

Pastor's Notes: The Knights of Columbus - Part 1 of 2

March 7, 2021

On Feb. 24, 2021, I interviewed Adam Foster, Basilica parishioner and active member of the Knights of Columbus. The first part of our interview is presented here.



Fr. Carter: Welcome, Adam Foster. Adam Foster is recipient of this year's The Servant of God Father Patrick Ryan Service Award here at the Basilica. He has been heavily involved in lots of activities that help his fellow man in the name of Christ, and in particular, he belongs to the Knights of Columbus. Tell us what the Knights of Columbus is.

Adam Foster: The Knights of Columbus is a Catholic fraternal organization based on the principles of charity, unity, fraternity, and patriotism. They were founded by Blessed Michael McGivney in 1882. And there's currently around 2 million Catholic men who are members. Knights of Columbus Father Patrick J. Ryan Council 610 is the council that serves the Basilica. We are the second oldest Knights of Columbus Council in Tennessee, and we are the first Knights of Columbus Council in Chattanooga.

Fr. Carter: Awesome. So we've got a venerable history here, and even a connection to our own Servant of God, whose Cause for Canonization is being postulated from our parish. You also mentioned the founder of the Knights of Columbus, and that's Blessed Michael J. McGivney. Tell me more about Blessed Michael J. McGivney.

Adam Foster: When he was a priest, life was pretty hard on Catholic immigrants in the United States. A lot of times, if the father died, the families would get busted up, the children would get put into foster care, and they wouldn't be able to practice their Catholic faith. Blessed McGivney was thinking of ways how he could address this problem. He came up with a fraternal benefit order, where everybody could kind of pitch in and help out families, if the breadwinner dies, to keep the kids in the home, to keep the kids Catholic. And his legacy lives on today, through the Knights of Columbus benefit program. He had a miracle approved. And on Oct. 31, 2020, he received his beatification. He is now just one step away from becoming a saint of the Church. They need one more miracle.

Fr. Carter: We'll be sure to pray for that miracle. Along with a miracle for our own Father Patrick Ryan. There's a lot of parallels there, you know. Father Ryan was involved in ministering to people with a pandemic. There's a parallel with our day with Coronavirus, that he ministered to people who are dying from a disease, and now we are trying to imitate his values. But in a parallel way, Father Michael J. McGivney was ministering to migrant workers who had no safety net, had no way of caring for their families if they were to lose their income or even lose their lives. Do you see parallels in our migrant community now?

Adam Foster: Yes. Most recently, we've had a lot of members from the Spanish speaking community at the Basilica join. I assume that a lot of those people don't have access to the type of benefits that English speaking Americans have. We have more access to benefits. So, the Knights of Columbus can offer benefits to those families. I personally carry a term life policy for myself, so that if something were to happen to me and I died, my children would be taken care of. Also, I carry policies on my children. There's also investment opportunities with the Knights of Columbus now. If you want to make sure that the money that you invest represents your Catholic morals, they make sure that anything they put money into follows Catholic social teaching. So it provides Catholics with an opportunity to invest morally.

Fr. Carter: Yes, conscientious investment. Good. I think a lot of people think that the Knights of Columbus insurance program is some kind of gimmick just to make money. But it seems to be that it was part of the heart of the original mission of caring for the widows and orphans of the men. It was a men's fraternal benefit society, whose purpose was to care for the widows and orphans, should the man die and not be able to sustain his family, and that can take the form now of the life insurance program.

Adam Foster: Right. And it's not just life insurance. There's other investments like your more traditional retirement investing options.

Fr. Carter: So they give more opportunities, then, to mutually benefit together from a Catholic perspective. We bind ourselves together for the sustenance of our families. That's beautiful. Besides all this insurance talk and investment talk, what's the kind of meat and potatoes of the Knights of Columbus nowadays? What do the Knights of Columbus do?

Adam Foster: Again, we're founded on the principles of charity, unity, fraternity, and patriotism. A lot of the activities and programs we carry out around our councils fall under one of those categories. We're very active in the pro-life movement. The Knights of Columbus has been involved with the March for Life since there's been a March for Life. We fund ultrasound machines for pregnancy help centers, because we know that often when women can see the ultrasound they realize the life that is there. Locally with our council, we do a Habitat for Humanity build every quarter. We've got one coming up on March 13. We recently started our Food for Families program. That's a program that the Supreme Council, which is in New Haven, Connecticut, encourages all the councils to be a part of, to raise money or to get food donations for local food banks and community kitchens. We're doing 40 cans for Lent that benefits the community kitchen. We are also raising money for the Community Kitchen. Our goal is to raise \$2,500 and we will match \$100 for every \$500 raised. And the Supreme Council pays that matching fund.

The interview will conclude in the March 14 pastor's notes. Mr. Foster speaks more about the activities and opportunities to join and support the Knights of Columbus (KofC.org or from the Basilica website). The full video and transcript of the interview will be posted on the Basilica's website.