



# News Release

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## **Knights of Columbus Supreme Knight's Awards Session Held on Eve of 140th Supreme Convention**

*Awards Session includes inaugural Blessed Michael McGivney Medal*

**NASHVILLE, Tenn.** — The Knights of Columbus welcomed guests to its 140th Supreme Convention with the Supreme Knight's Award Session, held at the historic Grand Ole Opry House. The awards session annually recognizes individual Knights, councils, assemblies and jurisdictions for outstanding achievement in the areas of membership growth and retention, charitable outreach, fraternal leadership, and insurance sales and service.

Supreme Knight Patrick Kelly commended the awardees for their hard work and thanked them for the inspiration they provide. "You show us what it means to be a Knight. You're an inspiration to all of us," Kelly said during an awards program that featured performances by the Hillbilly Thomists and chart-topping country star, Craig Morgan.

International Program Awards were given to K of C councils that conducted an outstanding program in each area of the organization's Faith in Action program categories over the past year: faith, family, community and life.

The session also recognized the Knights' International Family of the Year and featured the inaugural presentation of the Blessed McGivney Medal, which will annually honor a Knights of Columbus chaplain.

The first-place winners of the International Program Awards and a brief description of their activities, as well as more information about the Family of the Year and Blessed Michael McGivney Medal recipient, can be found below.

### **Faith Program of the Year**

**Sts. Anne and Joachim Council 11930**

**Fargo, North Dakota**

**“The Fisherman”**

“The Fisherman” is a men’s apostolate created by Council 11930 to help men grow in faith and virtue while also training them to become better servant leaders. Over eight months, candidates participate in 24 sessions of CORE training that focuses on topics related to missionary discipleship. Candidates learn about authentic masculinity, prayer and encountering Christ through the sacraments. Once certified as a “Fisherman,” the participant is asked to spread what he learned within his community. “The Fisherman” program encourages men to be better fathers, husbands and men of faith.

### **Family Program of the Year**

**Fort Belvoir Council 11170**

**Fort Belvoir, Virginia**

**“Leave No Military Family Behind”**

When Council 11170, a military council, learned that an estimated 200 young military families associated with Fort Belvoir couldn’t afford basic expenses, they adapted the Knights’ Leave No Neighbor Behind program to assist efforts of Army-related community service. The council’s initial goal was to provide \$5,000 in commissary gift cards to these families, but through dedicated effort, they doubled that amount. This program led to the recruitment of new members and helped over 150 families during the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays.

### **Community Program of the Year**

**St. Wojciech Patron of Poland Council 15267**

**Tomaszów Lubelski, Poland**

**“Mercy Center”**

Members of Council 15267 immediately came to the aid of Ukrainian refugees fleeing to Poland following the Russian invasion of their country. By Feb. 27, 2022 — only three days after the start of the invasion — the council had helped construct and organize operations for the “Tent of Hope and Mercy” at the Polish-Ukrainian border crossing in Hrebenne. On March 15, the Mercy Center, as it came to be named, was enlarged to host up to 150 refugees thanks to support from the Knights of Columbus Supreme Council’s Ukraine Solidarity Fund and the Catholic Near East Welfare Association (CNEWA). The heated tent was primarily used by mothers with children and the elderly. Volunteers — which consisted of various Catholic groups, led by the Knights — provided the refugees with around-the-clock support. Provisions included meals and hot drinks, pre-medical and spiritual care, childcare and transportation to reception points. The tent also established a chapel, where priests, religious sisters and brothers regularly served the refugees. Knights of Columbus from other parts of Poland came forward to act as volunteers as well. On April 12, Supreme Knight Patrick Kelly visited the Mercy Center, and on May 2, Cardinal Timothy Dolan and representatives of CNEWA celebrated Mass in the chapel. After 96 days of operation and an estimated 300,000 people hosted (approximately 10% of Ukrainian refugees), the facility ceased operation due to greatly reduced traffic at the border with Ukraine.

### **Life Program of the Year**

**St. Clare of Assisi Council 9708**

**Houston, Texas**

**“Pregnancy Center Expansion and Item Drive”**

Council 9708 provided labor and supplies to help a Catholic pregnancy resource center expand its space by 50%, allowing the staff to accommodate more clients, provide parenting classes, and create an area for baby supplies and other items. The council replaced and upgraded electric outlets; painted rooms, a hallway and doors; and built custom cabinets. A member also donated his company’s crew for two and a half weeks, during which they installed flooring and baseboards and extended a wall. Seminarians also stopped by during the project to assist and offer support. Along with their work, the Knights donated \$2,500 in baby items collected from their parish and a check for \$6,500. In total, the Knights gave over \$10,000 in donations, materials and labor.

### **International Family of the Year**

**The Sewell Family**

**St. John Paul II Council 10821**

**Douglasville, Georgia**

Robert Sewell is a devoted Knight of 15 years who has always been a steady volunteer along with his wife, Tracey, and their eight children. Two of their sons — Robert A. Sewell III (22) and Logan A. Sewell (21) — are also Knights and members of Council 10821. Robert has served in many roles within his council, including deputy grand knight, district warden, membership director, fundraising committee member and youth group coordinator.

The Sewell family often volunteers in their parish and community. When the local pregnancy resource center organized a Walk for Life, Robert, Robert III, Gabriel and Luke served as active “walkers” and financial donors, raising more than \$101,500. In support of the Atlanta Martin Luther King Jr. Eucharistic Celebration, Robert, Sade, Gabriel and Luke participated as lectors and altar servers during a Mass held at Lyke House, the Catholic Center at the Atlanta University Center Consortium. During the Mass, the Sewell family received special recognition for more than five years of service to Cardinal Wilton Gregory, then-archbishop of Atlanta, and to Auxiliary Bishop Joel Konzen of Atlanta.

### **Blessed Michael McGivney Medal**

This year, the supreme knight and the Knights of Columbus Board of Directors instituted a new award (which was approved by resolution last year at the 139th Supreme Convention) called the Blessed Michael McGivney Medal, named for the Knights’ founder. The medal will be awarded annually to a Knights of Columbus chaplain whose priestly zeal and exemplary service are in the finest traditions of Blessed Michael McGivney.

The inaugural recipient of the Blessed Michael McGivney Medal is:

**Father Matthew Keller**  
**Former State Chaplain of New Mexico**  
**Fray Marcos Council 1783**  
**Gallup, New Mexico**

Father Matthew Keller has been a Knights of Columbus chaplain for 15 years. He is an Anglo priest born and raised on the Navajo Nation, where he has spent a lifetime serving the Native and non-Native peoples of the southwest. Father Keller gave up a budding country music songwriting career when he joined the seminary in the 1990s. He joined the Knights of Columbus following his ordination in 2002 due to the support he received from the organization's RSVP program. He helped found multiple new councils and currently serves as the chaplain of Council 1783 and Fray Marcos de Niza Assembly 686. He regularly brings other priests and deacons to Knights of Columbus meetings with him. Father Keller served as the state chaplain of New Mexico for several years, helping that jurisdiction achieve membership growth awards four times. As state chaplain, he personally reached out to the bishops of New Mexico and received permission to be in regular contact with the state's priests, leading to a resurgence of chaplains attending meetings, a spiritual revival among councils and a surge in membership.

As the current vicar general of the Diocese of Gallup, he has been instrumental in liturgical and eucharistic revival in New Mexico and Arizona. He has a great devotion to the Eucharist and introduced eucharistic adoration at all state meetings while state chaplain. His eucharistic processions also feature prominently in materials and videos created by the Knights of Columbus to support the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' National Eucharistic Revival. As a spiritual advisor to numerous young Catholics over the years, Father Keller led many young men to their vocations in married or religious life. When he served as diocesan vocations director, he fostered a surge in vocations for the Diocese of Gallup, which had not had a single seminarian in 20 years. To pay for the education of these young men, who belonged to the poorest diocese in the United States, he partnered with New Mexico and Arizona Knights to start the V8 for Vocations project. V8 for Vocations invites Knights and seminarians to work together to fix up classic V8 muscle cars that are raffled off nationwide. This program raises over \$300,000 for vocations every year and has been featured in national news outlets such as *USA Today* and Fox News, in addition to *Columbia* magazine and Knights of Columbus videos.

### **About the Knights of Columbus**

In 1882, Blessed Michael McGivney, a young parish priest in New Haven, Conn., founded the Knights of Columbus to serve the needs of a largely immigrant Catholic community. What began as a small fraternal benefit society has since grown into one of the world's leading international charitable organizations, with 2 million members in more than 16,000 local councils. From July 2021 to June 2022, Knights around the world donated nearly 48 million service hours and nearly \$154 million for worthy causes in their communities. The Knights of Columbus also offers extensive life insurance products to members and their families. Knights of Columbus Insurance currently has more than \$119 billion of life insurance policies in force and was named by Forbes as one of *America's Best Insurance Companies 2022*. In addition, the Knights provides investment services in accord with Catholic social teaching through Knights of Columbus Asset Advisors, which holds total assets of more than \$28 billion in assets under management. Based

on the founding principles of charity, unity and fraternity, the Order remains committed to strengthening Catholic families and parishes and to practicing faith in action through service to all in need. To learn more or to join the Knights of Columbus, please visit [kofc.org/join](http://kofc.org/join).

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