



**Knights of
Columbus®**

Taking a Stand

Armed with charity and unity, the Knights of Columbus has long responded to attacks against the Catholic faith and human dignity

By Supreme Knight Patrick E. Kelly / July 2023

The Knights of Columbus cannot take up every fight... But 2 million Catholic men can make an enormous difference where it matters most — always through prayer and often through action.

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Who are the Knights?



Last month's opening Mass of our annual Organizational Meeting of State Deputies was followed by a beautiful eucharistic procession. Knights of Columbus leaders and state chaplains from throughout the Order participated, as our supreme chaplain carried Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament up and down New Haven's historic Hillhouse Avenue.

Home to St. Mary's Church, the birthplace of the Order, Hillhouse is lined by majestic elm trees, stately homes and Yale University buildings. The procession was a peaceful expression of piety and unity, yet the scene and setting also evoked the long history of tension between our Catholic faith and those who fight to keep Catholics out of the public square. In July 1879 — less than three years before Blessed Michael McGivney founded the Knights — a New York Times article dismissively labeled St. Mary's as "an unprofitable church." The headline read, "How an Aristocratic Avenue Was Blemished by a Roman Church Edifice."

Much has changed in the past 144 years, but much remains the same. Anti-Catholic bigotry may look different today, but there can be no doubt that it is still prevalent — and even on the rise. As one historian put it, today's anti-Catholicism is "the last acceptable prejudice." The attacks go beyond anonymous acts of vandalism or pernicious online commentary; they are aired on national television and publicly expressed by leaders in politics and business.

A recent instance was the abhorrent decision of the Los Angeles Dodgers to honor a group called the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence. The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops noted that the group's "lewdness and vulgarity in mocking our Lord, His Mother and consecrated women cannot be overstated." The Dodgers, when challenged on the decision, initially backed down and disinvited them. Then, under pressure, the team not

only renewed the invitation, but also apologized to the offensive group.

This is deeply disappointing — and ironic in the extreme. The same people who cry out for tolerance often demonstrate complete intolerance for Catholics and other Christians.

The U.S. bishops, in denouncing the Dodgers' decision, said it was more than offensive; it was blasphemous. As such, they asked Catholics to pray the Litany of the Sacred Heart of Jesus as an act of reparation. Of course, we Knights spread the word to do just that. And beyond praying, our brothers in California were among many local Catholics who expressed their displeasure to the Dodgers organization.

This latest stand against bigotry is in keeping with the Order's history. A century ago, the Knights prominently opposed the Ku Klux Klan; countered legislative attempts to destroy the Catholic school system in the United States; published books on the contributions of Black, Jewish and German Americans; and spoke out against the persecution of the Church in Mexico.

The Knights of Columbus cannot take up every fight. We must choose our battles wisely, following Christ's admonition to be "shrewd as serpents and simple as doves" (Mt 10:16). But 2 million Catholic men can make an enormous difference where it matters most — always through prayer and often through action. This includes educating ourselves and others; engaging in respectful conversation; and making our voices heard in the voting booth and through petition.

Whatever the times might demand, the Knights of Columbus will continue to speak out and stand up for human dignity and the fundamental rights of all.

Vivat Jesus!