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KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS DAY

Pilgrimage to Founder's Grave a Great Success.

GRAVE STREWN WITH FLOWERS

Thousands of Knights Were in Line – With Solemn Tread, as the Band Played a Dirge, the Knights Marched Past the Grave of the Founder – Monument Bedecked With Garlands of Flowers and Evergreens – Eloquent and Appropriate Orations by the Rev. Father Slocum and the Rev. J. H. O'Donnell.

Father O'Donnell's Address.

Fellow Knights, Ladies and Gentlemen:

You are come from your cherished homes to this sacred enclosure to pay homage to-day to the memory of a departed priest, whose name is inseparably linked with the splendid organization of which it is our privilege to be members. You are come hither to gather about the grave of your founder and to place upon his tomb tributes, which bear silent but eloquent testimony to the affectionate remembrance in which you hold him. To the tomb which contains all that is mortal of Father McGivney you make pilgrimage, not only to give honor to departed worth, but to emphasize your respect for the memory of him who laid strong and deep the foundations of a brotherhood that embraces almost the Union, and whose record for good deeds and heroic well doing is not surpassed by any fraternal organization. A source of joy and congratulation is it to us who enjoyed his friendship, and who valued his worth, to witness the coming hither of our brethren from a distance, thus inaugurating a custom which, we trust, will endure throughout the succeeding years. Your presence here to-day is an earnest of the esteem in which you

hold the name of as true a priest as ever received the character, as loyal a citizen as ever obeyed the laws, as staunch a friend as ever honored another with his friendship. Your pilgrimage to the spot hallowed by the dust of this anointed representative of Christ presages a still more glorious future for the order, which his genius brought into existence. It bespeaks your unwavering adherence to the principles which underlie our organization. These principles ever animated Father McGivney and regulated his life, principles that find expression in the ritual and which make for the moral uplifting of our fellow men. You will, we believe, carry hence to your homes the influences that are enshrined about this grave, influences that are vital, potent, far-reaching, ennobling; influences that survive from a life unselfishly given to the service of others, a life spent in the promotion of his neighbors' welfare, a life redolent of deeds whose motive was the social, moral, intellectual and religious improvement of his fellows. With him the demands of self were ever subordinated to the needs of others, and the splendid legacy he has left in the Knights of Columbus attests the love in which he held his brother man, as it also evidences his profound knowledge of the special needs of the hour. Co-incident with his spiritual labors, he wrought also for the temporal welfare of his brethren, and in so doing, imitated the Divine Exemplar, whose minister he was. A practical, conservative and intelligent exponent of the needs as well of the duties and obligations of young men, he has bequeathed to society an organization whose merits shine resplendent and whose devotion to the Church is one of its pronounced characteristics; an organization rich in deeds that have evoked the

heartfelt benisons of numberless widows and orphans; an organization faithful to its high ideals and to the spirit infused into it by its founder; successful in the past; prosperous and progressive in the present; a glorious future in prospect; in a word, an organization whose unwritten motto is "Excelsior," and which is destined, we would fondly believe, to make still greater conquests in the field of philanthropy. Beneficent and enduring as have been the achievements of the past, they will yield to the victories that will crown the labors of our successors, if they maintain undivided allegiance to the principles upon which the order is builded.

Well shall it be with the Knights of Columbus as an order, if its individual members possess the spirit that dominated its founder. Genial, approachable, of kindly disposition, cheerful under reverses, profoundly sympathetic with those upon whom had fallen the heavy hand of affliction, a man of strict probity and sterling integrity in his business transactions. He was charitable to a fault, if I may so speak. The poor found in him a good Samaritan, and were frequent recipients of his bounty. In time, the years spent by Father McGivney in the sacred ministry were replete with deeds that honor his name and are now, no doubt, the brightest jewels in the crown he has received from the just Judge. There are few clergymen in my recollection who enjoyed in a greater degree than he the respect of his colleagues and the reverence of the people. His life was an open book, whose pages all might read, and the influences that radiated from his active, energetic and zealous personality, brought many a poor wanderer to the house of God, back to the faith of his childhood, and to the sacred tribunal of penance, where with faith, contrition and humility, he

became reconciled to his Heavenly Father. Father McGivney was nothing, if not active. His energy was restless, ever seeking new outlets, and to this disposition are we indebted for the existence of the Knights of Columbus.

Father McGivney had unbounded faith in the saving graces dispensed by Holy Church. He was cognizant of the efficacy of those divine splendors of the Church, the sacraments, to spiritualize his fellow men of good will and to bring them to the knowledge and love of Christ. He fully realized that in the Divine Economy the Church possesses in herself the precious means of salvation, and that to be a devout Catholic here is a pledge of eternal happiness hereafter; but he recognized also the social aspirations of the young men of his time, their tendency to form themselves into associations, sometimes affiliating with societies which are under ecclesiastical ban. To nourish their legitimate aspirations and to provide for his young men a field in which their activities might find proper exercise, he set for himself the task of organizing a society on lines different from existing Catholic associations. I was in a position to know that it was his intention that his society should be an auxiliary to the Church in her glorious, divinely commissioned work, that it was to operate in its chosen sphere under her guidance and with her blessing. Nothing was farther from his thoughts than to substitute the council chamber for the church nor to place the ritual of the order, elaborate though it be, on a plane with the ritual of the oldest organization in Christendom. As an auxiliary, then, of the Church, it was Father McGivney's purpose in instituting the Knights of Columbus, to keep the young men of his parish within the household of the faith, to preserve them from the taint of infidelity, to weld together

the scattered units whose influence was nil, into one grand, compact whole, whose sphere of usefulness would be enlarged and whose influence would be paramount, commensurate with its high purposes. It was his aim to surround his proteges with an atmosphere of religion and to bring them into even closer relationship to Mother Church, to give them a practical illustration of the strength that comes from intelligent organization – these were the motives that inspired Father McGivney in the foundation of the Knights of Columbus. To him the familiar saw, “In union there is strength,” was no mere figure of speech, no empty shibboleth. It was the expression of a great truth to the inculcating of which, he bent all his energies; and the results of his labors in this direction are visible to-day in this magnificent assemblage of Knights. But after everything is said, the great fact stands out prominently, that in organizing the Knights of Columbus Father McGivney was actuated primarily by religious motives. Zeal for souls is the corner stone of the superb organization, which to-day, through its honored and thrice welcome representatives, pays tribute to his memory.

I have a vivid remembrance of the days that preceded the foundation of the order. I have personal recollections of the anxiety that preyed upon Father McGivney as he resolutely sought the realization of his heart's desire. I know something of the obstacles he encountered and surmounted before the Knights became a reality. I witnessed the revision of this article and of that section of the organic law of the order, until he was satisfied that it met all needed requirements. I recall, as though it were but yesterday, the bestowal upon the infant organization of the name of the immortal Genoese navigator who, in his judgement, was the living embodiment of those virtues that best adorn the Catholic character. When asked why he selected the name of the “Knights of Columbus,” for his new society, he

replied in substance, that, as the chief virtues that adorned the mediaeval knights were chivalrous respect and deference for womankind, unalterable devotion to the church, personal courage, mortification of self, and unswerving adherence to high and noble principles, their reproduction in the young men of the present, could not but prove a precious boon to society. As to the name “Columbus” he said, that in the person of this, the world's greatest admiral, were embodied those virtues that are essential to the rounding out of the Catholic character in an age when a dismal materialism is so rampant, namely, unconquerable faith in Providence in the midst of the gravest trials and difficulties, unflinching courage amid cruel disappointments, tenacity of purpose in the face of treachery and ingratitude, the humility of a saint, though profoundly impressed with the conviction that dominated his life, that he was the instrument chosen of Heaven to open up new lands into which would be brought the priceless blessings of Christianity. Here was the figure, unquestionably the greatest of his age, whom Father McGivney summoned from the tomb of the past for imitation, a magnificent personality, and one worthy of the veneration of all time. Here was the patron, under whose spotless banner his young men were called upon to enlist. The standard of the great navigator became the Labarum of the order, and in its sign, which is that of the cross, it has achieved many and splendid victories.

The grain of mustard seed planted in February, 1882, has grown with wondrous vitality. The order has developed with marvelous rapidity, nor has this rapidity been at the expense of its solidarity. In February, 1882, when the first council, San Salvador, was organized at New Haven, there were eleven members, all in the insured class. At the present time there are 510 well equipped councils, an average of nearly thirty councils formed yearly. We have a membership insured in

the state of Connecticut of 5,800, and in the whole order of 29,000. In addition to this number, we have 32,000 associate members. The order is now operating in twenty-one states, in the District of Columbia, and in the Province of Quebec. A goodly showing truly, and one which speaks eloquently for the principles of the order. And these successes shall be multiplied as long as the order remains faithful to its original purpose. Developments there will be, as there have been, to meet future exigencies of time and place. Modifications in non-essentials may be deemed advisable, but the watchword of the Knights of Columbus should forever remain “Unity and Charity.” They are the marks which have hitherto distinguished it. The conquests it has made and which glorify it, have been won by the practical application of the meaning of these words to our lives individually and collectively. No organization, how numerous so ever its membership, can long maintain a successful existence in which there is no unity of purpose; but the Knights of Columbus rejoice in such unity. We have a community of interests which bind us together, though widely separated by town, city and state boundaries. Not for self-aggrandizement, nor for the welfare of a select coterie, do we exist. Our interests are co-extensive with the membership of the order; so that every true Knight, every Knight who is thoroughly imbued with the spirit which permeates the order's written law, may be said to be an active disciple of altruism. And foremost among these interests is that of religion. It is the highest, the noblest, the most exalted of all interests. All other interests are subordinate, or rather, all other interests flow from this as from a source. “We know, and what is better, we feel inwardly,” says Edmund Burke, “that religion is the basis of civil society, and the source of all good and of all comfort.” It is the sweetest of all bonds and joins the creature with the Creator in holy friendship. Our faith is a golden tie that unites priests with

the laity, and laymen one with another. As the child of Mother Church is at home in any part of this wide world where there is an altar of sacrifice; as he is no stranger wherever the cross glistens in the sky; so the Knight of Columbus meets his brethren in the faith, wherever a council exists; and to the duty of hospitality imposed by the ties of fraternity is the added obligation which springs from a common faith. And the faith which the order demands in its members is no negative nor passive, much less a dead faith; but a living, active force, animating the entire spiritual being, a faith that produces and abounds in works of mercy, that summons a Knight to the bedside of a brother stricken with illness, that speaks words of comfort and cheer, that opens the heart and the hand, and which gives practical evidence of its sincerity and efficacy, a faith which culminates in love. It is this faith that will make him loyal to God and loyal to the state. If he aspires to the privilege of citizenship in the kingdom beyond the skies, he will strive to be worthy of citizenship here below. I do not believe that the individual who falls foul of the state by violating its laws will be faithful to God, who delegates His authority to the state. All authority is from God. This two-fold loyalty the Knights of Columbus strenuously inculcates – God and country. There is no antagonism here; rather, is one complementary of the other. It has all the force of an axiom to say, that the deeper and more intelligent is one's Catholic faith the more profound is his respect for the civil laws. And we lay the flattering unction to our souls that, in obedience to the laws of this beloved republic of ours, in all that is implied in upright citizenship, the members of the Knights of Columbus are the peers of their fellows of other organizations. Unity of purpose, unity of action and unity of faith complete a trinity which makes the Knights of Columbus a mighty agent for good, an upholder of order, a protective force in society.

The second distinguishing mark, but in reality the first, of the Knight of Columbus, is charity, the queen of the virtues – charity, “the virtue of the heart and not of the hands.” Charity is the love of God and the love of the neighbor in whom dwells the image and likeness of God. It is the most beautiful ornament of the human soul. It expands the heart of man and enlarges his vision. It is a chain of purest gold that binds him a loving captive to the throne of the Master. It sweetens his own life and brightens that of others. The faithful and earnest practice of it lifts him above the things of earth, earthy, and gives him a foretaste of the joys that are of heaven, heavenly. He participates in the mission of Christ, who went about doing good and whose blessings for soul and body fell alike upon all. He assuages pain and relieves distress. The corporal works of mercy are his field in which he delves for treasures that will be his for eternity, for Divine Truth has said, that “The alms of a man is as a signet with him, and shall preserve the grace of a man as the apple of the eye.” From the sweet face of Charity flies every evil. Misery, dishonor, sin have no abiding place in her presence. It disdains not the lowliest offering, nor shrinks from the most generous gift. It recognizes the cup of cold water, as well as the munificent donation.

“Tis a little thing,

To give a cup of water;
yet its draught

Of cool refreshment drained by
fever'd lips,

May give a shock of pleasure
to the frame

More exquisite than when
nectarean juice

Renews the life of joy in
happiest hours.”

Charity – this is the virtue that ennoble the Knights of Columbus and attracts so many within its fold. It impels each Knight to extend the helping hand, to banish sorrow, to bring sunshine into gloomy lives, to lift up the fallen, to strengthen the weak, to encourage the downcast. He bows submissively to the divine injunction: “Be not wanting in comforting them that weep, and

walk with them that mourn. Be not slow to visit the sick.” The true Knight of Columbus is ever an exponent of charity in its best sense, a dispenser of kindness, “a language which the dumb can speak and the deaf can understand.” In his person he exemplifies the Golden Rule, which is the essence of fraternity. With his confreres he strengthens the ties of friendship, that

“Mysterious cement of the soul,
Sweet'ner of life, and solder of
society”

by these little amenities that confer so much happiness upon the recipient. But the charity of the Knights of Columbus is not confined to, nor does it cease, with life. Faithful and solicitous at the couch of sickness, the order comes a “kindly light 'mid the encircling gloom,” when death, that mysterious visitant, has entered the home. It banishes the dread attendant upon the fear of poverty, and amid the sorrow that follows the final departure of loved ones, bestows assistance which brightens the existence of mother, or wife or children. How many homes clouded with grief have been made brighter by the Knights of Columbus we may not know. The record is beyond our ken. Let it be our hope that he whose name is upon our lips and in our hearts to-day is receiving the precious reward of the good works accomplished by his foundation.

Brother Knights, the rapid expansion of the order – and its growth is a marvel – with its increasing responsibilities, admonishes us to jealously safeguard its interests. To conserve its influence and to perpetuate its power for good, calls for the exercise of the highest wisdom. No object foreign to its present purpose should be incorporated into its constitution, nor should there be any modification in its requirements for membership. Its catholic character should be maintained: the man of wealth and his less favored neighbor; the high in station and the humble laborer; the professor and the artisan – all classes standing

upon an equality in its councils. Equality should have no distorted meaning, nor should fraternity be an empty sound.

I commit no indiscretion when I say that the order in the letter and spirit of its laws is Catholic to the core. It is our boast, our pride. Cardinal Satolli, when Apostolic Delegate to the United States, bore weighty testimony to its Catholic character. “We also wish to express our great pleasure,” said he, “after learning the merits of this great Catholic organization, that in the present active period of social and fraternal alliance in America, there exists a society of practical Catholics which offers them the best advantages of insurance, benevolence and fraternity, proffered by the most popular societies, without any of the disadvantages of prohibited companionship.”

The written law of the order demands as a qualification for membership that the applicant be a practical Catholic. These are weighty words. They should be no empty formula. Any other than practical Catholics would prove an incubus, a detriment to the order, an affront to the memory and purpose of its founder. Strong as it is in membership, powerful as it is in influence, the Knights of Columbus cannot afford to admit into its councils men whose lives give foundation for the suspicion that they have practically severed connection with the Church. The order should not, it cannot take under its sheltering protection men who make voluntary surrender of that which alone dignifies man, his faith in God, the most precious boon that earth possesses.

Another word: Among the shining characteristics of the Catholic church none is more conspicuous than the equality of its membership. Before the altar all are equal. The beggar if such there be, kneels by the side of the possessor of wealth and the man of dark skin occupies the same pew with his white brother. And this spirit pervades the Knights

of Columbus; and so should it ever be. The most perfect organization on this earth is the Church, to which you cheerfully yield spiritual allegiance. Let the Knights of Columbus learn from her, as far as possible, the lessons of organization – and it would seem to be the part of worldly wisdom to do so – and the prosperity of the order in the world of the future is doubly assured.

Visiting Knights, may you enjoy your sojourn in Waterbury; may it bind you in still closer bonds to your local brethren; may you carry hence pleasant memories of this, your first pilgrimage, to the tomb of your founder.

A burst of music consistent with the address followed, and the host of visitors, dusty and tired, but still cheerful looking, turned citywards, where dinner, provided by the hospitable people of Waterbury, awaited them. Stirring music maintained a military step and whetted appetites that were already in buoyant mood.

Arriving at the City hall, the banquet scene, the local Knights gave way to their visiting brethren, and in two sittings, 900 men were dined. If any Knight's digestive apparatus was out of kilter, the fine music of the American band put it right. Here, more than in any other part of the great field in which the committee of arrangements operated, was seen fine judgement. Everything moved with pre-arranged desirability, and a keen appreciation and foresight of the appetites of the jolly visitors. The service was excellent, the menu fine, for it contained all the season afforded and the best that could be obtained. It was a great sight, a picture seldom seen by thousands, that the auditorium of City hall presented, with eight tables extending from stage to entrance, and at each about 100 merry men, many of whom were partaking of the hospitality of a portion of the Nutmeg state for the first time. They received a good impression of it and they appreciated it.