

February 2016 Meeting

Principles of the Order

Opening Prayer

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

The Reading

(To be read by the Leader)

Our Principles: Charity-Unity-Fraternity-Patriotism

“So Faith Hope and Love remain, these three, but the greatest of these is love, (1Cor. 13, 13).”

Most of us have heard the expression that charity begins at home. We may have even used this expression or maxim as a way for us to opt out of contributing our resources to a particular cause. You know, it is true; we are simply not able to support every good cause that comes around the corner, because there are indeed many. There we go again, connecting the word charity with money, but instead, let's go back home where we have said charity begins. Brothers, think of a time when your child woke up sick or scared in the middle of the night and came into your room and woke you up. Think of a time when you got up way earlier than is human on a Saturday morning in order to take your child to hockey or soccer practice. Think of a Friday evening when you agreed with your wife to watch a romantic favorite movie of hers, when all you really wanted to do was flop onto the couch and fall asleep after a long week at work. Brothers, this is love lived out in charity. No money came out of your pockets but you gave of yourselves for the good of those you love. True and pure charity is when we do what we do out of love for the other. Love is the motivation and charity is the vehicle to actually live that love.

I offer these thoughts Brothers because when we live our lives out of a response of love, as our Lord did for us, the charity that flows from that love becomes very simply an expression of our love. Charity does begin in the home because our homes are certainly the most logical places where the love in our hearts flows deepest and most freely to the other.

The Reflection

(To be read by the Leader)

Let's go back to the three important relationships in our lives; our relationship with God, with others and with ourselves, it is here we see the source of our love lived out in charity. It is when we recognize, when we come to truly believe that we are

loved by our God, when we own the reality that we are each expressions of love in and of ourselves, it is then that we are filled with a heartfelt joy that needs to be expressed. Remember; “Charity is the power by which we, who have been loved first by God, can give ourselves to God so as to be united with Him and can accept our neighbor for God's sake as unconditionally and sincerely as we accept ourselves, (Youcat 309).”

Think about when your first child was born. My thought is that you were so filled with joy, that you really did not know what to do next. You did not know what to do but you knew you needed to do something or else you might explode. Maybe you smoked a cigar, had a shot of something, maybe you phoned your parents to share this momentous event. When in reality if it would have been socially acceptable (and you weren't afraid they would lock you up in the psych ward) you would much rather have done the happy dance all the way through the hospital. Brothers, that is the joy I am speaking of, joy that flows out of a love that cannot be contained. When we come to this, when we recognize just how blessed we are, how much we are loved by God, there is no other option but charity as an expression of the love we have received. My Brothers, the Knights of Columbus, provide us with a perfect vehicle to assist us in expressing our love of God, of one another and ourselves in charity.

“So Faith Hope and Love remain, these three, but the greatest of these is love, (1Cor. 13, 13).”

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.

March 2016 Meeting

Principles of the Order

Opening Prayer

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

The Reading

(To be read by the Leader)

Our Principles: Charity-Unity-Fraternity-Patriotism

“So Faith, Hope and Love remain, these three; but the greatest of these is love. (1Cor. 13, 13)”

Brothers, are you tired of talking about charity yet? It has been our focus literally for the entire Columbian year thus far. The truth is; if we do not have the virtue of charity wired into our DNA (and it is by the grace of God) nothing else will make sense. When we make our decisions, our discernments and our directions with charity as the guiding principle, (you might say as the guiding light), everything else we do will work out in a positive way. Remember, love is the essence of who we are and charity is the vehicle that we live our love.

Did you ever give much thought to why we worship our Lord together on Sunday morning? Why we meet as a Council on a monthly basis? Why very nearly everything we do in this world involves others? Well, the primary reason is that we are created to be in relationship, with God, with one another and with ourselves. However, a very pragmatic and practical reason for worshipping, serving, working together is that there is great strength in UNITY.

The Holy Church began with a unified group perhaps no larger than our own Council, but who were unified in belief and faith. “They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common...Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple area...praising God and enjoying favor with all the people. And every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved, (Acts 2, 42-47).” Brothers, the Church that you and I stake our salvation on began with a small unified group of believers. The unity of the early Church survived a number of persecutions and in fact that unity became stronger in the face of persecution. The early martyrs, (those who died for their faith) actually strengthened the core of believers

and the believers stood stronger than ever unified in the face of whatever challenges they encountered.

The Reflection

(To be read by the Leader)

None of us is as good as all of us. Brothers, we know that together we can accomplish far more together than we ever could individually. Our spouses are a perfect example of this. In our marriages often there are some clearly defined duties for each partner but there are also grey areas where one or the other sometimes picks up the slack for the other. Why? It goes back to love lived out in charity. The end result, a very efficient relationship that accomplishes far more within the family than any one person by themselves could ever hope for.

As Knights, we operate in the same way. We support one another in activities even though the chosen direction may not have been our first choice. We count on one another’s unified support whether we are praying the rosary, serving pancakes, or running a bingo at the seniors’ center. Together, in unity we are able to accomplish notable works of charity that would never have been possible as an individual. The Knights are a very strong example of what unity is able to accomplish, when we consider some of the major projects that have been undertaken as a jurisdiction. The fire in Slave Lake the Coats for Kids programs even things like the Basketball Free Throw program hosted annually throughout the jurisdiction, all examples of what a unified effort is able to accomplish.

“So Faith, Hope and Love remain, these three; but the greatest of these is love. (1Cor. 13, 13)”

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

April 2016 Meeting Principles of the Order

Opening Prayer

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

The Reading

(To be read by the Leader)

Our Principles: Charity-Unity-Fraternity- Patriotism

“So Faith, Hope and Love remain, these three; but the greatest of these is love. (1Cor. 13, 13)”

None of us is as good as all of us. None of us are as effective or efficient as all of us. These are statements that we as practical Catholic gentlemen will agree with. However our unity is not just within our families and within our Councils. Unity is what makes the Church the Church. “Christian unity is the business of all Christians, regardless of how young or old they are. Unity was one of Jesus’ most important concerns. He prayed to the Father, “that they all may be one...so that the world may believe that you have sent me, (Jn. 17, 21).” (Youcat 131)

To give us a sense of the importance of unity we can look at the Church as the “Body of Christ.” Above all through the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Eucharist, an inseparable UNION comes about between Jesus Christ and Christians. The UNION is so strong that it joins Him and us like the head and members of a human body and makes us one, (Youcat 126).” Brothers, the analogy of Christ as the head and us as the body united very specifically through the Catholic sacraments should give us a reasonable perspective on the importance of unity in our relationships particularly those ones which are critically important to us.

Does this mean that to be in unity we have to see all things the same and agree on all things within the order or even within the Church? No, absolutely not. Again the concept of the Church, (us who are the body) as the body of Christ, is very good because we know that different parts of our bodies are responsible for different functions, but all are important to the well-being of the whole. Did you know that without that big old, ugly old big toe on your foot you would have a very challenging time keeping your balance? Yes I know, off topic, but important to show that all members of our order are important in the unity of the big picture.

The Reflection

(To be read by the Leader)

Catholic actually means universal, which can go back to Christ’s desire that all may be one. The beauty of our Universal (Catholic) Church is that there are those who would like to see the Latin back in the Mass and others who would say priests can be married, neither of which are on the discussion table. But the beauty of our Church is that despite our differences as part of the body of Christ there is room for all of us within this beautiful communion. “The character of universality which adorns the People of God is a gift from the Lord Himself whereby the Catholic Church ceaselessly and efficaciously seeks for the return of all humanity and all its goods, under Christ the Head in the UNITY of the Holy Spirit, (CCC 831).”

Brothers it is no different with the Knights, unity is critically important. But unity does not mean uniformity. As Knights we need to profess a unity of purpose and direction, a unity of faith and support for our Church. How we live that within the Order and within our families will be as unique as each of us are unique children of God. Remember, St. Augustine is credited with the maxim; in the unimportant things of life diversity, in the important things unity, but in all things charity.

“So Faith, Hope and Love remain, these three; but the greatest of these is love. (1Cor. 13, 13)”

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.

May 2016 Meeting Principles of the Order

Opening Prayer

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

The Reading

(To be read by the Leader)

Our Principles: Charity-Unity-Fraternity- Patriotism

“So Faith Hope and Love remain, these three, but the greatest of these is love, (1Cor. 13, 13).”

We have spoken at length on the importance of Charity, (a response of love) as our guiding principle within the Knights of Columbus. Last month we focused on the importance of the principle of Unity. As Knights we profess a unity of purpose and direction and particularly a unity of faith. We acknowledged that how live that unity within the Order, our families, our Church and our community will be as unique as we are unique children of God. The third principle of our Order is one that will assist us in a unified response of charity and that of course is the principle of **Fraternity**. Webster’s Universal College Dictionary gives these definitions of fraternity. “An organization of laymen for religious or charitable purposes. Brotherhood.” In the same breath we see the definition of **fraternal** as follows. “Of or befitting a brother; brotherly. Of or being a society of men associated in brotherly union, as for mutual aid or benefit, (Webster’s).”

Brothers, when you think of your Brother Knights, do you think of them as brothers? This is what the principle of fraternity calls us to. To think of our Brother Knights in a similar way that we would think of our own blood brothers. For the majority of us, brother is a definition in itself. When we consider the term brotherhood we think of our own families and the love that makes these relationships so important to us. Regarding brotherhood, one of the definitions that Mr. Webster offers us is the following: “The quality of being brotherly. The belief that all people should act with warmth and equality toward one another.” All this to say that the principle of Fraternity is understated in its importance and value within the Knights of Columbus. Though fraternal is not a distinctly biblical statement or term, brotherhood is.

The Reflection

(To be read by the Leader)

“In Aramaic, Jesus’ mother tongue, there is only one word for sibling or cousin. When the Gospels speak about the ‘brothers and sisters’ of Jesus, (e.g. In Mark 3, 31-35), they are referring to Jesus’ close relatives, (Youcat 81).” Much as we see fraternity as important within the Knights, we see that fraternity can clearly be linked to the brotherhood that was just as essential in the life of Jesus as it is for each of us Catholic gentlemen. One of the concepts I have pushed hard with reference to charity within the Order is that it needs to be part of our worldview. Love is the lens with which we need to gaze at the world around us. In the same way, if our worldview embraces the principle of fraternity/brotherhood when we consider our brothers within the Knights, we come to a sense of quasi-family which for the most part evokes a response of charity that is based on the love we are all called to in all areas of our lives.

In some ways we can view **Fraternity** as the glue that binds our Order and our individual Counsels together in unity and charity. When we view one another with fraternal love there is no limit to what we are capable of doing with and for one another and for our greater world community.

“So Faith Hope and Love remain, these three, but the greatest of these is love, (1Cor. 13, 13).”

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.

June 2016 Meeting

Principles of the Order

Opening Prayer

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

The Reading

(To be read by the Leader)

Our Principles: Charity-Unity-Fraternity-Patriotism

“So Faith Hope and Love remain, these three, but the greatest of these is love, (1Cor. 13, 13).”

Amidst the turmoil that is such an integral part of the world we live in we are the recipients of a variety of great gifts. Without question the greatest gift our Lord blesses us with is the gift of faith. Faith allows us a glimmer of understanding and confidence in God’s love and providence for all of humanity. Faith that gives us hope in the world but more importantly in eternal life. Within this challenging world one of the gifts that is often overlooked or taken for granted is the gift of our freedom. Freedom to express ourselves, freedom to practice our faith openly, freedom to be who we are and believe what we believe. As Canadian Catholic men we take these freedoms as our God-given right, but we know these freedoms are not so present in all areas of the world. Brothers, we are blessed. One may see our response to these freedoms that are intrinsic to our beloved country as a response of Patriotism. Though Patriotism is the principle united particularly to the 4th Degree of our Order it is an integral facet of who we are as citizens of our free and bountiful country of Canada.

Mr. Webster defines Patriotism as; “devoted love, support and defense of one’s country; national loyalty.” A patriot is defined thus; “a person who loves supports and defends his or her country and its interests.” As Catholic men we take the understanding of patriotism one step further than other patriots might. We know that the freedoms and the country we enjoy are gifts of God’s grace for us. We are proud of our devotion to God, the giver of all that is good and we are patriots of this country, Canada that our loving God has blessed us to be part of.

The Reflection

(To be read by the Leader)

Patriotism is a noble term because it speaks of our love for our country, but because love is part of patriotism we understand that virtues like integrity,

and fidelity are an integral component of patriotism. To be a patriot is a good thing, again because of the intrinsic virtues that are implicitly part of being a healthy Canadian patriot.

More importantly for us, as practical Catholic gentlemen, we acknowledge that our freedoms are an expression of our providential God’s love and care for us. So we express our patriotism as we do for so many other gifts, from a point of gratitude. At all times our Order, our counsels and ourselves individually are profoundly grateful for the copious blessings which include the many freedoms that are an everyday way of life for us and our families.

Our Fourth Degree Brothers are the “visible right arm of the Church” and really do offer a very public witness to the Order’s pride and gratitude in God and country. Patriotism is a principle best lived out in action. Our Fourth Degree Knights, resplendent in their full regalia, serve to witness to the values of devotion to God and country. Brothers. To be clear, one does not have to be a Fourth Degree Knight to exemplify the principle of Patriotism. We are all called to be patriots, but the Fourth Degree is a great way to wear our Patriotism on our sleeve.

Charity, Unity, Fraternity, Patriotism.

Brothers, those men they call Knights stand for and behind these principles. I am proud to be part of a Catholic Fraternal group of men and their families who serve their Church and their community through the lens of these principles’.

“So Faith Hope and Love remain, these three, but the greatest of these is love, (1Cor. 13, 13).”

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.

July 2016 Meeting Principles of the Order

Opening Prayer

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

The Reading

(To be read by the Leader)

“So Faith Hope and Love remain, these three, but the greatest of these is love, (1Cor. 13, 13).”

Charity, Unity, Fraternity, Patriotism.

Brothers, those men they call Knights stand for and behind these principles. I am proud to be part of a Catholic fraternal group of men and their families who view and serve their Church and their community through the lens of these principles.

So why the Knights? These past ten months I have spoken at length about our Orders principles, and particularly about the principle of charity. Why? Because charity is the virtue that infuses all other activities within the order and in our lives. What I would like to do in the months of July and August is simply to speak about what it is that impels us to participate in an organization like the Knights of Columbus. A refresher, charity is rooted in love, in other words, when we involve ourselves in charitable activities, love should be the motivation for that charitable activity, love of God and love of neighbor. Let’s face it brothers we are imperfect human beings, therefore our actions, our activities will always fall short of perfect love or perfect charity. The gift and the grace is that the Lord knows our hearts, He knows that we are trying, He knows that we are doing the best we are able given circumstances and conditions to serve Him by serving our neighbor.

So why the Knights? Are we not able to find enough to do at home with our own families? Do we ourselves not have aging parents who need our care and attention? I am sure the answer, generally speaking is yes, we have lots to do on the home front and then some. So why the Knights? Because Brothers, we have been created in God’s image and likeness, (Gen 1, 26). This fact implies that we are created good in His image and likeness. We are far more good than anything else. But there is more....We are created by God to be in relationship with one another, (Then the Lord God said; “It is not good for the man to be alone,” (Gen. 2, 18). We are all familiar with this Scripture and of course we

understand that our primary mode or form of relationship is that with our spouses, children and family members.

The Reflection

(To be read by the Leader)

So why the Knights? You know what Brothers. We need each other. As practical Catholic gentlemen we have much in common, most importantly we have our faith in God. This is what inspires us on a daily basis sometimes more implicitly than explicitly. Our faith simply assists us in knowing that we are loved. It allows us to know that we will get through the challenges we encounter here in the world and most importantly, our faith allows us hope in eternal life. Suffice to say, much as husbands and wives are complimentary in their nature to one another, meaning our spousal relationships are designed to build one another up, we are all still unique children of God. Much as you love one another, your wife may not have much interest in the latest free agent signings and trades in the NHL. You may not be too keen on her sharing the proper stitch to use when creating the next pair of mittens for your grandkids. Our spouses are unique, they are complimentary and they are the most important relationship other than with the Lord Himself that we will ever be blessed to be part of.

“So Faith Hope and Love remain, these three, but the greatest of these is love, (1Cor. 13, 13).”

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.”

August 2016 Meeting

Principles of the Order

Opening Prayer

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

The Reading

(To be read by the Leader)

“So Faith Hope and Love remain, these three, but the greatest of these is love, (1Cor. 13, 13).”

So why the Knights? Because Brothers, we do have a variety of common interests with one another that may not be particularly important, or at least of interest to our spouses. When I arrived in the parish I am presently serving in eight years ago, the finishing touches were being applied to a brand new rectory that had been built for the purpose of housing four Priests who would serve to large Churches in our community. When I moved in there was quite a flurry of activity going on. The fence was being built, the deck was being created and the stone patio work was ongoing. Who was making this happen? My Parish Knights of Columbus Council. And you know what? It was hard, hot; heavy work but these men were enjoying what they were doing. Why? Because they were working together toward a common goal, (key words ‘working together’), complete with the teasing, joking and sharing of trade secrets that come from many years of varied and diverse experience in the working world. They were sharing an experience of building, (for the greater glory of God); one that might not have been valued or as enjoyable for their spouses, but it was fun for them. They were united in common purpose working together to achieve a common goal together.

So why the Knights? Because whether they are working a bingo in a senior’s residence, flipping pancakes on Sunday morning, meeting for their monthly Council meeting, whether they are selling State Raffle Tickets, whatever the activity, they are doing it together. Most of us would agree that there is no shortage of extracurricular work around our own homes, perhaps there is no end to the amount of hours you can put in at your jobs. There is no question that it is limitless and invaluable the more time that you are able to spend with your children and your spouse. All of these forenamed activities are pivotal to healthy happy relationships on the home front and in the workplace.

The Reflection

(To be read by the Leader)

So why the Knights? Because Brothers, it matters not the activity, work or play, with the Knights

we are involved with like-minded practical Catholic gentlemen. When our faith is the common denominator and it is augmented by some common interests and values that might not be held in high esteem in other areas of our lives, (remember the NHL free agent discussion) then those men they call Knights are the perfect choice.

So why the Knights? My point. I am speaking of the practical reality of participating in, and being part of an organization where faith is the key ingredient and those involved have much in common with one another. This makes hanging out with one another, even in a meeting environment, not an unpleasant experience. So we participate in charitable works and activities with the goal of serving our Lord by serving His people, we do it with fellows that we actually like because we have much in common with them. Brothers, these are the practical common sense reasons why a practical Catholic gentleman should be a Knight. There is however one more small item that bears mentioning. As practical Catholic gentlemen, we all want to get to heaven eventually. Brothers, short of serving our families with complete love and devotion, the Knights of Columbus are the perfect vehicle or conduit that will assist us on our journeys to eternal life. The Knights are about “charity, Love.” God is love and that is what we must be for others, to the best of our imperfect human ability in order to enter the heavenly kingdom. “So Faith Hope and Love remain, these three, but the greatest of these is love, (1Cor. 13, 13).”

Meditation Period

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Closing Prayer

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“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.”

September 2016 Meeting

Dignity of Life, from Conception until Natural Death

Opening Prayer

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

The Reading

(To be read by the Leader)

“God created humanity in His image and likeness, in His divine image He created him; male and female He created them....God looked at everything He had made, and He found it very good, (Gen. 1, 27, 31)”

My dear Brothers in the Lord; a significant portion of our Catholic identity is based on the value and dignity of human life, “from conception until natural death.” I know that you are clearly aware of this reality. I know that most of our Councils have Pro-Life Directors as an integral part of our Council executive. Brothers, the inception or genesis of our stated position on the dignity and value of life came to the forefront very definitively with the legalization of abortion in our country. Our position on the dignity of life, “from conception until natural death” has never varied but when abortion became a legal entity in Canada, we as Knights needed to stand up and voice our disgust, disagreement, displeasure with the direction our society and our government have taken. This is not news to you or to any faithful Catholic person.

However, I suggest to you that things at our societal and governmental level have taken a definitive turn for the worse with regard to the Dignity of human life. In February, 2015 our Canadian government implemented the legislation that would make assisted suicide legal in our great country. They have done this under the guise of calling it assisted dying, euthanasia, but as Catholics we need to call it what it is. “Assisted Suicide,” with no glamorous titles, our government has made it legal for someone to commit suicide. Perhaps even more devastating, our government has made it possible for someone to obtain the medical assistance of doctors and the medical profession in achieving the desired suicide. I am not an alarmist by nature but we are on very slippery slope at this moment in the history of our society, our country and our humanity.

Another area of serious concern with regard to the dignity of the human person is the issue of gender identity, gender reassignment, etc. Correct medical terminology for what we understand as people who are experiencing a strong desire to be a person of the opposite gender is, “Gender Dysphoria.” We are all aware by now that publically funded schools, including our Catholic schools in

Alberta have been mandated by the Education Minister to provide gender neutral washroom facilities in all schools. My opinion is that this is simply the tip of the iceberg with regard to gender identity and the many challenges that come with it.

The Reflection

(To be read by the Leader)

Catholic teaching on gender identity is based on and follows the established teaching of the Church on sexuality and marriage. In brief we can say the following: 1. Each of us is made in God’s image as man or woman. 2. Gender identity is determined at conception, genetically, anatomically and chromosomally. 3. A person must accept that objective identity.

“Everyone, man and woman, should acknowledge and accept his or her sexual identity. Physical, moral and spiritual difference and complementarity are oriented toward the goods of marriage and the flourishing of family life. The harmony of the couple and of society depends in part on the way in which the complementarity, needs, and mutual support between the sexes are lived out, (Catechism of the Catholic Church, CCC 2333).”

Brothers, this Columbian year we will focus on the dignity of life, from conception until natural death. Within the realm of the dignity of life we will look at the many challenges and issues with regard to gender identity, (Gender Dysphoria) that have become mainstream societal issues. These same issues which in our childhood were in all likelihood not even words that had a definition. But they are very real today and they are affecting our children, our Church and our society. **“God looked at everything He had made, and He found it very good, (Gen. 1, 31).”**

Meditation Period

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Fraternal Sharing

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Closing Prayer

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October 2016 Meeting

Dignity of Life, from Conception until Natural Death

Opening Prayer

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

The Reading

(To be read by the Leader)

“God created humanity in His image and likeness, in His divine image He created him; male and female He created them....God looked at everything He had made, and He found it very good, (Gen. 1, 27, 31)”

Last month we set the stage for our Columbian Formation program by bringing into the conversation the topics of Gender Dysphoria and Assisted Suicide. Neither of these topics is an easy one to comprehend but as practical Catholic men we have an obligation to understand what the Church says about these issues and why She says what She says about them. For the coming months we will focus on endeavoring to come to grips with the reality of assisted suicide right here in our midst, in our hospitals and perhaps it is just a matter of time before we may have to be prepared to address it within our own extended families.

What I find particularly disturbing about our present circumstance is this. Our society, our government have made it legal to end the life of a human being in the very early stages, while still in their mother’s womb. Our society, our government have now made it possible to legally end the life of an individual when there appears to be no chance that they will recover their former health. So.....now it is legal to end life at the very threshold or beginning and now it is legal to end life at the end. Where will it all end? It seems only a logical progression that eventually someone will want to decide which middle aged lives are worth living. Be clear on one thing Brothers; just because something is legal does not in any way guarantee that it is morally right according to God’s natural law. In St. Paul’s letter to the people of Corinth he makes the following statement with regard to seeking the good of others. “Everything is lawful, but not everything is beneficial. Everything is lawful, but not everything builds up, (1 Cor. 10, 23).” In his comments about sexual immorality in another part of his address to the Corinthians he states; “Everything is lawful for me, but not everything is beneficial. Everything is lawful for me but I will not

let myself be dominated by anything, (1 Cor. 6. 12).” In other words, it may be lawful but that does not necessarily make it right.

The Reflection

(To be read by the Leader)

In “**Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons & Families Considering or Opting for Death by Assisted Suicide or Euthanasia**” promulgated by the Catholic Bishops of Alberta and the Northwest Territories on Sept 14, 2016, the following introduction is offered.

“Death by assisted suicide and euthanasia has been made legal in Canada. These grievous affronts to the dignity of human life from beginning to natural end are never morally justified. The legal permission now granted to these practices does not change the moral law.” The teaching of the Catholic Church on these matters is clear. “Whatever its motives and means, direct euthanasia consists in putting an end to the lives of handicapped, sick or dying persons. It is morally unacceptable” (CCC 2277).

Brothers, this is a challenging and sensitive topic but a necessary one to put on the table. We need to understand what it is we believe (Church Teaching) and why it is we believe it, particularly about the dignity and value of life from conception until natural death. **“God looked at everything He had made, and He found it very good, (Gen. 1, 31).”**

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.

November 2016 Meeting

Dignity of Life, from Conception until Natural Death

Opening Prayer

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

The Reading

(To be read by the Leader)

“God created humanity in His image and likeness, in His divine image He created him; male and female He created them....God looked at everything He had made, and He found it very good, (Gen. 1, 27, 31)”

Brothers as we continue the journey to a clearer understanding of Church teaching with regard to Assisted Suicide and the related issues, we need to achieve some common ground with respect to definitions of particular phrases and terms. The reference material we are using is titled: “Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide, Urgent Questions.” and it is published by the “Catholic Organization for Life and Family, (COLF).” Website: www.colf.ca. In order to give you a sense of who COLF is consider the following. “COLF is co-sponsored by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCCB) and the Supreme Council of the Knights of Columbus. It promotes respect for human life and dignity and the essential role of the family.”

What is Euthanasia? “Euthanasia is the deliberate killing of someone, with or without that person’s consent, in order to eliminate all suffering. The individual who commits euthanasia must, therefore intend to kill the person and must cause the death for example, by lethal injection.” Brothers, we often hear the term “euthanized” with reference to the family pet that is very ill. This may leave us with a somewhat romantic or merciful view of euthanasia and this may be a reality when we are dealing with the family pet that we are responsible for and often quite attached to. Let us be clear, there is no parallel or similarity between intentionally putting your family pet to sleep and putting “Uncle Joe” to sleep. This sounds terribly disrespectful even as I write it, but in effect euthanasia does not belong in the same sentence as a human person who has a soul and has been given life by our Creator. Again Brothers for clarity, God is the giver of the gift of life and God is the Creator who will call us to be with Him in His time. We are not the masters; we are the stewards of the gift of life given to us. We are to care for our God-given lives and those of others with sincere and diligent desire to respect this gift from one end of the life spectrum (conception) until the other, natural death. We do not know better than the One who created us out of love.

The Reflection

(To be read by the Leader)

For clarity: It is not euthanasia when we respect a loved one’s refusal of a particular treatment or their request to discontinue a particular treatment. It is not euthanasia when we allow a loved one to “die naturally by withdrawing or withholding medical treatment when its burdens outweigh its benefits.”

It is not euthanasia “when the administration of drugs appropriate for the relief of pain and suffering, even if some anticipate that the unintended effect might be the shortening of life.” It is a medical reality that in some cases the amount of a particular pain killer may have a detrimental effect on the life of the individual receiving the drug. The term used here is “comfort care.” This is the case when recovery does not appear to be possible and so the goal becomes to make sure the individual is as comfortable as possible during their remaining time here in the world. The medical profession has made great advances in palliative and comfort care within the areas of pain management.

What is Assisted Suicide? “In cases of assisted suicide, a ‘third person’ (a legal term meaning a disinterested party) provides the means for the person to kill him or herself, (e.g. information, lethal substances [pills], or a weapon.” In short, assisted suicide occurs when for instance a medical professional (knowingly) is involved in administering the lethal concoction of drugs that would terminate a person’s life. Assisted suicide occurs when the individual whose life is at stake collaborates with another, (medical person or otherwise) in bringing their life to an end. Euthanasia can be understood as the same person whose life is at stake being brought to death without their own collaboration. In other words, someone else has made the decision for them. Please remember, respecting your loved one’s refusal of a treatment or request for withdrawal of treatment, (assuming sound mind of the individual) is not euthanasia nor is it assisted suicide. Also, recognizing that administration of some drugs in the appropriate amount to manage pain well may have the unintended effect of shortening one’s life. This is neither euthanasia nor assisted suicide. Brothers, next month, the Catholic Churches position on euthanasia and assisted suicide.

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Closing Prayer

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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.

December 2016 Meeting

Dignity of Life, from Conception until Natural Death

Opening Prayer

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

The Reading

(To be read by the Leader)

“God created humanity in His image and likeness, in His divine image He created him; male and female He created them....God looked at everything He had made, and He found it very good, (Gen. 1, 27, 31)”

Brothers, last month we defined the terms euthanasia and assisted suicide. This month we will look at the Catholic Church’s teaching on these two terms. In short the Catholic Church states that euthanasia is completely unacceptable both in principal and regardless what changes may be made to the Canadian Criminal Code of Law. As Catholics, our guiding principles are the **intrinsic value** and **sanctity of human life**. This, in conjunction with the fact that we are relational beings dependant on one another for the well-being of one another. Inter-relatedness imposes a sense of mutual responsibility for one another. We need to assist one another in becoming truly and fully human. To deny our brothers and sisters this opportunity, (which belongs to them and them alone) would be perpetuating a grave injustice. We cannot take our sister and brothers right to life from them. It is not ours to take.

“Although a legal distinction is made between euthanasia and assisted suicide, there is no ethical difference. The moral responsibility remains the same whether a third party provides the pills or gives an injection.” As Catholics, we believe that life itself is a gift of God’s love for us. We do not have absolute dominion over this profound gift. We are the stewards of this gift of life, not the owners. The conclusion is pretty straightforward. “Consequently, the time and circumstances of our birth and death are not ours to choose.” Nor are they anyone else’s for that matter. Death is a necessary part of our temporal life and it is the door that we must transition through in order to attain the eternal life promised on the day of our baptism, the eternal life that we as Catholic Christians profess belief in.

The Reflection

(To be read by the Leader)

“I confirm that euthanasia is a grave violation of the law of God, since it is the deliberate and morally unacceptable killing of a human person. The act of euthanasia appears all the more perverse if it is carried out by those, like relatives, who are supposed to treat a family member with patience and love, or by those such as doctors, who by virtue of their specific profession are supposed to care for the sick person even in the most

painful terminal stages...The choice of euthanasia becomes more serious when it takes the form of a murder committed by others on a person who has in no way requested it and who has never consented to it. The height of arbitrariness and injustice is reached when certain people, such as physicians or legislators, arrogate to themselves the power to decide who ought to live and who out to die, (St. John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, # 65-66).” These nearly prophetic words were written by then Holy Father, now Saint John Paul II, in March 1995 over twenty years ago and Brothers, the heifer is a lot further out of the barn today than it was then.

Although euthanasia is not legal in Canada, we see that twenty years almost to the day later, the government of Canada made it legal to assist someone to commit suicide. If it is legal today for an individual to have someone assist them in taking their own life, how long will it be before other entities will be given the responsibility of deciding when to end another individual’s life. We can say this seems a stretch but it is not. There are some lobby groups in Canada who in an effort to do an end around on the Criminal code which is federally legislated are trying to present euthanasia as a form of health care, (which falls under provincial legislation), using terms like assisted dying and “appropriate end of life care”. In summary, making euthanasia or assisted suicide legitimate options would diminish respect for human life. It would also have the potential of diminishing respect for all life from conception until natural death, a trust from a Catholic perspective that is essential to any well-functioning society.

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