

Knights of Columbus

Birth of the Order and the Robert W. Powell Council By Michael Dragonetti

For Knights of Columbus in Uniondale, the month of March holds special meaning: March is the anniversary of the Order, plus it's the anniversary of the Robert W. Powell Council, which has served St. Martha's since 1952.

The Knights are the world's largest Catholic fraternal organization consisting of 1.7 million members in 12,600 councils in 13 countries, including Germany and Japan, and in 2006 the Knights began forming councils in Poland. The Knights serve the Catholic Church, the local communities, and the respective countries through the principles of Charity, Unity, Fraternity and Patriotism.

In the early 1880's Reverend Michael J. McGivney called together a small group of Catholic men to organize a Catholic fraternal society. The group initially had three purposes: to help Catholic men remain steadfast in their faith through mutual encouragement; to promote closer ties of fraternity among them; and to set up an insurance system so that widows and surviving children of group would not find themselves in dire straits.

Because he wanted to tie Catholicism and Americanism together, Fr. McGivney suggested "Sons of Columbus" to honor Christopher Columbus. But many of the men were Irish-Americans who fought in the Civil War. They wanted a name that symbolized Knightly ideals of spirituality and service to the Church, country and fellowmen.

On March 29, 1882, the Connecticut legislature granted a charter to the Knights of Columbus, formally establishing it as a legal corporation. Fr. McGivney himself installed the first officers, and Council #1, San Salvador (a name chosen because it was the first land in the New World seen by Christopher Columbus) was established in May, 1882.

Fr. McGivney also served as Supreme Chaplain. His younger brothers, Monsignors Patrick and John McGivney, also served as Supreme Chaplains. The Knights are currently pursuing sainthood for Fr. McGivney.

You can read more about Fr. McGivney in the book, "Parish Priest", available at bookstores and through Amazon.com. Another book, titled "By Their Works", is based on Knights who made a difference. Knights to be featured in the book include Babe Ruth, Ray Flynn, John F. Kennedy, Ron Guidry, R. Sargent Shriver, Connie Mack, Vince Lombardi and Alfred E. Smith.

In the early 1950's, 18 Uniondale men who were members of the Hempstead Council #1241 saw the need for a new council to represent the rapidly growing community of Uniondale and the new parish of St. Martha's. The Formation Committee consisted of 17 gentlemen who became the Council's initial slate of officers. The council was named for the eighteenth gentleman on the committee, Robert W. Powell, who passed away in September 1951.

Their dream became a reality on March 9, 1952 when Robert W. Powell Council #3488 was officially born. Ninety-nine members joined Powell Council on that day. Thus began a tradition of service to Uniondale, St. Martha's Parish, and the Knights of Columbus. That tradition continues today as Uniondale's finest Catholic gentlemen live out the principles of Charity, Unity, Fraternity and Patriotism as the right arm of the Catholic church.

In April, Powell Council will be hosting a monthly dinner at our K of C Kafe and also a Knight at the Races at the American Legion Hall. All St. Martha's parishioners are welcome. All Catholic men 18 years of age or older are encouraged to join the Knights of Columbus. And Catholic boys between the ages of 10-18 are invited to join the Squires Circle, Rev. John J. Byrne #999.

You can find out more about the Knights of Columbus and the Robert W. Powell Council by visiting their website at www.koc3488.com or by calling 516-481-2578.