

**Knights of Columbus Alberta-Northwest Territories
Formation Program- February 2022**

Where two or three are gathered together in my name, I am present there among them (Mt. 18, 20)

Opening Prayer

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

The Reading

(To be read by the Leader)

My dear Brother Knights. Somehow, I missed a month of Formation, (January) and now I am extremely late with February. I pray that you and yours were blessed, with a healthy, happy, and holy Christmas season and a hopeful start to 2022. In December, the focus of my formation reflections centered around the importance of relationships in our lives, and the reality that God created us to be people of relationship. We spoke about those things that can have a negative effect on our ability to be in relationship. We also recognized that divide and conquer is a real thing and it is not just a technique your teenagers used with you and your wife, back in the days when they were trying to get their way, one way or another. We know that the evil one is only too happy when people who God created to be in relationship with one another, families, K of C Councils, parish communities etc. have discord sowed among them.

We spoke about the reality of Covid and all the restrictions that came into play in order to deal with this virus. This has had a very detrimental effect on our ability to be in, and cultivate important relationships. You can name the restrictions, to vaccinate or not, to mask or not, funeral and wedding limitations, how many folks can attend Mass on Sunday morning. These are all areas that we have taken for granted all our lives and now we deal with limitations. All this to say is that there are two things at play here. One; in many instances we have not had the ability to physically sit in the same room with one another for a social event or perhaps a Council meeting. So, we have the physical separation that robs us of our ability and created need to be in proximity and special relationship with one another. Two; The other challenge with this is that because we are not in the regular social situations that we are used to, we do not have the necessary plethora of opportunities to compare notes, vent to one another, or simply share our opinions. Instead, what can occur, is that we may spend more time in front of the television or on the computer. We can tend to inhale a whole lot more quasi-information about the same subject than is particularly good for us. Especially without the ability to off-load or share our thoughts about things. Our spouses are wonderful, but after a while I am sure they tire of hearing your opinion about the same old same old.

The Reflection

(To be read by the Leader)

Again, my point my dear Brothers is that the lack of sociability and relational opportunities can have a cumulative effect on our own well-being. To the point where we are not even aware that we are missing those relationships that we have taken for granted all our lives. Brothers we need to maintain an awareness and intentionally strive to work at those relationships in our lives. Covid has caused division in many families never mind among parishioners and Council Brothers. Where there is division among good God-fearing people, I am sure the evil one claps his hands with glee.

Brothers, we are all looking forward with anticipation to what the beginning March will bring. There is a good chance that many of our existing restrictions, masks, music, singing, pancake breakfasts will no longer be in effect. What we need to be cognisant of, in the interest of maintaining and cultivating those all-important relationships is this; the government, Alberta Health Services and the Church may tell us we do not need to wear masks any longer. This does not mean that your Brother Knight or possibly your spouse, will automatically be at ease, and somehow be comfortable without a mask. My point: we are all at different points on the Covid journey and we are all carrying some Covid propaganda with us that has accumulated over a two-year journey. We need to support one another moving forward. We are potentially entering a time of renewing union and communion. But we need to be respectful that we may all be at various places on that spectrum. We do not want to let our union, communion opportunity, be another opportunity to create division among us. We need to be sensitive to the needs and feelings of our Brother Knights, our families, and our parishioners. Brothers, next month, I hope to explore the concept of freedom, from a theological perspective. Lots of talk about freedom lately but is it really freedom?

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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 2022
The Truth will set you free, (Jn. 8, 32)**

Opening Prayer

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

The Reading

(To be read by the Leader)

My dear Brother Knights, as I write this, masks are still mandatory, but we are hoping that at the beginning of March all restrictions will be lifted, here in Alberta. Many other provinces are on a similar timeline, for moving back into what we hope will be the way of life we have been accustomed, for most of our lives. The beauty of our faith is that we live in hope. In challenging times, we are comforted by St. Paul’s encouragement; “We walk by faith and not by sight, (2 Cor. 5, 7).”

The end of January and most of the month of February inundated us with the word **freedom**. Often the term freedom was used as a preface for the many convoys that occurred in our country and in our Province. We know these “**Freedom convoys**” were a response to the existing restrictions that have been put in place by our Federal and Provincial Government as well as Alberta Health Services regarding Covid protocols. As we listened to the dialogue between the players, protesters, and counter-protesters alike, the meaning of the term freedom may have become somewhat convoluted. I offer this, because in the secular world there are some clear definitions of Freedom. “Sometimes it refers to physical freedom, the lack of physical restraints on human behavior. Freedom also refers to liberty; the lack of constraints placed by an authority upon someone’s actions. As well, freedom refers to political freedom, the ability of a citizen to participate in political affairs or of a nation to direct its own political affairs. (Sunday Visitor, Encyclopedia of Catholic Doctrine, p. 241).” These types of freedom are not what the Catechism of the Catholic Church is referring to in stating the following: “Freedom is the power, rooted in **reason and will**, to act or not to act. By free will one shapes one’s own life. Human freedom is a force for growth and maturity in truth and goodness; it attains its perfection when directed toward God, our beatitude, (CCC 1731). The freedom that you and I enjoy is the gift of free will. Our free will and the actions that we take, based on our God-given free will, shape the lives we live in the world. The natural outcome of the choices we make here in the world should always point to our ultimate purpose, and that is to spend eternity in the presence of our Creator.

“Freedom is exercised in relationships between human beings. Every human person, created in the image of God, has the natural right to be recognized as a free and responsible being. All owe to each other this duty of respect. The right to the exercise of freedom, especially in moral and religious matters, is an inalienable requirement of the dignity of the human person. This right must be recognized and protected by civil authority within the limits of the common good and public order, (CCC 1738).” What does this statement mean to you and me on a daily basis? Each of us, God’s children, have an

intrinsic God-given right to be treated with dignity and respect. This is inherent to the dignity of the human person. So, just as you and I have the right to be treated with dignity and respect, so does our neighbor have that same inherent right. I hope, we can, agree on this premise.

The Reflection

(To be read by the Leader)

For myself, the real question at hand is this. Does my natural God-given freedom allow me to make choices that will diminish the God-given dignity and respect I owe my sister or Brother, no matter how right I may be? I go back to the last line from the Catechism in 1738. “This right must be recognized and protected by civil authority **within the limits of the common good and public order.**” The Common Good is my point in all of this. I do have God-given freedom and I am entitled to be treated with dignity as a child of God. But where does my freedom end when it impinges upon another child of God’s freedom. Brothers I am a realist. I agree that sometimes we need to stand up and be counted for what we believe to be important. Do we have the right to exercise our freedom when it restricts the freedom and the dignity of others? I also realize this is a complicated question about a multi-faceted issue. Let us remember that when the Freedom Convoy began it was in protest to the vaccination requirements for cross boarder truckers. This was the issue that the truckers protested. However, several other parties got involved in this affair and in essence, stole the narrative and made it about the government and all Covid related protocols.

The voice of the original protesters was drowned out by louder voices that did not care whose freedom they restricted, as long as they could make sure their agenda was on the table. My dear Brothers. It does not matter what side of the discussion you find yourselves on. At the end of the day as men of faith and men who respect our own God-given freedom and dignity, we need to have the “Common Good” at the forefront of our deliberations. If we focus on the freedom and the inherent dignity of our sisters and Brothers, our formed consciences and free will decisions, will lead us to informed decisions and actions.

The Truth will set you free, (Jn. 8, 32)

Meditation Period

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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- April 2022
Healing and Reconciliation**

Opening Prayer

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

The Reading

(To be read by the Leader)

My dear Brothers in the Lord. We are still masking as I write this on Family Day Monday here in the Province of Alberta. My prayer of course is that by the time your Council meets in April, (in person I hope, for the sake of fraternity), things will be well on their way to what we will in the future refer to, as normal. Something important that I have been speaking about with the folks who advise me, is what we are doing about the healing and reconciliation that is required in our parishes, our families and perhaps our Councils. I know I am not alone in my parish on this. There has been much divisiveness that has occurred over the past two years. A lot of it has revolved around vaccinations or not, and certainly many of the protocols that have been part of our lives for much longer than we anticipated. I have seen grandparents experience separation from their grandchildren, at times because of divergent viewpoints. Some parishioners have certainly been more vocal in their thoughts about how things should or should not be. I am sure within our Councils we have men who are feeling excluded because for whatever reason, they are not able to attend meetings either virtually or in person.

Add to this, two long years of far less than normal existence, and many folks are pretty much at the end of their rope about many things. In other words, tempers, patience, and prudence, may be in short supply at times. This can be the cause of frictions and misunderstandings that might under normal circumstances and times, be easily resolved. But because of our present situation, the mole hill can turn into a mountain quite easily and for no apparent reason. All this to say as we journey through our Lenten time, it is important, to take an intentional look at where feelings and relationships may need some mending. I speak to you as Brother Knights, but perhaps you have challenges within your own families. Perhaps you have felt on the outside looking in, regarding your parish Church, and your inability to be involved with ministry etc. Perhaps your Council has temporarily struggled, so not much has been happening in the way of meetings and or actions.

It is possible that you are reading this, and you are of the opinion, situation normal, nothing to see here folks. I present this not because I am looking to open old wounds or wake sleeping dogs as the expression goes. I write this because I have seen firsthand in my own parish the challenges people of good will have faced.

Unless a challenge is faced, and resolution comes about there will always be that lingering discomfort or feelings of uneasiness. Brothers, we have come through a long journey from the darkness into the light.

The Reflection

(To be read by the Leader)

Lent is a time where we are called not to simply reconcile with our Lord, but with one another. As the Apostle John said: if anyone says, “I love God,” but hates his Brother, is a liar, (1 Jn 4, 20).” I have spoken about reconciliation and healing from the perspective of two years of Covid and isolation from relationships with important people in our lives. We are now at time in our history when we have in a very intentional way, been invited to walk with our Indigenous sisters and brothers. The Church has indeed been a part of a very dark part of our great Countries history. This includes the negative light that our First Nations people have been viewed in, for decades and decades. Brothers, we may not personally have committed sins against our brothers and sisters, but we as Catholics men have an obligation to do what we are able to walk with them in a meaningful way toward healing and reconciliation. I believe the first step in a mission such is this, is for us to become better educated and more aware of the true sense of what has transpired in the last century. We may not have been part of the problem, but we have moral obligation to be part of the solution. I encourage you at the Council level to bring this topic to the table and ask your Brothers; “what can we do to affect true healing and reconciliation with our Indigenous brothers and sisters. Reconciliation can only begin when we recognize what the issue is. Education and awareness are particularly important for this to occur. More on this next month Brothers.

Healing and Reconciliation

Meditation Period

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Fraternal Sharing

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Closing Prayer

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Let us pray:

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**Knights of Columbus Alberta-Northwest Territories
Formation Program- May 2022
*I love the fifty days of the Easter season.***

Opening Prayer

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

The Reading

(To be read by the Leader)

My dear Brothers in the Lord, if you want to be totally proud to be Catholic, (that is if you are not already, tee hee) follow the daily readings during the Easter Season. Particularly, the First Reading, which invariably is New Testament and very often from the Acts of the Apostles. These scripture passages paint a beautiful picture of the trials and tribulations, the successes and the failures of the Holy Catholic Church *becoming* the Holy Catholic Church. Not unlike a child growing up, complete with missteps and mistakes, but coming to adulthood because of the loving, nurturing care of the parents, who love the child more than they love themselves. Our Church is not obviously full grown and we are certainly still capable of making mistakes. The same may be said of our Councils. The key for us as Knights is that we continue to move forward. Surely, those early days after the resurrection would have been quite a time to be part of. Men and women were so absolutely convicted, that Jesus was indeed the Messiah that they suffered great persecution and often traumatic death, rather than recant their belief in the Risen Lord. I would say the same applies to our Councils and indeed our families. We encounter challenge and even push back but we know what we are doing is the right thing to be doing, so we push forward.

I find the **Acts of the Apostles** to be as engaging as any John Grisham or Harry Potter novel. (I know, holy understatement batman). There is life, there is death, and there is goodness ultimately prevailing over evil. All the ingredients of a real page turner, because my friends, it absolutely is! I am not even remotely comparing Grisham or Rowling to Holy Scripture on any kind of level playing field. Only, that those novels caught our attention because of their content and the way they were written. The New Testament, Acts of the Apostles is very much a number one best seller. It has all the ingredients: good guys, bad guys, life, death and a story line that leads to eternal life. The difference is that the Acts of the Apostles is in the non-fiction section.

I get excited reflecting on the different events that transpired time after time in Acts. People caring for one another and willing, literally, to die for that which was important to them. That is the Holy Catholic Church. My Brothers, this is the story of our Church, your Church, my Church. It helps remind me of why I am proud to be Catholic. Men and women far more inspired than me gave everything they had, including their lives, for the sake of the Kingdom. Wow. The good news Brother Knights, is that you and I, by the grace of God, have inherited what the cloud of witnesses who have gone before us, have bequeathed us.

The Reflection

(To be read by the Leader)

I am very grateful when I reflect on what I have been blessed with in my life: God’s love and particularly God’s mercy. It is these days of the Easter season where in the daily scripture time after time, day after day, I am able to reflect on the wondrous events within the early Church. These reflections of course, finally bring me back to ground zero. The death and resurrection of our Lord and Saviour. **“For God so loved the world that he sent His only Son, so that all who believe in Him many not perish but may have eternal life” (Jn 3:16).** Profound.

Yes, I am grateful, certainly not as grateful as I should be. I do know that. So, this week Covid finally caught up with me after a two-year leave of absence. I was praying that it was just a bug and that I would not have to isolate as is legally required when one tests positive for Covid. Well, I have tested positive three days in a row, so I guess I get a hundred percent. (First time for everything I suppose). Actually, I received some time to reflect on how blessed and protected I have been over the past two years. Not even a runny nose in that time. Thank you, dear Jesus. Two years, when I needed to be on deck for our faithful. Even now, this week, I have missed some things that were important in my ministry for sure, but . . . The Lord let me get through the last days of many confessions in Lent and a busy, busy (praise the Lord) Holy Week. Even to the point of fulfilling my responsibilities at our Knights of Columbus State Convention in Calgary last weekend, followed by the funeral of a long-time parishioner in Ponoka on Monday. Tuesday morning, I woke up and thought *oh boy*, hoping against hope - as our father in faith Abraham modeled - only for me it was not to be.

I have much to be grateful for, through our Risen Lord Jesus Christ. How about you Brothers? Treat yourself and ponder upon it, as you reflect on the Acts of the Apostles this joyful Easter season. Blessings to all.

“And every day the Lord added to their number, those who were being saved, (Acts 2, 47)”

Healing and Reconciliation

Meditation Period

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Fraternal Sharing

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**Knights of Columbus Alberta-Northwest Territories
Formation Program- June 2022
“For everything there is a season, (Ecc. 3, 1)”**

Opening Prayer

Lord, teach us to pray:

“Our Father...”

The Reading

(To be read by the Leader)

My dear Brother Knights, indeed, there is a time for every season, and a time for every matter under heaven. I am incredibly grateful for the insight within this statement of God’s wisdom. It allows us to trust in faith that indeed there is a time for all things. Though at times we may feel our time is not synchronized with His time, we trust in faith that all things work for the good. My dear Brothers, I have been privileged to serve as your State Chaplain for nine years. I have ministered with five State Deputies and State Executive Boards, who served our jurisdiction with distinction, and humble service. I have had the opportunity to travel to several Supreme Conventions, during these years and seen cities I would not have visited otherwise.

The Knights Formation program obligated me to write monthly formation articles on topics ranging from commandments to virtues, to deadly sins, to papal visits. In truth, I can say I found this exercise somewhat onerous at times, and I am sure the Lord laughed. I believe the Formation program was preparing me for the period of covid. During the past two years I have written weekly articles for our parish bulletin, and come to rather enjoy it. The State Affairs articles that Shauna had to constantly hound me for, as well as the Chaplains report for the State Convention, were all avenues for me to grow in my mediocre at best literary skills. This K of C Formation program commitment, helped me to see the value of the written word, as a valuable communications tool. For that I am very grateful.

One of the blessings of my State Chaplain appointment with the Knights, is that I have had the opportunity to meet and interact with many many Brother Knights over the years. From Council level to Supreme, I am constantly humbled by the commitment and service that some of my Brother Knights have freely given for the good of the Order. I have seen Brothers really grow in their time as Knights at all levels of the Jurisdiction, Council, District and State Executive. I am truly gratified by the long serving selfless giving of some of those men they call Knights. These Brothers have been a beautiful example and inspiration to me as a priest, demonstrating what the principal of charity means when translated into action. Thank you to my Brothers who have constantly said yes and then backed your yes with action. Charity, Fraternity and Unity abound among the members of this jurisdiction. What I will treasure is the example of those Knights who constantly have given of themselves, simply for the good of the Order. As stated earlier, an inspiration to me for sure.

I was appointed to this role at a time when the Knights had committed to removing themselves from the casino revenue stream. This was challenging for many, including me, because it called for some difficult conversations. I had those conversations and I have continued to offer my counsel in numerous other areas of the Order over the years. I know and understand that this has not been appreciated by some of the Brothers. I have always spoken the truth of the Gospel and I have peace with what I have said and to whom I have stated it. Upon reflection, I would not change my actions or my counsel over the past nine years. True love, (charity), means speaking the truth, even when some may not wish to hear it. This of course is what got our dear Lord in trouble on numerous occasions. Jesus always spoke the truth without fear of repercussion or reprisal.

The Reflection

(To be read by the Leader)

A particular group of Knights I am indebted to, are the many District Deputies whom I have crossed paths with over the years. I have witnessed your struggles and I have seen you become better more confident Knights because of the challenges you have encountered and overcome. You have become more competent, complete, confident Catholic gentlemen because of your roles as DDs. You have served your Order and your Brothers well with your patience and your perseverance. Thank you for this Brothers. The most profound gift the Knights have Columbus have given me personally is the fraternity. It has allowed me to interact with like-minded Catholic gentlemen at ground zero for the common good. Men do need the companionship of men. It is a good thing for men to build relationships with one another working for the good of the Order. It makes us better Catholic gentlemen, and the principals of fraternity and unity, should never be underestimated.

“For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under the sun (Ecc. 3, 1)” My dear Brother Knights, the time has come for me to say thank you for my time as State Chaplain of the Alberta/NWT jurisdiction. This is a role I have held proudly and with gratitude. I now see it is time for me to move into other areas of pastoral ministry. My experience has always been that if a priest is open to the opportunities, he will never run short of things to do, or people to serve. I am grateful, and I thank the Lord for my time with the Knights of Columbus at the State level. My time as State Chaplain has been a cherished part of my priesthood. Thank you Brothers, for your love, your support, and your service. It is not for me to say, but I am very familiar with and very fond of our incoming State Chaplain. He is a very fine, very accomplished, and very gifted Brother Clergy and Brother Knight. I pray that you will treat him with the same respect and dignity you have always accorded me. **For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under the sun.** Thank you dear Brothers, for your love of God and your response to His call. For your service, and for allowing me to serve you. Fraternal love and prayers. Vivat Jesus!

“For everything there is a season, (Ecc. 3, 1)”

Healing and Reconciliation

Meditation Period

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