had such a negative/divisive effect upon our ability to live our lives as God made us, in relationship with one another. The Gospel I am referring to is (Luke 11, 15-26). In this Scripture Jesus had cast out a demon from an individual, and He was immediately accused of casting the demon out by Beelzebul, “the ruler of the demons.” Jesus rebuts their accusations by noting that “Every kingdom divided against itself becomes a desert, and house falls on house” Jesus says, if Satan is divided how will his kingdom stand?

That statement and the commentary by Bishop Baron got me thinking about how the evil one goes about his daily business here in the world, and how Covid has provided a wonderful opening for the evil one to flourish in his activities. One of the many detrimental effects that Covid has imposed on our society, and the Knights are a case in point, is the concept and reality of isolation. We, in so many ways have been restricted in our natural God-given desire to be in relationship with one another. This is how God made us. “It is not good that humanity should be alone (Gen. 2, 18).” We need one another in order to give life meaning and value. I know that you are all aware of this basic human principal and Thanksgiving/Christmas with or without your loved ones and extended family, certainly reinforces this reality.

My point this day, is that the way the devil succeeds is when he can divide us, have us work against one another. Divide and conquer is a real thing my Brothers. “The demonic power is always one of scattering. It breaks up communion. But Jesus, as always, is the voice of communion, of one bringing things back together, (Barron).” Covid has provided a very apt tool for isolating and scattering us, even from our own families. We are very blessed in our parish community’s for many many reasons. First and foremost, we for the most part, have been able to remain a Church of communion.

***The Reflection***

*(To be read by the Leader)*

There is no question that there are varying opinions within our community/councils, about steps taken and not taken. About things like masks, vaccinations, social distancing, grouping sizes, limitations on worship like funerals and weddings. There is no end to the variety of topical issues. Clergy abuse, residential schools, Covid protocols. What do they all have in common? They all have the potential to divide us. First, in our opinions, and then literally physically from one another. Did you ever think you would see the day when you worshipped your God in your Church, and that

you would become uncomfortable if someone sat closer to you than six feet away? Yikes. We come together as family, as friends, and as a community of faith, to give thanks to God for the many blessings that are part of our daily lives. Yet...

My Brother Knights, we are diverse in our opinions and our perspectives about many things, and rightly so. **There is one thing we cannot be diverse in. That is the importance of our relationships with one another. These relationships are integral to the communion that our Lord created us to joyfully live our lives in. Communion with our Lord, with one another and with ourselves.** Brothers, diverse as our opinions might be, about things going on around us, **we absolutely must remain as people of communion.** When we allow the wedge of differing opinions to push its way between us, and to separate us from one another, I am sure the evil one smiles. I am not saying we cannot differ in our views about things. What I am saying is this. **We cannot let our own agendas/opinions separate us from communion with one another, and with our loving God, who made us to value, respect and love one another.** When we push ourselves away from our community of faith, from our families, from our friends, from our Councils, the devil smiles and says my work here is done. This divisiveness I have created between them, will complete what I started.

My dear Brothers in the Lord, be diverse, be different, but above all else be in communion, with God, with one another, with ourselves. I cannot say I love God, if I have separated myself from loving my neighbor, my Brother Knight, particularly a family member or that person sitting six feet away from me in the pew. Worthy Brothers, our God created each of us uniquely, but our commonality is that we are all children of God created to be in relationship with God, with each other and with ourselves. We, as **those men called Knights** need to lead the charge on communion within our councils, our parishes and most importantly our families. May the good Lord bless your Christmas festivities and gatherings as communities of faith and families. May 2022 be a year of union and communion.

**Communion, Communion, Communion**

***Meditation Period***

*(The Leader now invites the members to spend a few moments in silent reflection, as the above text is not meant to be a ready-made answer but a starter for personal reflection on the theme.)*

***Fraternal Sharing***

*(The leader now invites the members to share with their Brother Knights any relevant thoughts that came to them during the meditation period.)*

***Closing Prayer***

*(Recited by all)*

Let us pray:

“Almighty ever-living God, grant that we may always conform our will to yours and serve your majesty in sincerity of heart. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.