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## The Works of the Jnights of Columbus as the Way of Catholic Volunteerism

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Forum Teologiczne 16, 195-207

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2015

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## THE WORKS OF THE KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS AS THE WAY OF CATHOLIC VOLUNTEERISM

**Summary.** “Volunteerism” is a wide term to describe altruistic behaviours or activities to promote human goodness, well-being, and integrity. Christian people have always been encouraged to follow Christ, who *went around doing good* (Acts 10: 38).

Among Christian volunteers special recognition is due to the Knights of Columbus, who through numerous activities humbly defend basic values. The Organization, founded by Rev. Michael J. McGivney in New Haven, CT in 1882, provides its members with brotherly support and help for their families. At present the organization of the Knights of Columbus is built on more than 1.8 million members, united in more than 14,000 councils worldwide, including Poland. Currently, the Fraternity every year contributes to charitable works \$170 million and 70 million hours of volunteer labour under the motto, „In Service to One, in Service to All”. The history of the Order is a history of service, a history of responding to a variety of needs. The Order stands up for the „Culture of Life” and life-affirming laws against abortion, euthanasia and physician assisted suicide, and medical procedures that violate human life. The Knights promote a „Culture of Inclusion” by support for people living with disabilities, confirming that they are significant and welcomed. Serving a „Culture of Love” brother Knights offer food to the hungry, warm clothes for the needy, shelter for the homeless, and help for those affected by tragic occurrences or natural disasters. Knights advocate „Healthy Culture”, the Christian roots and identity of Western civilization, and believe in the renewal of society by the promotion of lasting values and principles. The Order, founded in poverty and inconvenience, and inspired by the Holy Spirit, goes on with good deeds, especially to *the least of brothers and sisters* (Matthew 25: 40) of Jesus Christ.

**Key words:** Knights of Columbus, volunteerism, volunteer, charity, healthy culture.

“Volunteerism”, “volunteering” or “volunteer work” are general terms used to describe a wide spectrum of altruistic behaviours and activities undertaken to promote human goodness, virtue, well-being, rectitude, tranquillity and integrity. Most of the definitions of volunteerism refer to the etymological meaning of the Latin verb *volo, velle, volui* – to wish, to be willing; noun *voluntas, voluntatis*

– wish, will; and the noun *voluptas, voluptatis* – pleasure<sup>1</sup>. Such a reference stresses that a volunteer performs a work or service from free choice<sup>2</sup>, is not getting paid money, nor is getting something in return<sup>3</sup>, but is rewarded by the pleasure, joyful satisfaction, and personal fulfilment<sup>4</sup> that comes from affirming a mental power<sup>5</sup>.

Authorities of social science tend to agree that volunteerism is a work that fulfils the following conditions: “freely chosen, unpaid, part of an organization (normally non-profit), and benefits the larger community”<sup>6</sup>.

Labour law brings to consideration the awareness that volunteer work, like any other work, should be regulated in its legal issues of the value of life and health, equal opportunity, protection of privacy, etc.<sup>7</sup>

Christian people of all ages were encouraged to live out their faith by works of charity, compassion, loving kindness, volunteerism, and follow the example of the Good Samaritan<sup>8</sup>, the patron saint of Christian volunteers<sup>9</sup>, and the figure of Christ, who himself *went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him* (Acts 10: 38). As pope Benedict XVI stated: “For Christians, volunteer work is not merely an expression of good will. It is based on a personal experience of Christ”<sup>10</sup>.

Among those, special recognition for the 132 years of noble presence in social life is due to the Knights of Columbus, who, through numerous of activities, humbly defend the values so crucial to a healthy culture and civilization of love<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> E. Andrews, *A First Latin Book, or Progressive Lessons in Reading and Writing Latin*, Boston, MA 1869, p. 243.

<sup>2</sup> E. Sargent, *A School Manual of English Etymology, And Text-book of Derivatives, Prefixes and Suffixes, with Numerous Exercises for the Use of Schools*, Philadelphia, PA 1873, p. 169.

<sup>3</sup> E. Barnes, *Why Volunteers Get All the Breaks*, Bloomington, IN 2009, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> C. Bennett, *Volunteering, The Selfish Benefits, Achieve Deep-down Satisfaction and Create that Desire in Others*, Ojai, CA 2001, p. 28.

<sup>5</sup> J. Mitchell, *Significant Etymology or Roots, Stems, and Branches of the English Language*, Edinburg, London 1908, p. 392.

<sup>6</sup> F. Duguid, K. Mündel, D. Schugurensky, *Volunteer Work, Informal Learning and Social Action*, Rotterdam 2013, p. 18.

<sup>7</sup> J. Murray, *The Legal Regulation of Volunteer Work*, in: *Labour Law and Labour Market Regulation, Essays on the Construction, Constitution and Regulation of Labour Markets and Work Relationships*, C. Arup (ed.), Riverwood, NSW 2006, p. 698.

<sup>8</sup> K. McCarthy, *American Creed, Philanthropy and the Rise of Civil Society, 1700–1865*, Chicago, IL 2005, p. 60.

<sup>9</sup> G. Keizer, *Putting Our Money Where Our Mouth Is, The Biblical Case for Economic Justice*, in: *Getting on Message: Challenging the Christian Right from the Heart of the Gospel*, P. Laarman (ed.), Boston, MA 2006, p. 200.

<sup>10</sup> Benedict XVI, „*Goodness Exists and... It Is Growing in Our Midst*”, *Papal Address to Bishops Directing Charity Groups*, Vatican City, November 11, 2011, in: *ZENIT The world seen from Rome* [online], access: 11/11/2011, <<http://www.zenit.org/en/articles/papal-address-to-bishops-directing-charity-groups>>.

<sup>11</sup> A. Pelowski, *An Urgent Call for Renewal*, *Columbia*, vol. 94 (11/2014), p. 2.

Social relations in New England during the XIX and early XX centuries were marked by prejudice and economic discrimination, which were characterised by the slogan “Catholics Need Not Apply”. This notice was notoriously placed above the doors of employment agencies or in newspaper job advertisements. What were left over on the job market of the time for Catholic people were the simplest positions at minimum wage, in the mines, on the railroads, and in the sweatshops. With greatly limited access to education the future didn’t look bright<sup>12</sup>.

In October 1881, a group of sixty struggling Catholic workers, concerned about their families, met with their pastor, Rev. Michael J. McGivney, in the crypt of St. Mary’s Church in New Haven, Connecticut. They developed the idea of forming an assembly to provide its members with brotherly support and crucial backing for their families in time of health problems, bereavement, and funerals<sup>13</sup>. On February 2, 1882 the association was effected, and on March 29, 1882 under the local law a charter was declared<sup>14</sup>, which states: “The purposes for which said corporation is formed are the following: (a) of rendering pecuniary aid to its members, their families and beneficiaries of members and their families; (b) of rendering mutual aid and assistance to its sick, disabled and needy members and their families; (c) of promoting social and intellectual intercourse among its members and their families; and (d) of promoting and conducting educational, charitable, religious, social welfare, war relief and welfare, and public relief work. To more effectually carry out its purposes, said corporation may establish, accumulate and maintain a reserve fund or other funds in such manner of in such amounts as it may determine”<sup>15</sup>.

The choice of Christopher Columbus as the patron reflects the society’s regard for the Catholic origins of the American Continents and its endeavour to legitimise Catholic standing in public life<sup>16</sup>. The Order believed that Catholic loyalty is attuned with patriotic American nationality, presented Catholic people with public identity, and encouraged them to actively participate in the life of a democratic society<sup>17</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> G. Falk, *Stigma, How We Treat Outsiders*, Amherst, NY 2001, p. 223.

<sup>13</sup> V. O’Malley, *Saints of North America*, Huntington, IN 2004, p. 302.

<sup>14</sup> T. Knight, *Knights of Columbus, Illustrated, A Complete Ritual and History of the First Three Degrees, Including All Secret “work.” By a Former Member of the Order*, Chicago, IL 1920, p. 14.

<sup>15</sup> *Charter of the Knights of Columbus Granted by the General Assembly of the State of Connecticut*, sec. 2, in: *Charter Constitution and the Laws of the Knights of Columbus, Governing the Supreme, State and Subordinate Councils With Amendments to and Including The Year 2006*, New Haven, CT 2006, p. 3.

<sup>16</sup> C. Kauffman, *Knights of Columbus*, in: *The United States in the First World War, An Encyclopedia*, A. Venzon (ed.), New York, NY 1999, p. 321–322.

<sup>17</sup> A. Koehlinger, *Knights of Columbus*, in: *The Oxford Encyclopedia of American Social History*, L. Duménil (ed.), New York, NY 2012, p. 588–589.

From the beginning, while the financial resources were limited, the work done by the Knights was mainly a labour of love<sup>18</sup>. Presently, it is estimated that the Fraternity annually contributes to charitable works \$170 million and 70 million hours of volunteer labour<sup>19</sup>. It became a tradition that reports on the Order's work, besides the information on money value, include the amount of hours donated by Knights to the project.

Current Supreme Knight Carl A. Anderson explains that the long-time motto "In Service to One, in Service to All" expresses the belief that the two commandments of love stand at the centre of life of the Knights of Columbus, life that is "filled with charity, motivated by faith and hope"<sup>20</sup>. The history of the Knights of Columbus is a history of service, a history of responding to a variety of needs, in which natural disasters, and social conflicts and challenges are landmarks.

Originally, initiation into the Order was integrated of three degrees reflecting three foremost values: charity, unity and fraternity. In 1899, the extraordinary commission proposed a supplementary fourth degree: patriotic. The proposal was accepted<sup>21</sup>.

At present, the organizational structures of the Knights of Columbus are built on a membership of more than 1,862,774 million brother Knights united in 14,871 councils, adding new members or providing services in 29 countries throughout the world. The Order in Poland has more than 2,000 members, and is the fastest growing in the world. The highest Fourth (Patriotic) Degree Knights, besides being members of councils, are united in Fourth Degree assemblies. Most recent reports account for 340,960 Patriotic Degree Knights in 3,169 assemblies<sup>22</sup>. The headquarter of the Organization is located in New Haven, Connecticut, home of the Supreme Council of The Knights of Columbus with Supreme Knight Carl A. Anderson.

With its focus on a strong connection between spiritual life and service provided to others, the Order gives testimony to a deep understanding and ful-

<sup>18</sup> C. O'Neill, *The Story of Columbian Knighthood, Donahoe's Magazine, An Illustrated Monthly Journal* vol. 59 (January, 1908 to June, 1908), p. 57.

<sup>19</sup> C. Anderson, *Annual Report of the Supreme Knight, 132nd Supreme Convention, Orlando, Florida, August 5-7, 2014, Columbia*, vol. 94 (10/2014), p. 24-25.

<sup>20</sup> C. Anderson, *In Service to One, in Service to All*, in: *Knights of Columbus* [online], access: 8/1/2010, <[http://www.kofc.org/en/news/supreme/detail/fromthesk\\_20100801.html](http://www.kofc.org/en/news/supreme/detail/fromthesk_20100801.html)>.

<sup>21</sup> C. Dronet, *A Century of Acadian Culture, The Development of a Cajun Community, Erath (1899-1999)*, Erath, LU 2000, p. 176.

<sup>22</sup> C. Anderson, *Annual Report of the Supreme Knight, 132nd Supreme Convention...*, p. 29-34; see also C. Anderson, *Annual Report of the Supreme Knight, 131st Supreme Convention, San Antonio, Texas, August 6*, New Haven, CT 2013, p. 28-29. The Knights of Columbus have established councils or charitable institutions in Afghanistan, Bahamas, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Cuba, Dominican Republic, France, Germany, Great Britain, Guatemala, Haiti, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Lithuania, Mexico, Pakistan, Philippines, Poland, Puerto Rico, Uganda, Ukraine, United States, Vietnam, Virgin Islands, and Zambia.

filment of the invitation by St. John Paul II: “This voluntary service, which draws from the richness of the consecrated life, should be held in great esteem; it is however necessary to provide proper formation so that, besides being competent, volunteers always have supernaturally motivated intentions and, in their projects, a strong sense of community and of the Church”<sup>23</sup>.

## 1. A Culture of Life

Catholic people believe in strong ties between volunteer work and a culture of life that finds its expression in the words of Pope Benedict XVI: “Significantly, our time has also seen the growth and spread of different kinds of volunteer work, which assume responsibility for providing a variety of services. I wish here to offer a special word of gratitude and appreciation to all those who take part in these activities in whatever way. For young people, this widespread involvement constitutes a school of life which offers them a formation in solidarity and in readiness to offer others not simply material aid but their very selves. The anti-culture of death, which finds expression for example in drug use, is thus countered by an unselfish love which shows itself to be a culture of life by the very willingness to *lose itself* (cf. Luke 17: 33 *et passim*) for others”<sup>24</sup>.

Knights of Columbus are present in today’s world as strong pro-life champions, undertaking the Catholic rhetoric in the world as an arena of “an enormous and dramatic clash between good and evil, death and life, the *culture of death* and the *culture of life*”<sup>25</sup>. The Order members can be seen, and are willing to offer their time, financial means, talents, and energy whenever and wherever the right to life (from the moment of conception to natural death) is denied or questioned.

The logo of the Knights of Columbus is present during the annual March for Life in January in Washington, D. C. to oppose the iniquitous *Roe v. Wade* decision from 1973<sup>26</sup>, and in the well-known 40 Days for Life operation – in which serene prayer vigils are held in front of numerous abortion amenities around the world<sup>27</sup>.

Another programme, the Fraternity is recognized by established in the 2009 Organization’s Ultrasound Initiative, by which funds are being raised to purchase

<sup>23</sup> VC, no. 56.

<sup>24</sup> DCE, no. 30.

<sup>25</sup> EV, no. 28.

<sup>26</sup> *Roe v. Wade – 410 U.S. 113 (1973) – Jane Roe, et al. v. Henry Wade, District Attorney of Dallas County*, in: *Abortion. The Supreme Court Decisions, 1965–2000*, I. Shapiro (ed.), Indianapolis, IN 2001, p. 22–46.

<sup>27</sup> J. Monahan, *America’s Steady March Toward a Culture of Life*, *Columbia*, vol. 94 (7/2014), p. 8–9.

and deliver ultrasound equipment to pregnancy recourse facilities such as the pro-life foundation Woman's Care Center<sup>28</sup>. Up to the present time the operation has helped set up more than 500 ultrasound units in United States, Canada, and Jamaica<sup>29</sup>.

A great expression of the Order's strong pro-life position can be found in the "Project Manger". A programme was established in 2009 after a woman of Falls Church, VA confessed that she had had abortion because she couldn't even provide a crib for the baby she already had. The Knights of Columbus, in cooperation with Dolores Wisecarver of Woman's Choice pregnancy centre, took it as a challenge and decided that no innocent life would ever be taken away for the need of a cradle. In that same year Knights raised enough funds to buy 75 cribs equipped with mattresses and bedding<sup>30</sup>. In June 2014 the 1,000th crib was purchased, assembled, furnished and delivered. Currently, Woman's Choice has a waiting list for over 200 baby beds, including a set for twins. "Project Manger" ensures that the Order will help<sup>31</sup>.

Through the multidimensional efforts of the pro-life movement, only in past two years more than 110 life-affirming legal decrees were introduced in USA<sup>32</sup>.

The Fraternity's pro-life crusade also takes international dimensions, i.e. on March 24, 2012 in Manila, Philippines thousands of Brother Knights along with their families and other pro-life advocates conducted the Walk for Life to go up against the proposal local Reproductive Health Bill, which does not meet the standards of Christian respect for life<sup>33</sup>.

The Knights of Columbus' dedicated service to defend and promote the value of human life includes their stand on the moral aspects of health care and care for the dying. The Order actively opposes every attempt to legalize euthanasia and physician assisted suicide<sup>34</sup>.

## 2. A Culture of Inclusion

The Order is present in today's world promoting a "Culture of Inclusion" by volunteering in support of people living with physical and mental disabilities,

<sup>28</sup> C. McGrath, *Knights of Columbus Ultrasound Initiative Saves Lives, Columbia*, vol. 92, (1/2012), p. 15.

<sup>29</sup> C. Anderson, *Annual Report of the Supreme Knight, 132nd Supreme Convention...*, p. 48.

<sup>30</sup> *Knights provide cribs via "Project Manger"*, A. Pelowski (ed.), *Columbia*, vol. 94 (5/2014), p. 31.

<sup>31</sup> D. Borowski, "Cribs are life", in: *Catholicherald.com* [online], access: 6/18/2014, <[http://catholicherald.com/stories/Cribs-are-life,26504?content\\_source=&category\\_id=&search\\_filter=Project+Manger&event\\_mode=&event\\_ts\\_from=&list\\_type=&order\\_by=&order\\_sort=&content\\_class=&sub\\_type=stories,blogs&town\\_id=>](http://catholicherald.com/stories/Cribs-are-life,26504?content_source=&category_id=&search_filter=Project+Manger&event_mode=&event_ts_from=&list_type=&order_by=&order_sort=&content_class=&sub_type=stories,blogs&town_id=>)>.

<sup>32</sup> J. Monahan, *America's Steady March...*, p. 8.

<sup>33</sup> *Knights "Walk for Life" in the Philippines*, A. Pelowski (ed.), *Columbia*, vol. 92 (5/2012), p. 6.

<sup>34</sup> W. Smith, *Death, Be Not Proud*, *Columbia*, vol. 94 (7/2014), p. 16–18.

confirming that they are significant and welcomed. One aspect of this service is the contribution to the Special Olympics from the time of its first games in 1968 in Chicago. Beside the gift of immeasurable volunteer hours of charitable service, the Knights of Columbus pledged a donation of \$1.4 million for the 2015 Special Olympic World Games in Los Angeles. This gift elevates contributions from the Order to the Special Olympics to over \$46 million, which makes a total of more than \$243 million to benefit those with physical or intellectual disabilities since 2001<sup>35</sup>. This incorporates a long tradition of serving the handicapped. An example of providing for the less fortunate can be found in the work of the Knights of Columbus Retardation Foundation of Kentucky, Inc. This institution provided for diagnostic clinics, moving services, vans, buses, special schooling requirements, leisure activities and starting shelter homes, and thus became a leading advocate for the disabled citizens of Kentucky<sup>36</sup>. In 1981, through a Tootsie Roll Drive handing out candies at shopping centres, the Knights in Kentucky raised \$62,000 to support the disadvantaged<sup>37</sup>. In celebration of Veterans Day on November 11, 2007 the Knights of Columbus united with the Wheelchair Foundation to dispense 2,000 wheelchairs to armed forces veterans on the road to recovery from combat wounds<sup>38</sup>. In 2011 brother Knights provided the programme “Healing Haiti’s Children” with 1,000 wheelchairs<sup>39</sup>. The latest of the projects is to help to deliver mobility to the handicapped in tragic events. This initiative is designed to cover the price of supplementary or higher-quality prosthesis. Currently, the Knights of Columbus are helping three victims of the Boston marathon bombing of April 2013, who lost limbs in that terrible occurrence<sup>40</sup>. The Order is devoted to continue its effort in building a “Culture of Inclusion”.

### 3. A Culture of Love

The life and work of the Knights of Columbus are deeply rooted in Catholic experience, prayer, participation in the Holy Eucharist, and contemplation of the Holy Scriptures. The “Knights of Columbus Prayer Book” invites members of the Order to reflect on Jesus’ words, *I am the living bread that came down from*

<sup>35</sup> C. Anderson, *Fostering a “Culture of Inclusion”*, *Columbia*, vol. 94 (11/2014), p. 3.

<sup>36</sup> *Knights of Columbus*, Kentucky State Council, G. Schrode (ed.), Paducah, KY 1993, p. 75.

<sup>37</sup> *Fund-Raising Drive Begins*, J. Gaines (ed.), in: *Daily News, Bowling Green, Kentucky*, Year 128-No 323, p. 5–A.

<sup>38</sup> *Year In Review, September 2007 to August 2008*, M. Bunson (ed.), in: *2009 Catholic Almanac*, M. Bunson (ed.), Huntington, IN 2009, p. 16.

<sup>39</sup> R. Thomas, *Roots of Haiti’s Vodou-Christian Faith, African and Catholic Origins*, Santa Barbara, CA 2014, p. 232.

<sup>40</sup> *Knights Provide Prosthetic Upgrades for Boston Marathon Bombing Amputees*, A. Pelowski (ed.), *Columbia*, vol. 94 (6/2014), p. 7.

heaven (John 6: 51)<sup>41</sup>. Focused on spiritual life, and serving food to the hungry, brother Knights offer the *food that spoils* (John 6: 27) in order to gain the *food that endures to eternal life* (John 6: 27). Helping the hungry with food is something that's been done by the Order many times throughout its history. During the Great Depression of the 1930s, and during the time of World War II, the Knights saw it as their special vocation and fulfilment of Christian duty. One of the services the Knights of Columbus provide for the needy in this regard was established in 2012, the Food for Families Reimbursement Program. This programme is oriented at activating local communities by being of assistance to councils and assemblies to help with volunteer time, food and financial means for local soup kitchens, food banks and food pantries. The Supreme Council refunds councils and assemblies with \$100 for the donation of each \$500 or 500 pounds of food<sup>42</sup>.

In many local communities it became "natural" that volunteering Knights of Columbus can be seen whenever food for the hungry is being served<sup>43</sup>.

Every year as the cold days draw near Knights offer the Coats for Kids programme, involving local schools, charitable organizations, media, churches, local community centres, or sport stars like the Super Bowl Denver Broncos. Councils from warmer climates help the needy children of colder climates by donating funds for the purchase of desired clothes<sup>44</sup>. Since its establishment in 2009 the Order has delivered 170,000 new coats<sup>45</sup>.

The day after the terrorist attack of September 11, 2001, the Knights of Columbus responded with the introduction of their 9/11 Heroes Fund in the sum of \$1 million, and sent volunteers to assist more than 400 families who lost their loved ones by sacrificing their lives helping others as first responders. Some of them were brother Knights<sup>46</sup>.

The Fraternity recognizes its vocation to help those affected by natural disasters, such as participation in the recovery of Haiti after the 2010 earthquake when society, "has consisted of raising over one million dollars and providing several million volunteer hours of work"<sup>47</sup>. One of the most recent developments is the Livelihood Project, lending a hand to people in the Philippines to restore

<sup>41</sup> T. Nelson, *Knights of Columbus Prayer Book*, New Haven, CT 2007, p. 130.

<sup>42</sup> C. Anderson, *Annual Report of the Supreme Knight, 131st Supreme Convention...*, p. 14.

<sup>43</sup> D. Ebner, *Servant Leadership Models for Your Parish*, Mahwah, NJ 2010, p. 139.

<sup>44</sup> *Volunteering Together Project, Coats for Kids*, A. Pelowski (ed.) *Columbia*, vol. 94 (11/2014), p. 23.

<sup>45</sup> *Denver Broncos Help Distribute Coats Before Super Bowl*, A. Pelowski (ed.), *Columbia*, vol. 94 (3/2014), p. 6.

<sup>46</sup> C. Anderson, *Our Continued Commitment*, *Columbia*, vol. 94 (11/2014), p. 21.

<sup>47</sup> R. Thomas, *Roots of Haiti's...*, p. 232.

their former community after Typhoon Haiyan, which swept through the country in November 2013 causing the death of 6,000 people, and depriving millions of all they had. The Knights of Columbus delivered over 100 motorized and equipped fishing boats with tools to fishermen who had lost their source of work due to the disastrous weather conditions. The Livelihood Project also helps the farmers whose farms were devastated by the floods. The Brother Knights' assistance to them includes the purchase, delivery, and help to plant 10,000 coconut seedlings. The Order additionally helped local churches with financial donations of \$50,000, food, and water supply<sup>48</sup>.

The Order executes the Christian task of helping the homeless by supporting the projects of Habitat for Humanity – a Christian institute established in 1976 that works to eliminate poverty, providing housing for the underprivileged. The Knights of Columbus support the Habitat for Humanity programme in many different ways. Their last annual report states that brother Knights in 2013 helped the project with 1.5 million hours of volunteer work and financial donations of more than \$870,000<sup>49</sup>.

#### 4. A Healthy Culture

In his first Encyclical Letter *Lumen Fidei* (2013), The Light of Faith, Pope Francis declared: “Today more than ever, we need to be reminded of this bond between faith and truth, given the crisis of truth in our age. In contemporary culture, we often tend to consider the only real truth to be that of technology [...] In this regard, though, we can speak of a massive amnesia in our contemporary world. The question of truth is really a question of memory, deep memory, for it deals with something prior to ourselves and can succeed in uniting us in a way that transcends our petty and limited individual consciousness. It is a question about the origin of all that is, in whose light we can glimpse the goal and thus the meaning of our common path”<sup>50</sup>.

The Knights of Columbus are taking on the mission of advocacy for the Christian roots and identity of Western civilization<sup>51</sup>. The Fraternity believes in the renewal of society. This goal can be achieved by political and cultural involvement to promote lasting values and principles, self-discipline, national security, prosperity, and family values<sup>52</sup>. The Knights of Columbus focused more strongly

<sup>48</sup> B. Caulfield, *Working Toward Recovery*, *Columbia*, vol. 94 (9/2014), p. 16–19.

<sup>49</sup> C. Anderson, *Annual Report of the Supreme Knight, 132nd Supreme Convention...*, p. 24.

<sup>50</sup> LF, no. 25.

<sup>51</sup> A. Pelowski, *Our History and Identity*, *Columbia*, vol. 94 (11/2014), p. 2.

<sup>52</sup> A. Pelowski, *An Urgent Call...*, p. 2.

on the patriotic character of their organization, and joined Catholic campaigns against communism. After Pope Leo XIII announced his Encyclical Letter On the Condition of the Working Classes *Rerum Novarum* (1891)<sup>53</sup>, Brother Knights went on countrywide operations lecturing to contest these treacherous propensities<sup>54</sup>. The anti-communism crusade continued, and in the 1980's the magazine "Columbia" became recognizable for promoting peace amid the "Cold War"<sup>55</sup>.

It's attributed to the spirit of Christian patriotism of the Knights of Columbus that the words "under God" were added to the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag. Campaigns began in April 1951, and resulted in President Dwight D. Eisenhower, on Flag Day, June 14, 1954, signing a resolution approving the insertion of the words "under God" into the pledge<sup>56</sup>. Occasionally challenged by proponents of a radical interpretation of the doctrine of the separation of church and state, e.g. in June 2002 before the Ninth District Court, the pledge has remained unchanged since 1954<sup>57</sup>.

In 1982 members of the Knights of Columbus met representatives of President Ronald Reagan's Administration in Washington, D. C. concerning the subject of the enforcement of obscenity laws<sup>58</sup>.

Showing appreciation for those who serve in military forces are always essential to the works of the Order. Accounts of the Order's support for troops, going back to World War I as a significant milestone in the history of the Fraternity, describes when the Knights of Columbus responded to the religious, social, and cultural needs of the numerous Catholic men in military service. At that time the Brotherhood became noticed and acknowledged as a distinguished association, one of the leading volunteer organizations officially authorized to provide for the broad variety of needs of the servicemen, recognized by the

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<sup>53</sup> RN, no. 3: "To remedy these wrongs the socialists, working on the poor man's envy of the rich, are striving to do away with private property, and contend that individual possessions should become the common property of all, to be administered by the State or by municipal bodies. They hold that by thus transferring property from private individuals to the community, the present mischievous state of things will be set to rights, inasmuch as each citizen will then get his fair share of whatever there is to enjoy. But their contentions are so clearly powerless to end the controversy that were they carried into effect the working man himself would be among the first to suffer. They are, moreover, emphatically unjust, for they would rob the lawful possessor, distort the functions of the State, and create utter confusion in the community."

<sup>54</sup> R. Bayor, *T. Meagher: The New York Irish*, Baltimore, MD 1997, p. 314; W. Ames, P. Miller, *100 Master Speeches, Speeches for Special Occasions*, Rockville, MD 2007, p. 46.

<sup>55</sup> R. Reagan, *Remarks at the Centennial Meeting of the Supreme Council of the Knights of Columbus in Hartford, Connecticut*, August 3, 1982, in: R. Reagan, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, Ronald Reagan, 1982*, Washington, D. C. 1982, p. 1013.

<sup>56</sup> L. Canipe, *Freedom, Commitment, and the Challenges of Pledging Allegiance in America's Public Schools*, in: *Church-state Issues in America Today: Religion, family, and education*, A. Duncan, S. Jones (ed.), Westport, CT 2008, p. 50–53.

<sup>57</sup> M. Norton, J. Kamensky, C. Sheriff, D. Blight, H. Chudacoff, *A People and a Nation, A History of the United States*, Stamford, CT 2014, p. 773.

<sup>58</sup> R. Reagan, *Remarks at the Centennial Meeting...*, p. 1012.

poster “Everyone Welcome, Everything Free”. Operating with meticulous attention to detail, the Knights of Columbus have shown their care for soldiers and their families. They developed famous postcards, such as the “Safe-and-Sound” notes, by which members of the armed forces informed their loved ones that they had survived the warfare. Service provided by the Knights of Columbus during World War I was well accredited, and sealed by fact that from 1917 to 1923 almost 400,000 men decided to join this noble society<sup>59</sup>.

Recently, care for veterans took the form of the “Serving Those Who Served” project. In 2011, through this programme brother Knights served 40,000 hours of volunteer work helping at VA medical centres<sup>60</sup>.

The support of the Order for vocations to the priesthood is expressed by the RSVP (Refund Support Vocation Program). To the end of 2012, through this program the Knights helped individual seminarians with donations of \$10,522,500<sup>61</sup>. Established in 1981, the programme has helped 91,000 people to pursue their vocation for the priesthood or religious life<sup>62</sup>.

For over 130 years The Order has served the idea of protecting the economic wellbeing of Catholic families in the occurrence of the death of a wage earner, running for its members the highest rated A++ (Superior) insurance company<sup>63</sup>. The Organization promotes fair business relations, also in practice as in 2014, the Knights of Columbus life insurance company was acknowledged by the Ethisphere Institute as being among the World’s Most Ethical Companies<sup>64</sup>.

As a part of support for healthy culture the Knights of Columbus helped to promote the movie “For Greater Glory. The True Story of Cristiada” (2012), a history of the Cristero War of 1926 to 1929, with its universal memorandum on the value of religious freedom<sup>65</sup>. It was a great opportunity to be reminded of the significant role the Order took part in the events the movie relates to. About 70 Mexican brother Knights were amid the Cristeros, who suffered martyrdom for their faith. Six of them were canonized by St. John Paul II on May 21, 2000, and three others were beatified on November 20, 2005<sup>66</sup>.

The Knights of Columbus care for the identity of the American culture. This can also be seen in their concern for details of daily life, such as the “Keep Christ

<sup>59</sup> C. Kauffman, *Knights of Columbus...*, p. 321–322.

<sup>60</sup> C. Anderson, *Annual Report of the Supreme Knight, 130th Supreme Convention, Anaheim, California, August 7, 2012, Columbia*, vol. 92 (10/2012), p. 34.

<sup>61</sup> C. Anderson, *Annual Report of the Supreme Knight, 131st Supreme Convention...*, p. 52.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 21.

<sup>63</sup> C. Anderson, *Annual Report of the Supreme Knight, 132nd Supreme Convention...*, p. 36.

<sup>64</sup> A. Pelowski, *K of C Named Among World’s Most Ethical Companies, Columbia*, vol. 94 (5/2014), p. 6.

<sup>65</sup> D. Naglieri, *Freedom is Our Lives, Columbia*, vol. 92 (5/2012), p. 8–11.

<sup>66</sup> M. Scaperlanda, *The Untold Story of the Knights during the Cristiada, Columbia*, vol. 92 (5/2012), p. 12–16.

in Christmas” campaign, against excessive commercialization in observance of the birth of Jesus. The intent of promoting the religious forms of celebrating Christmas paid off. An opinion poll showed that 64% of Americans prefer the greeting “Merry Christmas” over “Happy Holidays”<sup>67</sup>.

The Order believes in the essential function of family values for a healthy culture. With a commitment to uphold these values brother Knights are willing to undertake numerous activities to support Christian families. Supreme Chaplain Archbishop William E. Lori cheers Sunday as a day for the family, a day to rejuvenate, including participation in the Holy Eucharist, where we can celebrate God’s love. The archbishop points to the Knights of Columbus’ curriculum Building the Domestic Church<sup>68</sup>. Each Sunday Knights, along with the whole church, celebrate Easter, the triumph of life. On this special day they are encouraged to share with their families a special meal “preparing a tasty dessert, using a special tablecloth and good dishes, lighting candles, composing a toast to share”<sup>69</sup>.

It’s often said that one who has experienced poverty tends to be more sensitive towards the disadvantaged. This is very true and visible in the works of the Knights of Columbus, throughout history and at the present time. The Order, founded in poverty and inconvenience, and inspired by the Holy Spirit, goes on with good deeds, especially to *the least of brothers and sisters* (Matthew 25: 40) of Jesus Christ. In the words of Pietro Cardinal Parolin, from the address to the 132nd Supreme Convention of the Knights of Columbus: “Just as faith is shaped by charity and bears fruit in good works, so the fraternal spirit inculcated by Father Michael McGivney and the first Knights of Columbus continues to be fruitful in the numerous charitable activities of the local councils, which, while meeting the needs of individuals, also build up communities in solidarity and concern for the common good.”<sup>70</sup>

### **Dzieła Rycerzy Kolumba jako droga realizacji katolickiego wolontariatu**

**Streszczenie.** „Wolontariat” to termin o szerokim znaczeniu, składają się nań altruistyczne postawy i działalność na rzecz ludzkiego dobra, dobrobytu i integralności.

Wszyscy chrześcijanie są powołani do naśladowania Chrystusa, który *przeszedł [...] dobrze czyniąc* (Dz 10,38). Wśród chrześcijańskich wolontariuszy na wyrazy szczególnego uznania zasługują Rycerze Kolumba, którzy swoimi licznymi dziełami bronią fundamentalnych zasad etycznych i niosą pomoc potrzebującym. Organizacja powstała z inicjatywy ks. Michaela

<sup>67</sup> C. Anderson, *Annual Report of the Supreme Knight, 130th Supreme Convention...*, p. 42.

<sup>68</sup> W. Lori, *Sunday: A Day for Families, Columbia*, vol. 94 (11/2014), p. 4–5.

<sup>69</sup> *Family Projects*, A. Pelowski (ed.), *Columbia*, vol. 94 (11/2014), p. 22.

<sup>70</sup> P. Parolin, *Called to Be Brothers, Columbia*, vol. 94 (10/2014), p. 2.

J. McGivneya w New Haven, w stanie Connecticut w USA w 1882 r., aby służyć swoim członkom braterską pomocą i wspierać ich rodziny. Obecnie Bractwo liczy 1,8 miliona członków zgromadzonych w ponad 14 tysiącach rad na całym świecie. W Polsce organizacja liczy ponad 2 tysiące członków. Działalność charytatywna Rycerzy Kolumba pod mottem „W służbie jednemu, w służbie wszystkim” obejmuje donacje charytatywne w wysokości 170 milionów USD i 70 milionów godzin wolontariackiej pracy rocznie. Bractwo promuje „kulturę życia”, regulacje prawne afirmujące życie, zakazujące aborcji, eutanazji, samobójstwa w asyście lekarza i procedur medycznych, które nie szanują integralności ludzkiego życia. Swoimi dziełami wsparcia osób niepełnosprawnych Rycerze budują „kulturę akceptacji”, w której ludzie zmagający się z inwalidztwem są przyjmowani i szanowani. Służąc „kulturze miłości” Bractwo oferuje pożywienie głodnym, ciepłe ubrania potrzebującym, schronienie biednym i pomoc osobom dotkniętym wojnami lub klęskami żywiołowymi. Rycerze Kolumba są adwokatem „zdrowej kultury”, chrześcijańskich korzeni zachodniej cywilizacji i wiary w niezmiennie zasady etyczne. Organizacja założona wśród ubóstwa, inspirowana natchnieniami Ducha Świętego trwa, czyniąc dobro, szczególnie *najmniejszym* braciom i siostram Jezusa Chrystusa (por. Mt 25,40).

**Słowa kluczowe:** Rycerze Kolumba, wolontariat, wolontariusz, dzieło charytatywne, zdrowa kultura.

### **Die Werke des Kolumbus-Ritter als ein Weg der Realisierung des katholischen Volontariats**

**Zusammenfassung.** „Volontariat” ist ein weitgefaster Begriff, der altruistische Haltungen und die Wohlfahrtstätigkeit zugunsten des menschlichen Wohlstandes und Integrität beschreibt. Alle Christen sind zur Nachfolge Jesu Christi berufen, der „umherzog und Gutes tat” (Apg 10, 38). Bei den christlichen Volontieren verdienen die Kolumbus-Ritter eine besondere Beachtung, die mit ihren zahlreichen Werken die fundamentalen ethischen Prinzipien schützen und den Bedürftigen Hilfe bringen. Diese Organisation ist 1882 in New Haven im Bundestaat Connecticut in den USA auf die Initiative vom Priester Michael J. McGivney entstanden, um ihren Mitgliedern mit einer brüderlichen Hilfe beizustehen und ihre Familien zu unterstützen. Heute zählt die Bruderschaft 1,8 Mio Mitglieder, innerhalb von weltweit über 14 Tausend „Councils”. In Polen gehören über 2 Tausend Mitglieder zu dieser Organisation. Gemäß dem Motto „Im Dienst für einen, im Dienst für alle” umfasst die caritative Aktivität der Kolumbus-Ritter Wohltätigkeitsspenden in Höhe von 170 Mio US Dollar und 70 Mio Stunden des Wohltätigkeitseinsatzes jährlich. Die Bruderschaft fördert „Kultur des Lebens”, Rechtsverordnungen, die das Leben achten, die Abtreibung, Euthanasie, medizinisch unterstützten Suizid sowie medizinische Prozeduren, welche die Integrität des menschlichen Lebens missachten, verbieten. Mit ihren Werken der Unterstützung für Behinderte bilden die Ritter eine „Kultur der Akzeptanz”, innerhalb der Menschen, die mit Behinderungen kämpfen müssen, angenommen und geachtet werden. Indem sie der „Kultur der Liebe” dient, bietet die Bruderschaft die Nahrung den Hungernden, warme Kleidung den bedürftigen, Zufluchtsort den Armen und Hilfe jenen Menschen an, die vom Krieg oder Naturkatastrophen betroffen sind. Die Kolumbus-Ritter sind Anwälte der „gesunden Kultur”, christlicher Wurzeln der westlichen Zivilisation sowie des Glaubens in unveränderliche ethische Prinzipien. Die Organisation, gegründet in einer Elendssituation, inspiriert vom Heiligen Geist, besteht weiterhin, indem sie Gutes tut, vor allem den *kleinsten* Brüdern und Schwestern Jesu Christi (Mt 25, 40).

**Schlüsselworte:** Knights of Columbus, Freiwilligenarbeit, ehrenamtliche, gemeinnützige Arbeit, gesunde Kultur.