

# I'm a Member of the Knights of Columbus and I'm Not Old



MAKE AN IMPACT, VOLUNTEER

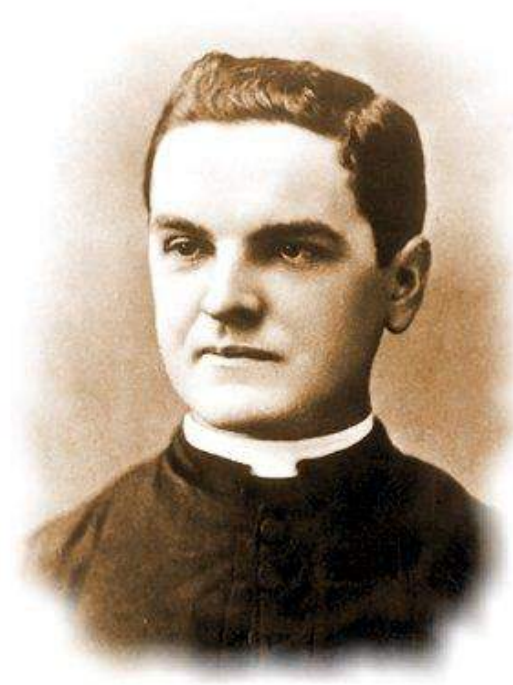
By Andrew Weiss

I know, I know. Only old guys are in the Knights of Columbus, right?

They wear funny hats, carry swords, and run the fish fry at your parish – your grandfather was probably a Knight.

While that may be true in a limited sense, the reality is that the Knights of Columbus is a large and robust organization that has been doing extraordinary things for over 135 years. I joined the Knights of Columbus in college when I was 18 years old. I am now 28, and I'm as active as I've ever been in the Order.

## Who are the Knights of Columbus?



The Knights of Columbus is now the world's largest Catholic Fraternal Organization. It was founded in 1882 by Fr. Michael J. McGivney to provide financial assistance to the widows and orphans of Irish immigrant men who died prematurely because of poor working conditions.

Today, the Knights continue to provide financial assistance to members and their families through our **insurance program**, which has allowed us to expand our **charitable efforts** beyond Fr. McGivney's wildest dreams. Local chapters, called "councils," conduct localized charitable activities specific to their community's needs. These local efforts are often supported materially and financially by the overarching structure called "Supreme." This collaboration between local councils and Supreme empowers smaller communities to do big things.

It is the brilliance of this collaboration and the uniformity of mission that compels me to this day to be such an active member and "big fan" of the Knights of Columbus. I knew when I first joined that I was becoming a part of something very special, something much bigger than myself.

## Why the Order matters to me as a 20-something

### Brothers despite differences

We're a transient generation, moving from home to college, from our first job to our second job, and so on.

As young adults, we typically **find community among our peers** through things like young professional associations or young adult groups.

But there's a reason "older and wiser" is a coined phrase — our elders have wisdom to share! So we shouldn't confine our networking circles to those with similar ages.

I have found great value in networking with, serving alongside, and befriending men who are older, wiser, and often very well-connected. Having friends who aren't all in the same stage of life as I am has been extremely valuable.

For one, it's tough to advance your career when all of your connections are right there with you at the bottom of the totem pole. Beyond "networking" though, the friendships I've built with guys twice my age has taught me things that only the expensive School of Experience teaches most.

As I begin to start my own family (my wife and I are expecting our first child!), I've been able to bounce ideas off of men who already have families.

Talking with guys who have climbed the corporate ladder or suffered a layoff has helped me manage expectations in my own career.

Some men lost their faith earlier in life and, having now returned, they've shared their experiences with me.

I might have been friends with some of these guys if we were the same age or went to college together, but it's the Knights of Columbus that has brought us together now. I have friends who share my Catholic values who are 78 years old, 58 years old, and 28 years old — and we're all in the same club. We serve in different capacities and we bring different things to the table, and there is great wisdom to be found in such an eclectic group of Catholic gentleman and their families.



### Unity among cultures

Our faith unifies us across languages and cultures, age demographics, etc. Serving in the K of C and becoming Brothers enables us to transcend those human boundaries and elevate our relationships with one another.

The Order was founded by an Irish priest and his Irish immigrant parishioners; however, they named their club after an Italian, Christopher Columbus, and subsequent councils were formed at parishes with other ethnic makeups.

In my own city, I've seen bonds of friendship forged through service between my Brother Knights of Hispanic,

Polish, African, and Filipino descent. Relationships have been built between men of a rich diversity of backgrounds. This dynamic of unity among the different ethnicities exists in the Catholic Church all over the world.

When the Knights of Columbus was founded in 1882, the Irish were a despised minority for their faith and immigration status. Today, my Hispanic Brother Knights suffer many of the same prejudices for the same reasons. We learn to love and respect one another as men by working together to build our Church through prayer and service.

My Brother Knights and I share in our desire to grow in holiness; we want to care for our families; we want to serve the Church; we find opportunities to do these things through the Knights of Columbus.

One global Catholic voice

The Knights of Columbus as an institution does not endorse any particular political party or ideology.

The Order does, however, encourage its members to be active participants in the political sphere — guided by their conscience and informed by Catholic teaching.

As a member of the Knights of Columbus, my voice is added to those of the 1.9 million other Catholic families in the Order. Together we are a global voice for Catholic values in the **public sphere**.

When political or social action needs to be taken to stand up for the **Christians being persecuted in the Middle East**, to **protect life in all of its stages**, or even to help men become **better fathers and husbands**, members of the Knights of Columbus can work together to accomplish so much more than any one individual could on his own.

As a politically engaged guy, I value the encouragement I receive from the Knights of Columbus through things like the **“Nonpartisan National ‘Get Out the Vote’ Program.”**

I also admire that, as an institution, the Knights of Columbus remain unwavering in their Catholic identity. During a time of increased secularity and polarization, this commitment takes courage. That courage on the institutional level has helped me be bold whenever I feel that my faith is being challenged.

Charity at the next level

The first and most important principle of the Order is Charity.

I’m a really busy guy and I value my social life, but looking at the lives of any one of my Brother Knights who has a wife, 5 kids, and his career made me realize that I can probably find a little time to give.

Once I began volunteering, the rewards were unbelievable. I almost feel guilty, because I think I get more out of volunteering than the people I am “helping.”

Of course, anyone can volunteer and they should, but as a Knight, my efforts are amplified through my council and through my council’s collaboration with Supreme.

I used to think I was too busy to be active in something like the Knights of Columbus, but when I reflected on what was really filling my time, I realized I could do better. Just a little bit of time goes a long way.

As a Knight, I have taken on a leadership role in my parish by starting (with the help of other Brother Knights) a formational group for men, I’ve headed up the “grill team” for our annual parish picnic, I’ve emceed our council “Trivia Knight,” and the list goes on.

Sure, I could do many of those things on my own, without being a Knight, but by joining the largest Catholic Fraternal Organization in the world, I unite my efforts to millions of other men and amplify my impact.

**A community to call my own**

My life has been truly enriched by joining the Knights of Columbus. As a Knight, I practice the Catholic principles I believe in by forming real-life relationships with my Brothers and serving my local community.

I’ve found a community to call my own, and I hope that other young people can do the same!

We can bring our skills, energy, and new ideas to the table to revitalize these orgs that have the power to do such good.

Why reinvent the wheel? I found the resources to grow and work in my community have been readily available through my council.

So be bold! Join one of your parish’s organizations, maybe even the **Knights of Columbus**, and reinvigorate it with your fresh ideas, energy, and skills. Make a significant difference by uniting in service with others from your local communities.