IN SERVICE TO ONE, IN SERVICE TO ALL

8/1/2010 by Supreme Knight Carl A. Anderson

KNIGHTS HAVE A LONG TRADITION OF PRACTICING CHARITY IN A SPIRIT OF UNIT

The phrase “In service to one, in service to all” has long been a motto of the Knights of Columbus. It simply means that Knights take seriously the two great commandments of Jesus Christ: to love God with our entire being, and to love our neighbor as ourselves. A good explanation of why this motto reflects the Order’s purpose comes from the Second Vatican Council document Lumen Gentium, which truly serves as our mission statement:

“The laity, by their very vocation, seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God. They live in the world, that is, in each and in all of the secular professions and occupations. They live in the ordinary circumstances of family and social life, from which the very web of their existence is woven. They are called there by God that by exercising their proper function and led by the spirit of the Gospel they may work for the sanctification of the world from within as a leaven.”

The idea of working in this world “as a leaven” is not a new concept for the Knights. We know that we are called to be witnesses to Christ in our families, in our jobs and in our service to society. We know God’s plan and will for us through an informed conscience, and cultivate such a conscience by being faithful to the Church’s teachings. This requires solidarity with our bishops and priests, something we have been committed to since our founding by Venerable Michael McGivney.

For 128 years, the Order has been led by its first principle, charity. Every day, people witness the work undertaken by Knights as members work in thousands of communities around the world. Combined with unity — with our Church and with our neighbor — charity provides us with the means to fulfill Christ’s great commandments. This is what it means to be “in service to one, in service to all.” Lives filled with charity, motivated by faith and hope, are what will make Christ known to others.

Reflecting on the Gospel story of the Good Samaritan, Pope Benedict XVI said in his July 11 Angelus address that the parable “must make us change our attitude following the logic of Christ, which is the logic of charity: God is love, and worshipping him means serving our brothers with sincere and generous love.” He added that this passage “offers the ‘standard,’ which is the ‘universal love toward the needy we encounter by chance, whoever they may be.”

It is this spirit of the Good Samaritan that has always propelled the Knights of Columbus. This is the reason why our history is one of service: helping the widows and orphans of the late 19th century; providing necessities to the American troops in World War I regardless of their race or religion; publishing books on the contributions of African-, Jewish- and German-American citizens four decades before the civil rights movement; working in support of Catholics in Mexico when the government there persecuted the Church in the 1920s; protecting parents’ rights to send their children to Catholic schools; helping the hungry in the city of Rome during and after World War II; adding the words “under God” to the U.S. Pledge of Allegiance; pioneering nationwide blood drives; promoting the dignity of people with intellectual disabilities through Special Olympics and other programs; supporting mothers and their unborn children through our work with pregnancy resource centers and our Ultrasound Initiative; giving winter coats to poor children; providing mobility to people with physical disabilities through wheelchair distributions; providing food for families in need; and in general, being a force of love for our neighbors, wherever and whenever a need arises.

In practicing charity, in a spirit of unity, we lead by our witness, and we bring to life Christ’s words in the Gospel, that all will know we are his disciples by the way we love one another.

Vivat Jesus!