

Installation Address of Supreme Knight Patrick E. Kelly
St. Mary's Church
New Haven
June 11, 2021

Your Excellency Archbishop Lori, Reverend Fathers, Supreme Officers, directors, state deputies and distinguished guests.

It's an honor to be here with you as together we are officially installed in our leadership roles. It's a particular blessing to be gathered in this historic and beautiful church, which is dedicated to Our Lady and is the permanent resting place of our founder, Blessed Michael McGivney. This is the spiritual home of every Knight of Columbus. And I cannot think of a more fitting place to begin our united work.

We are the heirs of the brave and faithful men who gathered here nearly 140 years ago. They founded the Order here in St. Mary's Church, and from the very beginning, we have been Our Lady's Knights. Our devotion to the Mother of the Savior has only grown through the decades. It was particularly strengthened by Past Supreme Knight Carl Anderson, who, on the occasion of his installation 20 years ago, consecrated his administration and the entire Order to Our Lady of Guadalupe.

Over his two decades of remarkable service, Past Supreme Knight Anderson courageously advanced the mission and vision of Blessed Michael McGivney. And less than one year ago, we witnessed our founder's beatification. In Father McGivney, we have not only an example of the kind of service to which we are called but also a powerful intercessor to guide us in our mission of Charity, Unity and Fraternity. By raising him to the honors of the altar, the Church has confirmed the holiness of our founder. At the same time, how can we not also see in Father McGivney's beatification a resounding confirmation of his vision in founding the Knights of Columbus? Certainly, the Lord is confirming not only where we have been; he is showing us the way forward.

I consider it a special honor to accept the office of supreme knight during this Year of St. Joseph. This year is providential for the Knights of Columbus because there are few things the world needs more right now than men in the mold of St. Joseph. This is a time for men, for *leaders*, who are faithful and virtuous witnesses to Christ and his Church.

I would like to reflect briefly upon two roles of St. Joseph. They both align with the vision of our founder and provide a model for how we as

Knights must witness to the world. These two roles present St. Joseph as “Guardian of the Family” and “Guardian of the Truth.”

St. Joseph’s role as guardian of the family is immediately apparent. God entrusted to St. Joseph the duty to protect the Holy Family. He listened to the Lord in humility and obedience and then made his life one of service and sacrifice to his wife and child. As Knights, we are also called to lead such a life.

In announcing the Year of St. Joseph, Pope Francis spoke eloquently of Joseph’s “creative courage” (*Patris Corde*, 5). He noted how St. Joseph consistently faced unexpected challenges: the fact of Mary’s pregnancy, the lack of a safe place for her to give birth, Herod’s slaughtering of the innocents, and the prophecy that Mary was to be pierced with a sword. In each of these situations, St. Joseph was obedient, entrusting himself completely to the will of God and summoning courage to face an unknown future.

In our own day, the family faces an unknown and precarious future. Catholic families are struggling to live out their faith and raise their children amid a culture that is increasingly hostile to our beliefs. Catholic husbands and fathers, especially fathers of young children, need the encouragement and support of the Knights of Columbus. We can inspire them with the creative courage needed to keep their families strong in the faith. They need our witness and example to guide them in embracing their vocation to heroic generosity and self-sacrifice, for the good of their wives and children. So let us, like St. Joseph, embrace our role as guardians of the family.

Let us also look to St. Joseph as the “Guardian of the Truth.” The truth that Joseph protected had a name: Jesus Christ, who is the Truth incarnate. As Knights, we too must serve this Truth. This is not easy in our day. As was the case for Blessed Michael McGivney, we live in a time of bigotry and intolerance. Key truths — truths about marriage, about life in the womb, about the nature of the family and the meaning of freedom — are often denied and even vilified. Yet, this makes our commitment to truth all the more important. We stand for these truths, for what is truly right, truly just and truly loving.

By standing for truth, we as an Order will continue to be a sign of unity — the lasting and *true* unity that comes from a commitment to Christ above all other things. This unity in truth is grounded in the truth of the Eucharist, what the Second Vatican Council called the “source and summit of the Christian Life” (CCC,1324; *Lumen Gentium*, 11). We know that Jesus

Christ is really, truly present — body, blood, soul and divinity — in the Blessed Sacrament. Committed to our principle of Unity, let us strive to serve Christ in the Eucharist.

The example of St. Joseph teaches us how to be Knights of the Eucharist. He was the guardian of the first tabernacle — beginning with Mary herself when she bore Christ in her womb, and then in the home where he and Mary lived with Jesus. As Knights, we too are called to have a special reverence for Christ's real presence. The more we dedicate ourselves to Christ in the Eucharist, the more we will be a sign of unity in an age of division and disbelief. This we will do, like St. Joseph, as guardians of the truth.

Let us ask St. Joseph and Blessed Michael Joseph McGivney to intercede for us and give us the grace to commit ourselves more fully to Christ. In so doing, we will be a sign of unity in this age and a source of light and courage for the men and families living in these challenging times. It is a high calling, and like previous generations of Knights, the time has come for us to answer the call, out of love for Christ and his Church.

United in this Eucharist, celebrated in the presence of our blessed founder, in the Church of St. Mary, in the Year of St. Joseph, may each of us lead, in the words of St. Paul, “may each of us lead, in the words of St. Paul, a life “worthy of the call [we] have received”” (Eph 4:1).

Thank you. *Vivat Jesus!*