

INVOCATION

September 2026



*"I am the Resurrection and the Life; whoever believes in Me,
even if he dies, will live" John 11:25*

Farewell, Sir Knight

By Invocation Publisher John O'Malley



We lost a good friend and a valued member of the Knights of Columbus Florida State Council with the death of Edward Freeman Sleyzak on July 31.

Ed, 65, passed away peacefully at his home in Brandon, surrounded by his wife Tina and family.

He was beginning his second year as Secretary of the Florida State Council, and was privately beginning preparations to become State Deputy at next year's State Convention.

Ed's faith was of huge importance to him and in October 2006 Ed answered the call to join the Knights of Columbus at St. Stephens Catholic Church. Through hard work and dedication, Ed worked his way through the ranks to become State Secretary of the Florida State Council. He was proud to serve alongside his fraternity of Brothers in being a man of Faith, Family, and Fraternity. He always enjoyed volunteering with his fellow Knights at the Special Olympics each year. He was someone who never hesitated to help others and a loyal friend and protector of those he loved.

Ed was born December 8, 1960 in Warren, Ohio. He moved to Florida in 1979 to attend school. He received his Associate Degree from St. Petersburg College. He worked in the restaurant industry for many years as a manager where he met the love of his life, Tina. In 2000, he switched careers and found a passion in the landscaping industry where he later became a Certified Arborist. He retired in 2018.

In 2010, Ed was diagnosed with stage 4 cancer, which he fearlessly battled for 16 years. He chose to live life to the fullest. He shared a love for basketball with his daughters and grandchildren. He enjoyed riding horses, fishing, traveling to the mountains, cruising as often as he could, and watching football on Sundays with his family. You could usually find him working outside on his lawn or sitting on the back porch with a large pot of coffee when he wasn't on his computer working on something for the Knights of Columbus.

Loving, proud, dependable, and irreplaceable are only a few words to describe Ed when it came to his family and friends. He was known for his



kindness, integrity, and generous heart. Ed's faith was of huge importance to him and in October 2006 Ed answered the call to join the Knights of Columbus at St. Stephens Catholic Church. Through hard work and dedication, Ed worked his way through the ranks to become State Secretary of the Florida State Council. He was proud to serve alongside his fraternity of Brothers in being a man of Faith, Family, and Fraternity. He always enjoyed volunteering with his fellow Knights at the Special Olympics each year. He was someone who never hesitated to help others and a loyal friend and protector of those he loved.

Ed is survived by his wife of 41 years, Tina Sleyzak; his children Nicole Ferrante (Aaron), Tracy Gilbert (Matthew), Anna Gaeta (Stephen), Timothy Sleyzak (Mason), and Faith Sleyzak (Joseph). He was a very proud and devoted "Papa" to 12 amazing grandchildren; his sister, Phoebe Cates; his brother, Tim Sleyzak, Sr. (Lorraine)

He was preceded in death by his father, John E. Sleyzak (Evelyn); his mother, Ellen B. Stanton (Charles Joseph); his brother, Johnnie Sleyzak; his sister, Mary Ann Smith; his brother-in-law, Wayne Cates.

From a personal standpoint, I met Ed early in my Knights career during a break at a State meeting – the first of our many chats, during breaks at meetings or after my early morning runs. We talked about public relations opportunities. He made me the Region 3 contributor to the Invocation, and gradually added to my responsibilities.

Back then, Ed was the State Communications Chairman and Invocation Publisher, and later the State Marketing and Public Relations Director. He remained very active behind the scenes in those positions while working his way up the state chairs, right up to hosting a state call for regional administrators only a few weeks before his passing.

Despite health and personal issues (he lost two homes during recent hurricanes), Ed was always there to help. On the rare occasions when he didn't answer his phone, he always called back in a very timely fashion. Not only for me, but for any Brother Knight who needed assistance.

Ed Sleyzak will be missed.

144th Supreme Convention

My Brother Knights in Christ, after returning from the Supreme Convention in Denver, Colorado, August 4-7, I am prouder than ever to be a member of the Knights of Columbus.

Being surrounded by Knights from across the United States and from countries throughout the world reminded me just how large, powerful, and truly remarkable our organization is. There is something very special about standing among thousands of Catholic men who come together from different states, different countries, different cultures, and different backgrounds, yet are united by the same faith, the same mission, and the same love for Jesus Christ. We may speak different languages and come from different places, but we are brothers, united in Christ and committed to serving our Church, our families, our communities, and our country.

The Supreme Convention is a reminder that the Knights of Columbus is much more than an organization. It is a brotherhood built on faith, charity, unity, and fraternity, and it is a brotherhood that reaches around the world. What makes us truly powerful is not simply our size, but what we do with the blessings God has given us. Every time a Knight reaches out to someone in need, every time a council supports a family, every time we provide a wheelchair to someone who cannot afford one, every time we help a veteran, support a seminarian, protect an unborn child, assist a person with a disability, provide coats for children, or simply stand beside someone who is struggling, we are putting our Catholic faith into action. We are showing the world what it means to live the Gospel.

Jesus tells us in the Gospel of Matthew, "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations." That command is not only for priests, religious, or missionaries. It is a call to every one of us. As Knights, we have a responsibility to take our faith beyond the walls of our churches and into the world. We are called to be men who do not simply talk about our faith but live it every day. Our councils should be places where people can encounter

Christ. Our homes should be places where our children and grandchildren see faith lived out. Our communities should know that when a Knight arrives, he comes with a heart ready to serve. As Jesus also reminds us, "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

That is the heart of the Knights of Columbus. Our love for Christ must be visible in the way we treat one another and in the way we serve those around us.

The good works being done by Knights around the world are a powerful witness to our faith. Whether we are helping a family in need, supporting a veteran, assisting someone with a disability, protecting the unborn, supporting vocations, helping our parishes, or simply reaching out to someone who needs a friend, we have an opportunity to show the love of Christ through our actions. Sometimes the greatest thing we can give someone is not money or material assistance, but our time, our friendship, our prayers, and the knowledge that they are not alone. There are people all around us who are searching for hope, searching for meaning, and searching for someone who cares. As Knights, we have the opportunity to be that person.

This has always been a strong and important month for the Knights of Columbus, especially here in the Florida State Council. As your State Deputy, I bring you greetings and ask each of you to look ahead with renewed faith, enthusiasm, and determination. We have accomplished much together, but I truly believe our greatest work is still ahead of us. God has given us an incredible opportunity to strengthen our councils, strengthen our families, welcome new men into our brotherhood, and reach people who may be searching for a place where they can belong and serve something greater than themselves. We



*State Deputy
Michael P. Gizewski*



should never underestimate the difference one Knight can make in the life of another person.

This is also a time for us to remember our dear brother, Ed Sleyzak, Florida State Council State Secretary, who has gone before us and found his final resting place in Heaven. Ed was not only a dedicated servant of the Knights of Columbus, but a brother, a friend, and someone who gave so much of himself to our Order and to the people he served. His presence is deeply missed, and there is an emptiness in our Florida State Council that only his unique friendship and dedication could fill. Yet our Catholic faith gives us hope. Jesus tells us, "I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live." Those words remind us that death is not the end for those who place their trust in Christ. We pray that our Lord has welcomed Ed into His eternal kingdom and that he now rests peacefully in the loving arms of Christ. We pray for his family and for all those who loved him, and we honor his memory by continuing the work he cared so deeply about. Every time we serve another person, every time we strengthen our councils, and every time we bring another man into the Knights of Columbus, we can remember Ed and know that his work continues through us. May his faith, his friendship, and his dedication remain a part of the Florida State Council and in the hearts of all who had the privilege of knowing him.

Most importantly, I ask you to open the doors wide for Christ. Open the doors of our councils,

our parishes, our homes, and our hearts. Let Christ enter into everything we do, and then carry His message with us wherever we go. There are so many people in our communities who need to hear that they are loved, that someone cares about them, and that they are never alone. We should never be afraid to invite someone into our councils, never be afraid to tell another man about the Knights of Columbus, and never be afraid to share our faith. The world needs men who are willing to stand for something, men who are willing to serve, men who are willing to sacrifice, and men who are willing to put their faith into action.

Jesus tells us, "Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven." That is what we are called to do. We are not called to hide our faith. We are called to let it shine. When people see the Knights of Columbus, they should see men who are willing to serve. When they see our families, they should see the love of Christ. When they see our councils, they should see a place where men are welcomed, where families are supported, and where people in need are cared for. The message we carry is simple: "I love you. I care for you. I want you to be happy, joyous, and free." Those words may seem simple, but they can mean everything to someone who feels forgotten or alone.

My Brother Knights, I am proud of what we have accomplished together, but I believe our greatest work is still ahead of us. We cannot become



comfortable with yesterday's accomplishments. God is calling us to continue moving forward, to continue growing, to continue serving, and to continue bringing souls closer to His Son. There are still men waiting for an invitation to become Knights. There are still families who need our help. There are still young people who need examples of strong Catholic men. There are still communities that need our presence. And there are still souls who need to hear the message of Jesus Christ.

When we unite our faith, our families, our councils, and our service, there is no limit to what God can accomplish through the Knights of Columbus. Saint Paul reminds us, "Whatever you do, do from the heart, as for the Lord." That should be the attitude of every Knight. We do not serve for recognition. We do not serve for applause. We serve because Christ calls us to serve. We give because God has blessed us. We love because Christ first loved us. And we continue the work because there are still people who need to know that they are loved by God.

I am honored to serve as your State Deputy, and I am grateful to call each of you my brother. I do not take this responsibility lightly, and I am humbled every day by the faith, dedication, and generosity I see throughout the Florida State Council. I know that the work we are doing today is part of something much bigger than any one

of us. We are building upon the foundation laid by those who came before us, and we have a responsibility to leave the Knights of Columbus stronger for those who will come after us. Let us continue this journey together with faith, courage, and love, always keeping Christ at the center of everything we do.

Let us be men who live our faith, strengthen our families, serve our communities, support our Church, and welcome others into our brotherhood. Let us never forget the poor, the vulnerable, the unborn, our veterans, the elderly, those with disabilities, and anyone who simply needs someone to care. Let us continue to open our doors wide for Christ and allow Him to work through us. And when our time comes to stand before our Lord, may we be able to say that we used the gifts He gave us to serve others, to strengthen His Church, and to bring souls closer to Him.

May God bless you and your families, may God bless the Knights of Columbus, and may God continue to bless the great state of Florida. And may God welcome our brother Ed Sleyzak into His eternal home, where he may rest in peace until that glorious day when we meet again. May we continue the work together, always remembering that we are not simply members of an organization; we are brothers in Christ, called to serve, called to love, and called to bring souls to Jesus Christ.

Vivat Jesus!

Christianity's Toughest Lessons in the Aftermath of 9/11

By State Chaplain Very Rev. Bob Kantor

"Whether we live or die, we are the Lord's." -
Romans 14:8

It's hard to believe 25 years have passed since the fateful day of 9/11. It's one of those world changing events that imprints the memory of where we were when it happened, much like the assassination of President John F. Kennedy for older members of our Order.

I was on Navy duty in a staff meeting with the Chief of Staff of Submarine Group 10 at Kings Bay, GA. I recall a sailor interrupting our meeting to whisper something into the ear of the Navy Captain and how we turned on the TV in the conference room to see the second plane hit the World Trade Center towers.

Do you remember what it felt like that day? Emotions of shock, horror, outrage, compassion, sadness, anger and resolve all mixed together. We had so many questions. How could such a thing happen? Who could hate to that degree? Where is God in all of this? What would this mean for the future of our country and our way of life? How should we respond? We know the answer to many of those questions. Some questions remain unanswerable.

This year's anniversary of that tragic day falls on a Friday, the day of the week on which our Lord died on the Cross. The Scripture readings on the Sunday after 9/11 this year focus on forgiveness, mercy and peace, and coincides with Scripture

readings that communicate love and mercy, difficult to reconcile with some of our natural reaction to what took place on 9/11. Maybe it's just what we needed to hear most, because those themes are exactly what we are about as followers of Christ who demand justice, but never to the exclusion of mercy and love.

There is a common theme running through the readings. In Sirach, we are reminded that anger and wrath are hateful things and that the vengeful will suffer the Lord's vengeance. This is not an easy lesson to embrace in the wake of the attacks of 9/11.

In the epistle, St. Paul tells us that no one lives for oneself or dies for oneself, but rather for the Lord. In either case, we are the Lord's. In our individualistic society of personal possession, this teaching is more radical than ever.

In the Gospel lesson, Jesus entreats us to forgive seventy-seven times! And by this he does not mean for us to count so that we can deny forgiveness on the 78th occasion! This

is a divine and not human way of thinking, and it's difficult to put into action when we have been wronged.



*State Chaplain
Very Rev. Bob Kantor*



God's abundant grace is evident, even in the greatest tragedies of humanity. We must continue to pray for the victims, their families, first responders, civic leaders, our military, and especially for a change of heart among those who support or condone sinfulness and evil in our world. The war in Ukraine and recent events in the Middle East remind us that evil is never too far away. But neither is the grace and love and forgiveness of a merciful God.

As we Knights seek to do the good and bring reconciliation in our families and world, let us be more closely united to the heart of our heavenly Father ... a Father of justice and truth, a heart of goodness and peace. Amid great sinfulness, we have to be careful that our hearts are not hardened

in a way that might give evil its most decisive victory. Let us continue to appeal to a God of justice and a God of mercy. Let us continue to respond as so many have done in the years following 9/11, with an outpouring of compassion and love. Let us be united in resolve and support a just response against evil in our world. And may that response always be undergirded by a godly disposition of heart embodied by Blessed Michael McGivney in his priesthood and founding of our Order, a heart that searches for lost sheep and brings them back to Christ, a heart that rejoices at the conversion of sinners, a heart that is ready to forgive. In every time of trial, may the spirit of God's heart live in ours.

Knights Help Vision of Key Training Center

Sometimes a gift means even more because of the personal story behind it. We are incredibly grateful to the Knights of Columbus **Florida State Council** for a generous \$5,000 donation to Run for the Money. Helping make this gift possible was William Kelly, Regional Administrator 2 from Northeast Florida, whose connection to the Key Training Center is close to his heart.

Three members of Kelly's family are part of the Key family. Brothers Matthew Payne, 50, and Michael Payne, 47, have been with the Key Training Center since 1997 and 2001, respectively. Their cousin, Luke Ritchie, 35, joined them in 2009. For Kelly, advocating for the Key means supporting a place where people he loves have opportunities to live, learn, grow and enjoy life to the fullest.

The Knights of Columbus' commitment to charity and supporting people with special needs closely reflects the spirit of our mission. Their generosity helps us provide year-round day, residential and supported employment services



to more than 300 adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities, including more than 30 individuals who receive no state funding.

The Key family is thankful to Kelly and the Knights of Columbus for believing in its mission and, most importantly, believing in the people it serves. Gifts like this remind us just how much can happen when a community chooses to care.

What It Means to Be a Knight

In every council across our jurisdiction, you will find men who come from different backgrounds, cultures, and walks of life. Yet despite these differences, they share something profound—an identity rooted in faith, a commitment to service, and a fraternal bond that strengthens them as Catholic men. This is the heart of the Knights of Columbus.

To be a Knight is to embrace a calling. It is to recognize that faith is not merely lived within the walls of a church, but carried into the world through charity, unity, and fraternity. Our founder, Blessed Michael McGivney, envisioned an organization where Catholic men could support one another, protect their families, and serve their communities with courage and compassion. More than 140 years later, that vision continues to flourish.

One of the most treasured aspects of being a Knight is the fellowship we share. The bonds formed within our councils are not casual or temporary—they are lasting, meaningful, and deeply rooted in shared purpose. Knights pray together, serve together, and support one another through life's joys and challenges. These relationships become a source of strength, encouragement, and spiritual growth.

Whether it is a simple conversation after a meeting, a shared moment during a parish event, or the collective effort of a charitable program, the fraternity of the Knights of Columbus creates a sense of belonging that is rare in today's world. It is a reminder that none of us walk the journey of faith alone.

At the core of our mission is faith—faith in Christ, faith in His Church, and faith in the transformative power of charity. Knights strive to be men of prayer, men of integrity, and men who lead their families with devotion. Our programs, from spiritual reflections to parish support, help deepen our relationship with God and strengthen the Catholic identity of our communities.

Being a Knight means living one's faith boldly.

It means standing for truth, defending the vulnerable, and offering our time and talents for the good of others. It means allowing Christ to work through us so that His love may be seen in our actions.

Every coat given to a child, every meal served to a family, every rosary prayed for the unborn, and every act of charity performed by our councils

reflects the mission entrusted to us. Knights do not serve for recognition—they serve because it is who we are. Our programs are not tasks; they are expressions of our commitment to building a better world rooted in Christian love.

Through initiatives like Coats for Kids, the Ultrasound Program, the Silver Rose, and countless parish activities, Knights bring hope where it is needed most. These efforts strengthen our parishes, uplift our communities, and remind us that charity is the heart of our Order.

To be a Knight of Columbus is to be part of something larger than oneself—a legacy of faith-filled men who have shaped the Church and society through their witness. It is a privilege, a responsibility, and a joy.

The special bonds we share, the fellowship we cultivate, and the faith we live out each day are what make our Order unique. They are what inspire men to join us, and what keep us united in mission and purpose.

As Knights, we continue to build a future rooted in Christ, strengthened by fraternity, and guided by the principles that have defined us since our founding. And in doing so, we honor the vision of Blessed Michael McGivney and carry forward the noble tradition of being Knights of Columbus.



*State Warden
Carlos Ortiz*

Supreme Chaplain's Challenge

By Supreme Chaplain Archbishop William E. Lori

Then Peter approaching asked him, “Lord, if my brother sins against me, how often must I forgive him? As many as seven times?” Jesus answered, “I say to you, not seven times but seventy-seven times.” (Gospel for Sept. 13, Mt 18:21-22)

To forgive others can be very difficult at times, especially when someone repeatedly offends us. Jesus tells us there is no magic number that limits our obligation — our desire to forgive and show mercy to others must be boundless, just as God’s mercy toward us is infinite. We pray in the Our Father, “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.” Our very salvation depends on our willingness to forgive, for God

will forgive us in the measure that we forgive others (cf. Mt 6:14-15).

Challenge by Supreme Chaplain Archbishop William E. Lori:

This month, I challenge you to make a list of the people in your life — past and present — whom you find or have found difficult to forgive, and to sincerely pray for them each day.

Questions for Reflection:

Are there people in your life whom you find difficult to forgive for past offenses? Do you sometimes find yourself saying the words “I forgive you,” but holding on to the hurt like a grudge? What steps can you take to move to true forgiveness?



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Honoring Those Who Serve

By Invocation Technical Editor Scott Huetteman

With grateful hearts and in a spirit of prayerful remembrance of those who served, members of **Council 14084**, parishioners, families, friends, first responders, and members of the surrounding community gathered at St. Stephen Parish on September 10, 2026, for the parish's annual Blue Mass.

The special Mass honored the men and women who devoted their lives to protecting, serving, healing, and caring for others. It was also a solemn time to remember those who made the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty and to pray for the safety of those who continued to serve their communities each day.

Law enforcement officers, firefighters, paramedics, emergency and rescue personnel, first responders, health care professionals, and their families were remembered in a special way.

Leading the procession were members of the Hillsborough County Color Guard and members of **Council 14084 and Assembly 3418** Color Guard.

The Mass offered the St. Stephen community an opportunity to express its appreciation not only for those who wore the uniform or answered the emergency call, but also for the spouses, children, parents, and loved ones who shared in the sacrifices that so often accompanied a life of public service.

The tradition of the Blue Mass dates back to 1934 in Washington, D.C., when a special Mass was celebrated in honor of police officers and firefighters. Although the observance was long associated with Catholic communities in the northeastern United States, the tradition gradually spread throughout the country and took on renewed



significance following the attacks of September 11, 2001.

At St. Stephen Parish, the annual celebration continued that proud tradition with a deeply personal and spiritual emphasis. The evening was more than a formal tribute. It was a community-wide expression of gratitude for the courage, compassion, and quiet sacrifices made every day by those entrusted with the safety, health, and well-being of others.

The Mass also provided a meaningful opportunity to reflect on the human side of public service. Behind every badge, fire helmet, ambulance, patrol vehicle, hospital uniform, and emergency call was a person who had chosen to place the needs of others before his or her own. For

many in attendance, the occasion was a reminder that such service deserved not only recognition, but continued prayer and support.

Brother Sean Walker assisted with coordination involving Traffic Control State Troopers, helping support the parish's outreach to the first-responder community. Following the Mass, a reception provided an opportunity for fellowship and for parishioners to personally thank those who served.

Through prayer, remembrance, and fellowship, St. Stephen Parish once again affirmed a simple but powerful message: those who protect and care for their communities are never forgotten, and their service is deeply appreciated.



Councils Volunteer at Speedway

Knights from the three councils of District 20 have combined to support the events at Daytona International Speedway by volunteering at trolley stops during major race weekends.

The Knights participated in the recent Coke Zero Sugar 400 NASCAR Cup Series event, following up volunteer work at the Rolex 24 At Daytona in January and Daytona 500 in February.



"We in District 20 follow, believe and are inspired by our principles of Unity, Charity and Fraternity," said District Warden Roger Packard, in his sixth year of coordinating the program. "We work all three of the tracks three major races. Next year, we will add the Busch Clash and new stadium venues, possibly the Rockville, Jeep and Supercross weekends. We have been doing this for our charities five-plus years. In the year 2026, we cleared \$25,000 collectively."

Packard began the relationship when he was Grand Knight of **Council 8086** in Port Orange.

Since then, **Father Downey Council #4934** of New Smyrna Beach, Church of the **Epiphany Council #12569** of Port Orange, and Fourth Degree **Assemblies #2794** of Port Orange and **#1726** of New Smyrna Beach have joined the effort.

"Their combined efforts have continued to make this program so successful over the years," Packard said. "Let's remember why we do this "Charity, Unity and Fraternity."

100-year-old WWII Veteran Honored



Sir Knight Joseph C Biscone Jr, a 100-year-old World War II veteran, was honored at a recent Sunday Mass at Resurrection Church in Miramar Beach.

Biscone, a member of Father Hoard J. Lesch Assembly #1564, was recognized as the oldest Knights of Columbus member and the member with the most continuous years of service in the area.

Council Chaplain and Resurrection Church Pastor Fr. Tom Guido was joining by Bro. Joe Biscone's fellow Knights from **Emerald Coast**

Council 11893, Saint Mary Council 4444 and Fr. Howard J Lesch Assembly 1564 at his favorite pizza restaurant. Biscone was presented with a KofC Assembly 1564 patriotic shirt.

The Knights are now looking forward to celebrating his 101 birthday this November.

In the photo are Father Tom Guido, SK Joe C Boscone Jr, SK Tom Fears Jr; PGK Charles Scheafer, PGK/PFN Paul Spikes, Bro Jeff Hamilton and PGK/FN Lee Beldock.

Did you know that the State of Florida Council has a YouTube Channel? Well, we do! This is a place where we can put in videos of the all the great things that we do as Knights in the State of Florida.

During the State Convention we took video interviews of some of the Dignitaries that honored us with their presence. You can

see the videos by [CLICKING HERE](#)

Please be sure to subscribe to the channel so you will be notified when new videos are added. If you have any videos that you would like to add that shows your Council doing good works please email Jim Clark, Broadcast Media Relations and Production Director at jclark1@gmail.com.

Flipping Pancakes, Fostering Faith

The scent of fresh pancakes filled the parish life center as Knights of Columbus **Council 5618** from Saint Mary Magdalen Catholic Church in Altamonte Springs, Florida, joined forces with the Council of Catholic Women and the Men's Club to serve the community.

Taking to the kitchen, the Knights co-hosted and cooked a warm breakfast for parishioners, keeping the griddles hot with endless stacks of pancakes and fresh bagels.

This collaborative breakfast set a welcoming tone for the Saint Mary Magdalen Ministry Fair, drawing close to 1,000 attendees together for food, faith, and fellowship. In the parish life center, colorful displays invited parishioners to explore liturgical & local ministries. Council 5618 maintained a strong presence and representation on the floor, with Grand Knight Joe Pocius and Deputy Grand Knight Nick Leon joining fellow brothers at the unified Mission Advancement booth to share the impact of the Knights' charitable work locally.

By joining hands with the CCW and Men's Club to nourish both body and spirit for nearly a thousand guests, Council 5618 demonstrated the true power of unity and faith in action.



Knights Welcome New Naples Bishop

St. John Council 11281 Naples was truly blessed to welcome Bishop Emilio Biosca Agüero, the newly Appointed Bishop of the Diocese of Venice, to St. John the Evangelist Parish on August 2.

During his visit, he celebrated the 11 a.m. Mass, blessed our Seminarians, and joined us for a Parish cookout in the Ballroom.

The St. John Council Members and their wives cooked barbeque for more than 400 people attending following the Mass Celebrated by Bishop Emilio.

Words of thanks were sent out to the St. John 11281 Council Knights and Wives for their planning and coordination of the event.

The Arthur J. Corr **Assembly #3308** Color Corps also participated in the ceremony.

"I want to thank all the KOC (and wives) who supported the Bishop's visit yesterday." Said Council 11281 Grand Knight Dan Ryan. "It was such an amazing day and that was, in great part, because of the Knights! The planning,

organization, and execution of serving over 400 people was flawless! We are blessed to have such amazing Knights council in our parish with a strong and supportive leadership."



St. John Council 11281 conducted a dinner dance with proceeds of \$5,900 donated to the Naples chapter of Saint Vincent de Paul.

Council 11281 partnered with a local restaurant in Naples, Patio Cafe, which donated all the food for the event dinner.

SVdP Naples is a District Council formed by SVdP Conferences

inside seven Collier County Catholic churches.

Grand Knight Dan Ryan presented the check to SVdP Naples Chapter President Bob Westenberg along with Rev. Fr. Len Gioeli of St. John the Evangelist Parish in Naples.

Council Honors Blessed McGivney



The Knights of Columbus of **Prince of Peace Council 8791** in Ormond Beach gathered on August 13 for a special celebration honoring Blessed Father Michael McGivney on his Feast Day.

More than 70 Knights and parishioners attended, making it a meaningful and memorable occasion for the Council and the parish.

The celebration began with the praying of the Rosary, bringing Knights, parishioners, and guests together in prayer and reflection. Following the Rosary, the congregation participated in the celebration of Holy Mass in honor of Blessed Father McGivney.

Council Chaplain and Pastor Rev. Fr. Justin Vakko presided at the Mass, assisted by Deacon SK Bruce Gesinski. Council 8791 ensured a special role of the Knights of Columbus in the liturgy. SK John Malafronte proclaimed the First Reading, and District Deputy SK Chuck Armstrong and Grand Knight SK Michael Ernst presented the gifts of bread and wine during the Offertory. SK Daniel Medved served as the Head Usher. Knights of the Regional Color Corps, including members from Council 8791, participated throughout the Mass.

In his homily, Father Vakko reflected on the remarkable life and ministry of Father Michael McGivney, his dedication to his parishioners, his concern for families and those in need, and his vision that ultimately led to the founding of the

Knights of Columbus. He also spoke about Father McGivney's continuing path toward sainthood and the lasting impact of the organization he established. Father Vakko highlighted the many contributions of the Knights of Columbus to our nation, our local community, and the parish.

At the conclusion of the Mass, the Knights led the congregation in the Prayer for the Canonization of Blessed Michael McGivney, uniting everyone in prayer for his eventual recognition as a saint of the Catholic Church.

The Feast Day celebration was a special occasion for Prince of Peace Council 8791. The strong attendance and active participation of the Knights and parish community reflected the deep respect and devotion held for Blessed Father McGivney and his enduring legacy. As the Council continues its mission of charity, unity, fraternity, and patriotism, the Knights of Columbus remain inspired by the example of their founder and his call to serve God, Church, family, and neighbor.

The Feast Day Rosary and Mass provided an opportunity not only to honor Blessed Father Michael McGivney, but also to renew the Council's commitment to living out the ideals he established more than a century ago. It was a fitting celebration of faith, fellowship, and service—and a reminder that Father McGivney's vision continues to flourish through the Knights of Columbus today.

Eucharistic Rosary Congress

The 2026 Eucharistic Rosary Congress will be observed from October 3-9. Its mission is to bring every soul to Jesus Christ in the Eucharist through Mary with the Rosary. The Congress features a central structure of seven days and nights of Eucharistic Adoration with the Holy Rosary prayed aloud at the beginning of every hour.

Many dioceses and parishes add daily Mass, confession, processions, speakers, and consecrations to the Congress as well as an opening and closing Mass. Hosting a Rosary Congress is one of the most powerful ways to bring a diocese or parish together in prayer.

People, families, parish groups, clergy, and organizations like the Knights of Columbus take turns to ensure the Blessed Sacrament is never left unattended. It is an opportunity for a Catholic week of intense prayer centered on Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and the praying of the Holy Rosary. It is also an act of penance and reparation—for our own sins and for the sins of humanity—offered before the Lord Himself, present Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity in the Blessed Sacrament.

His Holiness Pope Leo XIV granted an Apostolic Blessing to all who participate in and support the Eucharistic Rosary Congresses. For the first time this year, Congresses will be observed in all seven Florida dioceses with the blessings and support of Florida bishops. The best role for a council or assembly is to become the parish's implementation team—working under the pastor

to make sure the prayer, scheduling, promotion, and logistics for the Congress are covered.

Councils can also participate by providing an adoration and rosary team to cover one hour a day, or as many hours as possible. Knights can put their faith into action by recruiting adorers, leading designated Rosaries, providing volunteers, promotion, hospitality and other assistance needed. Some parishes are not able to offer 24 hour adoration for seven days and they can participate in whatever way the Pastor decides.

If a church is not available for an entire week, they can participate by being part of a traveling congress that moves from parish to parish. All parishes can participate by having a Holy Hour and praying the Holy Rosary at a minimum.

Resources for the 2026 Congress are available at: www.eucharisticcongress.com

or search online for “Eucharistic Rosary Congress 2026” where you can locate sign-up sheets for adorers, scheduling templates for hourly prayer, rosary binders, bulletin announcements, flyers, and checklists.

Knights of Columbus members are asked at their exemplification to always carry the Rosary and to pray it as often as we can. The 2026 Eucharistic Rosary Congress is a great way to faithfully keep our commitment.



Our Lady of Hope Welcomes 84 Sir Knights



The Florida Fourth Degree District of the DeSoto Province recently welcomed 84 new Sir Knights at an Exemplification at Our Lady of Hope Catholic Church in Port Orange.

Florida District Master Rob Urrutia was joined by Past State Deputy Donald Kahrer and Former Master John O'Toole in the ceremony, performed for the seventh time by the Florida District Degree Team.

Father Matthew Mello, Pastor of Our Lady of Hope and Chaplain of Host **Council 8086**, was the Degree Honoree. Father Matt was ordained to the priesthood in 1987 and has served in several parishes throughout Central Florida during nearly four decades of priestly ministry. In addition to his parish assignments, he spent eight years in Catholic high school ministry. At Father Lopez Catholic High School, he helped establish an endowment to support Catholic schools throughout the county, working in partnership with the Knights of Columbus. He has also been involved in justice ministry since 1999.

More than 30 Color Corps members participated in the ceremony, led by State Marshal Danny McIntyre; Vice Marshals Chris Laudato and Dr. Osmany Periu, and Commander Mike Eddy.

Sir Knight Andy Duzyk, Faithful Navigator of





Host **Assembly 2794**, was part of the Knighting team.

Council 8086 provided a luncheon for the new Sir Knights, their families and friends, and the Fourth Degree Color Corps. Grand Knight Vito Benedetto generously oversaw the arrangements for setup, meal preparation and serving, and hall cleanup.

Host Council 8086 had 23 new Sir Knights, joined by three candidates from Church of the Epiphany **Council 12569** into Assembly 2794. Father Downey **Council 4934** of New Smyrna Beach had 16 candidates welcomed into reactivated Sacred Heart **Assembly #1726**.

From District 18, Bishop Grady Assembly #2901 had 11 candidates; District 17 had eight candidates join Corpus Christi **Assembly #2810** and one candidate for new **Assembly #4069** of Palm Coast. District 19 was represented by Msgr. Ed Thompson **#1667** of Sanford, 8 candidates, and Bishop John Newmann **#1930** of DeLand, 1.

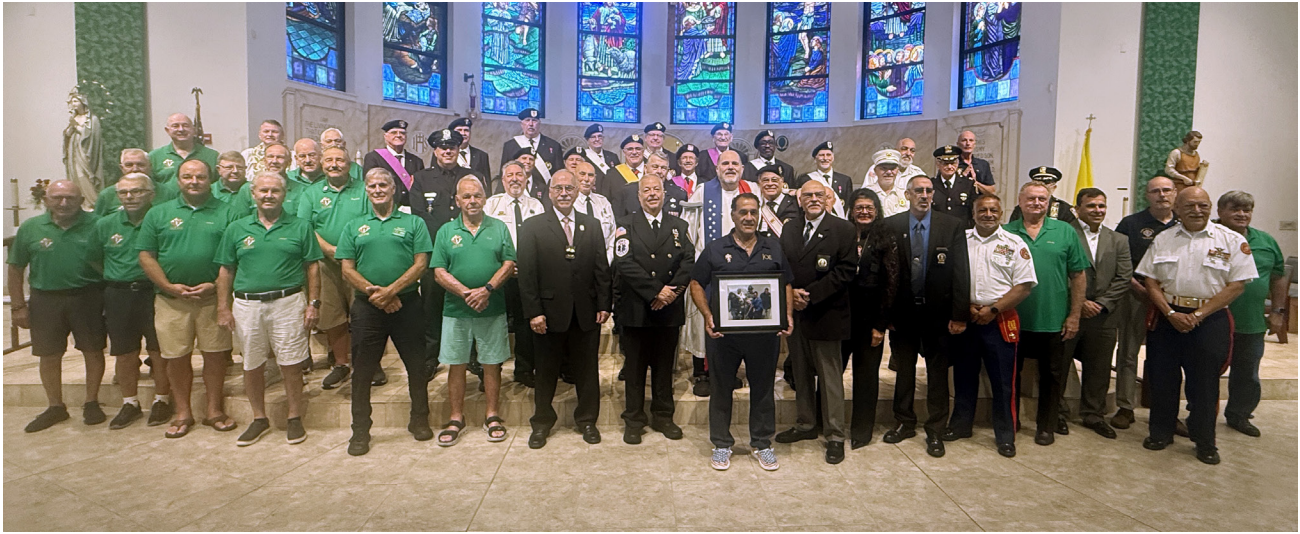
Other Assemblies included John Barry **#160** of

Rockledge, 2; Bishop Verot **#166** of St. Augustine, 3; Father James Hoge **#1547** of Lecanto, 2; Lake County **#1675** of Leesburg, 2;

Father Edward Mass **#2564** of Middleburg, 1; and Father Michael J. Flynn **#2586** of Sharpes, 4.



Commemorating the 25th Anniversary of 9-11



Members of the Flagler Beach community gathered to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks with an outdoor ceremony and Blue Mass to remember the nearly 3,000 lives lost, honoring the courage of first responders and ordinary citizens, and reaffirming a commitment to ensure that future generations understand the significance of that tragic day.

PGK Bryant Perszyk, representing Knights of Columbus **Council 10514** of Santa Maria del Mar Catholic Church, served as Master of Ceremonies and opened the observance with a reminder that, for millions of Americans, September 11 is much more than an event recorded in history books.

He was joined by 13 Sir Knights from five different Assemblies at both events, led by Florida Master SK Robert Urrutia.

“For millions of Americans, 9/11 isn’t a chapter in history; it’s a memory of the exact moment the world seemed to stop,” Perszyk said. “Twenty-five years later, a new generation knows it only through stories, photographs and videos. Our job is to make sure they never forget why it mattered.”

Like so many Americans, Perszyk has vivid memories of where he was when the attacks occurred. At the time, he worked at the National Security Agency in Maryland. As the

unprecedented events unfolded, the agency was evacuated because of concerns that it could be a potential target of the fourth hijacked aircraft. His wife, Pat, was traveling to the Pentagon when she received a call telling her to turn around and return home.

Their experience is one of millions of personal stories forever connected to September 11—a day that began like any other but became one of the defining moments in American history.

The commemoration paid special tribute to the extraordinary acts of courage witnessed that day. Firefighters, police officers, emergency personnel and civilians rushed toward danger to help others escape, with many sacrificing their own lives in the process.

The remembrance also honored the men and women who worked at Ground Zero during the difficult weeks and months that followed. They searched through the devastation for survivors and the remains of those who had died, often placing their own health and lives at risk.

Yet amid the tragedy came a powerful demonstration of the American spirit.

September 11th revealed not only the terrible consequences of hatred and terrorism but also the strength and resilience of a nation that came together in the face of unimaginable loss. Americans from every background united around

a common purpose, helping neighbors, comforting strangers and supporting the families of those who had been lost.

“We showed our resilience to come together, working for a common purpose,” Perszyk reminded those assembled. “We WILL NOT FORGET.”

The ceremony reflected that message through prayer, patriotism, music and remembrance. Drew Hoffman led those assembled in the Pledge of Allegiance. Father Manny Lopez, pastor of Santa Maria del Mar Catholic Church, offered the opening prayer and later the closing benediction.

Laurel Guffee, age 9, led the gathering in singing the National Anthem and “America the Beautiful.” A solemn moment of silence accompanied the playing of “Taps,” providing those gathered an opportunity to reflect upon the lives lost and sacrifices made.

A particularly meaningful part of the observance came from guest speaker Joe Palma, who was at the World Trade Center on September 11. His presence provided a personal connection to the events being remembered 25 years later and reinforced the importance of preserving the firsthand stories of those who experienced that historic day. He displayed a number of items he used while assisting in the search for survivors. This included a special safety cap, breathing

masks, and a leather welding jacket.

The ceremony also recognized the first responders and community leaders whose service continues the tradition of courage exemplified on September 11. The Flagler Beach Police and Fire Departments, Flagler Beach Mayor Pattie King and the City Commissioners were thanked for their cooperation and assistance in making the commemoration possible.

Special recognition was given to Former District Deputy and PGK Kevin Ryan for his work coordinating the many components necessary to bring the event together.

Perszyk also thanked the individuals and organizations whose participation contributed to the solemnity of the occasion, including Laurel Guffee, Joe Palma, the Matanzas High School ROTC Color Guard, Knights of Columbus **Assembly 2810** Color Corps and Father Manny Lopez.

Following the community observance, attendees were invited to continue the remembrance at Santa Maria del Mar Catholic Church, where a Blue Mass was held in honor of all first responders. Fr. Manny had a special recognition ceremony for six 9-11 first responders that assisted at Ground Zero.

The message of the morning was simple, solemn and enduring: We will not forget.



*Bishop William Wack of the Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee held his annual “Lunch with the Bishop” event at **Sacred Heart Cathedral** in Pensacola on September 11.*

The event is held to assist Catholic Charities of Northwest Florida in its efforts to support the needy and outcast in our society, which has been helping tens of thousands people while providing millions of dollars in the Panhandle since 1928.

Over 250 were in attendance, including the State Treasurer of the State Council, Kris Elliott (pictured with Bishop Wack), District Deputy 6 Dennis Dillenschneider, and several Grand Knights and PGKs of local councils.

Council 14084 Reflects on SK Ed Sleyzak

Ed and I were the District Deputy and District Warden respectively for District 47/48 in 2018 and 2019. We attended 96 Council meetings in the district usually together. After meetings, we would often hang out in the church parking lot for about 15 minutes talking about the councils, plans and life in general. I always thought we made a great team. I appreciated everything I learned from Ed about how to perform the District Deputy duties when my term came.

In 2025 Ed rejoined the Alafia Exemplification Team. I remember him saying that he would do whatever position we needed at anytime. I thought that was pretty humble and a sign of a leader who understands service to others. Ed served the exemplification team as Warden, Fraternity, Presiding Officer, and also assistant video technician.

Ed was always persistent. I remember since he joined the Knights, there were often things going on in his life such as cancer and related



health issues, family issues, employment, loss of a house and household goods, a failed election bid to State Warden, and things I don't know about. But Ed was persistent at what he wanted to do, he wouldn't give up, he would just keep trying. He would find a way.

~SK John Berrie

SK Ed Sleyzak was a Faithful Member of the Color Corps. Every Holy Thursday the Color Corps guards the Blessed Sacrament in the Garden Of Repose from 8PM to Midnight. Each Knight stands guard for a 15 minute shift, usually resulting in 4 or 5 shifts for the night. When we are not on guard we standby in a nearby waiting room.

One year Ed and I happened to be on the same shift. During one of our rest periods we each took off our Chapeaus and relaxed with our Brother Knights. When it came time for Ed to return to duty he mistakenly picked up my Chapeau, which was a few sizes smaller than his, and proceeded to the Garden of Repose. He couldn't figure out why his Chapeau didn't fit until he was just about to go out the door. We caught him just in time! Meanwhile, I tried to wear his Chapeau – it came down over my eyes. I was able to turn it sideways for the Napoleon Look. We



decided to nix that idea. We laughed about that for years afterward.

Ed was a great friend and Broiler Knight. He was the Grand Knight for the 2014-2015 Fraternal Year. Halfway through his term Ed was stricken with the cancer which he battled for more than 10 years. I was the Deputy Grand Knight and had the privilege of serving with Ed for several years on **Council 14084 and Assembly 3418.**

~ Mark C. Lovejoy

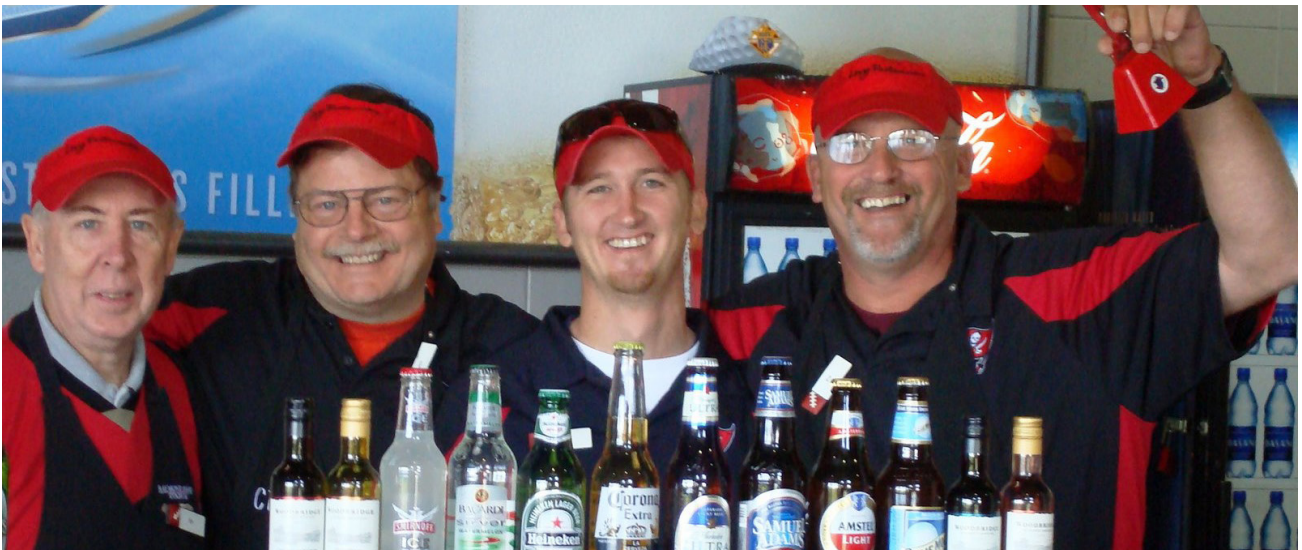
One of the best qualities that Ed had was being a mentor to the newly installed Knights. I remember him talking to me about the principles of charity, unity, fraternity and patriotism and how it makes you a better Catholic gentlemen.

As a dedicated leader within the Knights of Columbus, he embodied the core principles of charity, unity, and fraternity through every aspect of his service. Guided by a deep Catholic faith, he led with both quiet humility and steadfast resolve, inspiring those around him to put faith into action

through service to the parish, support for families, and unwavering care for those in need.

His visionary guidance transformed ideas into impactful community outreach, while his warmth and integrity fostered a genuine brotherhood among the Knights. He did not merely hold a title of leadership; he lived out a vocation of service, leaving behind a legacy of faith-filled devotion, noble character, and a profound impact on every life he touched.

~ Peter Depa





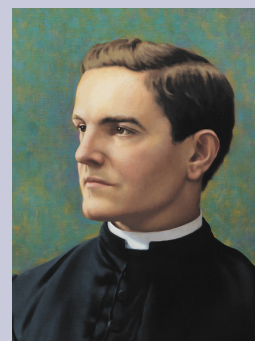
Prayer for the Canonization of Blessed Michael J. McGivney

God, our Father, protector of the poor and defender of the widow and orphan, you called your priest, Blessed Michael J. McGivney, to be an apostle of Christian family life and to lead the young to the generous service of their neighbor.

Through the example of His life and virtue may we follow your Son, Jesus Christ, more closely, fulfilling His commandment of charity and building up His Body which is the Church.

Let the inspiration of your servant prompt us to greater confidence in your love so that we may continue His work of caring for the needy and the outcast. We humbly ask that you glorify your venerable servant Blessed Michael J. McGivney on earth according to the design of your holy will.

Through His intercession, grant the favor I now present (here make your request).



Is Your Personal Information Accurate?

Every member of the Knights of Columbus in the Florida jurisdiction is listed on the Florida KofC website. Financial Secretaries update council lists on the Supreme and State websites at least quarterly. To ensure your information is correct, please review the brief YouTube video link below to confirm that your personal information and your preferred contact information is correct.

The 5-minute video describes how to log on or gain initial access, and reviews how to correct or confirm your personal information.

Please note that if you are a State, Assembly or Council officer, chairman or director, you must remain subscribed to the State Council's email list. Failure to do so will result in you missing important communications concerning your position and may result in your forfeiture of that position.

Follow the instructions on the video <https://youtu.be/IVS3XkgiUs> and while you are on the site, check out the other good news and information is available to you with just a click or two.

KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS FLORIDA STATE COUNCIL MISSION STATEMENT

Evangelize and proclaim our faith, protect families, and perform works of charity.

Through our witness and deeds attract Catholic men to our Order.

Build the Domestic Church through service, support our parishes, clergy, and communities.

Incorporate principled fiscal responsibility for charitable giving.

The Florida State Logo



Explanation of the Florida State Council Pin 2025-2027

“OPEN WIDE THE DOORS FOR CHRIST” is a powerful and fitting exhortation for the Knights of Columbus in this Jubilee Year. As men of faith, the Knights are called to welcome Christ into every aspect of their lives—into their homes, their parishes, and their communities. By echoing the words of St. John Paul II, we are reminded to live boldly and faithfully, opening our hearts to Christ’s truth, mercy, and love. Worn as a pin, it becomes a visible sign of commitment to evangelization, service, and the defense of life; encouraging all to embrace and share the Gospel in this special year of grace.

“JESUS IN MARY’S WOMB” is a profound symbol of the sacredness of life from its very inception. His presence as a child, unborn, reflects the divine value of every human life. The Knights of Columbus draws strength and inspiration from this mystery, standing firmly for the right to life from conception to natural death. As Mary carried the Savior of the world in her womb, so too must society recognize and protect the dignity of every human being at all stages of life.

We are a fraternity of men who love our God, love our Family, and love our country. We protect the children, we salute our veterans, and we pray to our patron Blessed Michael McGivney. We do all unashamed and with pride because we understand that which is not against us is with us. For we are the Knights of Columbus protectors of the widows and orphans, and we wear it proudly so **OPEN WIDE THE DOORS FOR CHRIST and he shall enter.**

Florida State Council Officers

STATE DEPUTY

Michael Gizewski
mpgizewski@gmail.com

STATE CHAPLAIN

Very Rev. Robert Kantor
frbob@stagnenaples.org

STATE SECRETARY

Richard E. Dahn Jr.
rdahn32@gmail.com

STATE TREASURER

Kris Elliott
kris.elliott@1980.usna.com

STATE ADVOCATE

Richard Gallant
floridaknightsofcolumbus@gmail.com

STATE WARDEN

Carlos Ortiz
carlos.ortiz.EA@outlook.com

IMMEDIATE PAST STATE DEPUTY

Richard Hughes
rhughes14084@gmail.com

STATE EXECUTIVE ADMINISTRATOR

Lorenzo Rodriguez
lorenzoarodriguez@gmail.com

STATE MEMBERSHIP DIRECTOR

Danny McIntyre
danmci@aol.com

STATE PROGRAM DIRECTOR

Steve J. Zajac
sjzajac@embarqmail.com

STATE CHARITIES DIRECTOR

Vince Cipriano
vinnie1248@outlook.com

STATE MARKETING DIRECTOR

Weldon "2E" Watkins
kofctuewowiii@gmail.com

PUBLIC RELATIONS DIRECTOR

Marc Anderson
marcstx19@gmail.com

INVOCATION

Publisher- John O'Malley *jomalley1@cfl.com*

Scott Huetteman Technical & Layout Editor *fl.hutts@gmail.com*

Harry Rother Photographer Website: www.kofcfoto.website

Regional PR Coordinators

Region 1 Bob Gualtieri *rag130@outlook.com*

Region 2 (Open)

Region 3 John O'Malley *jomalley1@cfl.rr.com*

Region 4 (Open)

Region 5 (Open)

Region 6 Armando Minutoli *alminutoli46@gmail.com*

Region 7 (Open)

Region 8 (Open)

Florida State Council Social Media

Your State Council is now on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and You Tube. We need all Brother Knights to participate and Let Your Light Shine.

- Go to Facebook and "LIKE" the page
- Go to X (Twitter) and Instagram and "follow"
- #LetYourLightShine @KofcFlorida



Knightline

KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS IN SERVICE TO ONE. IN SERVICE TO ALL.

Check out the current issue of **Knightline**, a monthly resource for local KofC leaders. It is designed to help council officers plan events and activities, meet quarterly goals for the fraternal year and learn about Orderwide news. [CLICK HERE](#) to download the issue.

COLUMBIA

[CLICK HERE](#) to view the online version of **COLUMBIA** Magazine, a publication for the Knights of Columbus.

