

KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS

Clergy Appreciation Dinner

St. Augustine Cathedral, October 29, 2015

- What a special honor to be here tonight with all of you, dear Brother Knights, and my brother priests and deacons as well.
- A special thank you to our State officers, Mr. Ken Unterbrink-State Secretary and Mr. Bill Chasse-State Advocate who have travelled here tonight and represent the Michigan State Council.
- Thank you to all those who have put together this lovely evening in appreciation for the ministry of the clergy. We really appreciate your kindness, and are ever grateful to all the Knights for the contributions you make to the life and vitality of the Church through the several Councils here in Kalamazoo and those throughout the entire Diocese.
- What an exciting time this month of October has been:
 - Pope Francis' Pastoral Visit to the United States---- Washington, New York and Philadelphia.
 - I got to greet Pope Francis at St. Matthew Cathedral in Washington and extended to him in your name our prayers and loyalty...

- I also wanted you to know that I got to meet the Supreme Knight, Carl Anderson, his wife and some of his family. They were on the same bus as I was from the Hotel to the Mass of Canonization, and I greeted him as well in the name of all the Knights here in our Diocese.
- The Knights hosted all the Bishops at the St. John Paul II Center between the Pope's meeting with the Bishops and the Mass of Canonization of St. Junipero Serra
- Of course, immediately following the Pope's visit here to the U.S., he returned to begin the Ordinary Synod on the Family which just concluded last week.
- Pope Francis' comment at the end of the Synod: *"In effect, for the Church to conclude the Synod means to return to our true 'journeying together' in bringing to every part of the world, to every diocese, to every community and every situation, the light of the Gospel, the embrace of the church and the support of God's mercy."*-----How beautifully that reflects what we're gathered together for this evening.
- So---these have been very exciting times for our Church here in our country and universally as well.....

- Tonight I wish to share just a few brief thoughts on another very exciting opportunity that is coming very quickly, namely the Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy. Our Holy Father, Pope Francis, has called for this Holy Year to begin on December 8, 2015 and continue through to the Feast of Christ the King next year, November 20, 2016.
- Pope Francis has called this year to focus on the essential importance of “God’s love and mercy”, a recurring theme for our Holy Father and definitely a “theme” he puts into practice in his own life all the time. We saw that during his Pastoral Visit----he met the President, the Bishops, the Congress and the General Assembly of the United Nations; but he took the greatest delight in having lunch at the soup kitchen in inner-city Washington, visiting the school children in Harlem, and spending time with hardened criminals in Philadelphia, reminding them that their lives still had meaning.
- The “Bull of Indiction,” which is entitled *The Face of Mercy*, is a rich document and one I encourage you to read
- In it Pope Francis writes:
 - The very first words are: “*Jesus Christ is the Face of the Father’s Mercy*”!(#1)

- He goes on to say: “*Mercy is the force that reawakens us to new life and instills in us the courage to look to the future with hope.*”
 - And he urges us all to practice the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy.
- One of the reasons why I’d like to speak with you about this topic is because the Knights of Columbus are devoted to the works of mercy and its fruits of hope. So I would say that we are well-positioned to enter into this Year of Mercy with hearts and minds renewed in the principles and practices of who the Knights of Columbus are, what we believe in and for the principles for which the Knights stand.
- More than a century ago, Venerable Father Michael McGivney founded the Knights of Columbus out of a desire to live the mercy of God in the lives of families and the poor and suffering members of society.
- Fast forward to today and there are countless inspirational examples of where the Knights of Columbus have taken this vision and how you have been a constant and positive force of men who truly reflect the merciful heart of God, who rally around their clergy, who encourage and support Vocations, in fraternal love reach out to the families of those who struggle in times of need, who stand up for the voiceless and

the powerless, especially those who are unborn and those on the fringes of society, who give witness to the dignity of the human person---the right to life---and the essential importance of religious freedom--- – In other words, those who are truly living out the principles of charity, unity, fraternity and patriotism.

- My dear Knights, this upcoming Year of Mercy is a wonderful time----the ideal moment----to proudly advance the mission of the Knights of Columbus here in our Diocese and to encourage other men to join in this great mission as envisioned by Venerable Father McGivney.
- As Pope Francis wrote: “How much I desire that the year to come will be *steeped in mercy*, so that we can go out to every man and woman, bringing the goodness and tenderness of God!”
- My brother knights, in *charity* let us always reflect the life of Christ Whom we are challenged to imitate. Let the **corporal works of mercy** help us to build a sense of unity within the Body of Christ by continuing to 1) feed the hungry, 2) give drink to the thirsty, 3) clothe the naked, 4) give shelter to the homeless, 5) visit the sick, 6) care for the imprisoned, and 7) bury the dead. Let the **spiritual works of mercy** help us to strengthen our fraternity within our communities of faith by

continuing to: 1) admonish the sinner; 2) instruct the ignorant; 3) counsel the doubtful; 4) comfort the sorrowful; 5) bear wrongs patiently; 6) forgive all injuries; and 7) pray for the living and the dead.

- My dear Brother Knights, that is what you do, day in and day out as part of your service as Knights of Columbus.
- As Knights of Columbus, you are on the “front lines” so that you can be the hands and feet, the eyes and ears, the heart and the will of Our Lord Jesus Himself. You are the ones who can do what Pope Francis calls us all to do so regularly---to take the Church out to the peripheries----to be the Presence of Christ to those who cannot, or will not, come to us; to allow the Church to be the “field hospital” which cares for those in need; to get our hands dirty as we help to brighten up the lives of those in need.
- In doing so you are “preaching the Gospel” and giving witness to the love of Christ for all His people, especially for the poor and vulnerable.
- In a spirit of what it means to be a real man----strong in faith and united to Christ---let us stand as a force and a presence, in the church, in our families, in our neighborhoods, in our workplaces, and wherever we go as a witness to what the unconditional love and mercy of God is.

- As Pope Francis wrote so beautifully about this Year of Mercy, may we “*serve as a leaven of reconciliation and unity for the whole human family.*”
- May this *fraternity* we have established be even more strengthened and advanced in our parishes and in the world around us. You, dear brother Knights, are very well-versed in the challenges families face because you face them yourselves--- you can recognize the signs of when another family is struggling.
- In fraternal love you and in an even more profound way, I believe that you are being called during this Year of Mercy to accompany those who are struggling, those who are hurting, those who are in need. It is up to you as their brothers to comfort those who are afflicted and to counsel the doubtful and to continue to be prayerful and inspirational witnesses to our faith through your own example.
- Finally, during this Year of Mercy, I encourage you to continue your resolve to strengthen our great nation. Our patriotism affirms our belief in “one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice (mercy) for all.”
- My dear friends, we all know of the threats we have to our religious freedom, to the lives of the unborn, to try to find ways to work for justice.

- Pope Francis wrote, “Mercy is not opposed to justice but rather expresses God’s way of reaching out to the sinner, offering him a new chance to look at himself, convert and believe.”
- We can all be that “voice” through the collective good works of the Knights of Columbus; but each of us also needs to let our voice be heard as well through our individual actions and choices.
- May we prayerfully consider our participation in this Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, living out the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy and embodying the principles of the Knights of Columbus of charity, unity, fraternity and patriotism.
- In that way, we will truly be the face of God’s love and mercy which Pope Francis so beautifully describes as the “the beating heart of the Gospel.”
- Thank you again for all you do to strengthen our Diocese and each of our communities of faith.
- God Bless You.----“Vivat Jesus!”