

## 2017-2018 Officers

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Leonard Baratta

3 Year Trustee  
Jim Johnson (Susan)

2 Year Trustee  
John Nowak (Helen)

1 Year Trustee  
David B. Ethier(Margo)

Lecturer  
Bill Pivnick

### Meeting Schedule (7pm)

Officer's Meeting 1<sup>st</sup> Mon.  
Council Business 2<sup>nd</sup> Tues.  
Assembly 3<sup>rd</sup> Tues.  
Women's Club 3<sup>rd</sup> Tues.  
Social 4<sup>th</sup> Tues.



# Knights of Columbus



Sacred Heart Council 8012  
September 2017 Newsletter

## **Grand Knight's Message**

Today, as at our founding, the family stands at the core of the Knights of Columbus' beliefs and ideals as a Catholic, family, fraternal service organization. The Knights of Columbus has always strongly supported the family at the local, state, and international levels in many ways, especially through our awarding insurance program. Throughout the year, we should work to strengthen our families by encouraging wholesome home life; take time to enjoy each other's company, talk, and be active together. Knights of Columbus Family Week, August 6th through the 12th, was a special opportunity for our order to celebrate and emphasize the importance of the family through activities and programs that support and involve the church and the parish, unite Knights with their families, and the community at large. These programs and activities should be fun and enjoyable for all but meaningful in their message, our celebration of the family on August 6th that was open to families of the parish, prospective members, parishioners, friends, priests, and religious. It was celebrated with fun, games, and a cookout from 12:30 to 2pm inside and outside of MacLoughlin Hall. It was sponsored by the Knights of Columbus and the Religious Education of St. Theresa. Thank you to everyone who attended or participated in this event. Thank you Ron and Loretta Ciampi, John & Helen Nowak, and Frank Demino for preparing the delicious food we enjoyed. Also, thank you to all who participated in the 5th Sunday Rosary on July 30th. Don't forget Grandparents Day on September 10, 2017.

Vivat Jesus!

Fraternally yours,  
Don LaClair



## Chaplain's Report

There is a story about Peter after the Ascension. He had a list of everyone who will be admitted into heaven. But when he looked around the room, he realized there was more than the 1,000 names on the list. He asked, "Lord, where did all these people come from?" Then the realization that the Blessed Mother was handing down her rosary, so they could step up into heaven.

The Rosary is not just a presentation that is practiced in the faith, but it is a proclamation of the Gospel.

My heartiest appreciation to all our members as we all represent the Knights of Columbus in our community, I wish you all the best. And may the intercession of Fr. McGivney bless and guide us, through Christ our Lord.

I remain

Fr David Vivero

## NEWS DESK

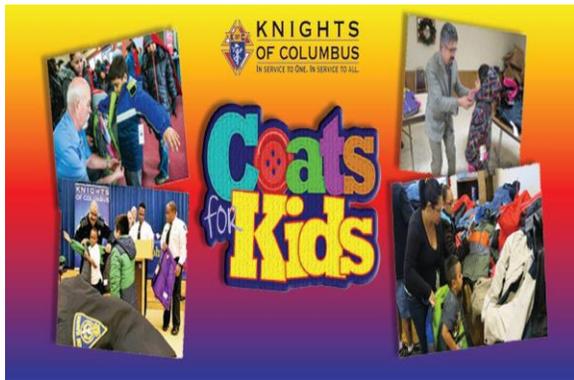
**ONLINE DONATIONS  
AVAILABLE FOR ST. THERESA  
ON SEPTEMBER 1<sup>ST</sup>.**

**THE FAMILY DAY COOKOUT ON  
AUGUST 9<sup>TH</sup> WAS A HUGE  
SUCCESS!!!**

**THE COUNCIL SOCCER  
CHALLENGE IS COMING SOON!!  
PLEASE LOOK FOR MORE  
INFORMATION IN THE  
BULLETIN, CHURCH  
ANNOUNCEMENTS, AND  
FACEBOOK.**

**COLUMBIAN AWARD: 4 MAJOR PROGRAMS IN EACH OF THE SERVICE PROGRAM CATEGORIES OR ONE FEATURED PROGRAM.**

- 1. CHURCH ACTIVITIES: 4 ACTIVITY PROGRAMS OR ONE FEATURED PROGRAM; REFUND SUPPORTS VOCATION PROGRAM. (RSVP).**
- 2. COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES: 4 ACTIVITY PROGRAMS OR ONE FEATURED PROGRAM; HABIT FOR HUMANITY AND GLOBAL WHEELCHAIR MISSION.**
- 3. COUNCIL ACTIVITIES: 4 ACTIVITY PROGRAMS OR ONE FEATURED PROGRAM; SPECIAL OLYMPICS**
- 4. FAMILY ACTIVITIES: 4 ACTIVITY PROGRAMS OR ONE FEATURED PROGRAM; FOOD FOR FAMILIES PROGRAM.**
- 5. CULTURE OF LIFE ACTIVITIES: 4 ACTIVITY PROGRAMS OR ONE FEATURED PROGRAM; LOCAL, REGIONAL, OR NATIONAL MARCH FOR LIFE.**
- 6. YOUTH ACTIVITIES: 4 ACTIVITY PROGRAMS OR ONE FEATURED PROGRAM; COATS FOR KIDS.**



## **STAR COUNCIL AWARD**

**FATHER MCGIVNEY AWARD: ACHIEVE MEMBERSHIP QUOTA: MINIMUM IS 7% INCREASE OR 4 NEW MEMBERS.**

**FOUNDER'S AWARD: ACHIEVE INSURANCE MEMBERSHIP QUOTA: 2.5% INCREASE AS OF JULY 1 OR 3 OR MAX OF 18.**

## **WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES**

Joseph F. & MaryAnn Unger 61 yrs.  
Sisto Anthony & Cheryl Frasca 24 yrs  
Lawrence J. & Patty Fusco 22 yrs



## SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Angel L. Pagan 9/3  
Norman Nowland 9/7  
Michael A. LaCombe 9/10  
James W. Hyer 9/12  
Rudy M. Lohse 9/12  
James H. Lasichak 9/16  
Hugh McCloskey 9/16  
Richard T. Szyper 9/16  
Louis E. Wesbecker 9/16  
Lois Laczko 9/25  
Maureen Szyper 9/26  
John Marshall 9/27  
Daniel Proulx 9/28



## PRAYER REQUEST

+NELLIE HORHOTA  
+TONY ROBERTO  
+JOE MC DERMOTT  
JERRY LAMURA  
+ LINDA LANZILLOTTI  
+MARY LANZILLOTTI  
+MARGE STERBINSKY

+GLENN KLINE  
RICHARD PENNDORF  
KEVIN AYALA  
GINA DOOLEY  
MARY CASSIDY  
THERESA ROMERO  
+ROBERT LANCTOT  
CINDY REM  
TERRY JONES  
+JOHN D. CAPOZZIELLO  
+CHARLES GILMOUR

## FOURTH DEGREE WOMEN'S CLUB

**No Report this Month**



We play on the 2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Friday of every month at 7pm in the council meeting room. The 5<sup>th</sup> Friday is our tournament style Texas Hold 'em. These games are open to the public. The food is complimentary and beverages are only \$1!

## COUNCIL DUES

This is a friendly reminder to pay your council dues if you have not done so yet. For any questions regarding dues, please contact Financial Secretary Dick Penndorf. 352-347-7717.

## PRAYER OF THE MONTH

### Memorial Prayer 9/11

O God of Comfort - 16 years have passed.

Yesterday, today and forever;  
let your love and peace endure.

O God of Healing - 16 years have passed.

Yesterday, today and forever;  
let your love and peace endure.

O God of forgiveness - 16 years have passed.

Yesterday, today and forever;  
let your love and peace endure.

O God of hope - 16 years have passed.

Yesterday, today and forever;  
let your love and peace endure.

May the peace of the Lord be with everyone on this day of remembrance.



A council that prays together stays together! Everyone is encouraged to attend the Corporate Communion Mass which takes place on the 1<sup>st</sup> Saturday of every month at St. Theresa's 5:30 p.m. Don't forget your Knights of Columbus shirt. The next Mass is on Sept. 2<sup>nd</sup>.

## CONTRIBUTOR SUBMISSIONS

FOR THOSE WHO REGULARLY SUBMIT ARTICLES FOR THE NEWSLETTER, AND ANYONE ELSE WHO MAY HAVE SOMETHING TO ADD, MUST BE TO ME NO LATER THAN THE 20<sup>TH</sup> OF EACH MONTH. PREFERABLY BY THE 15<sup>TH</sup>.

## ABOUT THIS NEWSLETTER

Should you have a correction, addition, or deletion to this newsletter (**especially birthdays and anniversaries**) please do not hesitate to contact David J. Pistarelli, Editor [djbj723@hotmail.com](mailto:djbj723@hotmail.com) or Richard Penndorf, FS @ 347-7717



## FAITHFUL NAVIGATOR MESSAGE

No Report this month

## *Saint of the Month*

St. Jerome

Before he was known as Saint Jerome, he was named Eusebius Sophronius Hieronymus. He was born around 342 AD, in Stridon, Dalmatia. Today, the town, which ceased to exist in Jerome's time, would likely be in Croatia or Slovenia.

The young Jerome was educated by Aelius Donatus, who was a famous

Roman grammarian. From him, the young Jerome learned Latin and Greek. Little else is known of his childhood other than his parents were probably well-to-do and Christian. Despite their efforts to raise Jerome properly, the young man behaved as he chose.

Around the age of 12 or so, Jerome traveled to Rome to study grammar, philosophy and rhetoric. It is likely that due to his training in rhetoric, he may have considered a career in law. By his own admission, he quickly forgot his morals. While he was not studying, Jerome pursued pleasure. In particular, he pursued women, even though he knew his behavior was wrong.

To alleviate the feelings of guilt he often felt afterwards, Jerome would visit the crypts in Rome and imagine himself in hell. He did so every Sunday, even though he was not a Christian. Jerome succeeded in frightening himself, but not in changing his ways.

Fortunately, Jerome had as a companion, Bonosus, who was a Christian influence. His influence is part of what persuaded Jerome to become a Christian and change his ways for the better.

In or around the year 366, Jerome decided to become a Christian and was baptized by Pope Liberius.

Now interested in theological matters, Jerome set aside secular matters to pursue matters of the faith. He traveled with Bonosus to Trier where there were schools for him to gain ecclesiastical training. In 370, he traveled close to home, ending up in a monastery at Aquileia. The monastery was overseen by Bishop St. Valerian, who had attracted some of the greatest minds in Christendom. While in Aquileia, Jerome met Rufinus and the two men became friends. Rufinus was a monk who became renowned for his translations of Greek works into Latin. Jerome himself was developing his skills as a translator, a skill he developed during his time in the Roman catacombs, translating the inscriptions on the tombs.

Following his time in Aquileia, Jerome traveled next to Treves, Gaul where he began to translate books for his own use. His goal was to build a personal library.

After a time in Gaul, he returned to Aquileia in 373. While there, Jerome and his friend Bonosus had a falling out and decided to part ways.

Bonosus departed for an island in the Adriatic where he would live as a hermit for a time.

Jerome traveled to the east, bound for Antioch by way of Athens.

In 374, Jerome finally reached Antioch, after making several lengthy

stops along the way. While in that city, Jerome began writing his first work, "Concerning the Seven Beatings."

During that same year, disease made Jerome ill while taking the lives of some of his companions. It is unclear what disease was responsible, or if different illnesses had taken his friends. During his illness, Jerome had visions which made him even more religious.

Jerome went into the desert to live for four years, living as a hermit southwest of Antioch. He was frequently ill during this time.

After he emerged from his hermitage, Jerome was quickly embroiled in conflicts within the Church at Antioch. This was not something Jerome wanted to be associated with. Jerome made clear that he did not want to become a priest, preferring instead to be a monk or a hermit. But Church officials in Antioch as well as Pope Damasus wanted him to be ordained. Jerome relented on the condition he would not be expected to serve in any ministry and would still be allowed to pursue his monastic life. He was subsequently ordained.

Making the most of his freedom as a priest, Jerome traveled to Constantinople where he studied under St. Gregory of Nazianzus, who was renowned as a great theologian.

After St. Gregory left Constantinople in 382, Jerome traveled to Rome for a council of the Church and met Pope Damasus. Following the council, Pope Damasus kept Jerome in Rome and made him his secretary.

While serving as secretary to the pope, Jerome also promoted the ideal of aestheticism to everyone around him. Included in this group were women of the city of Rome who wanted to live saintly lives.

Pope Damasus died in 384, and this exposed Jerome to criticism and controversy. Jerome was a sarcastic man of great wit. He became unpopular because of his attitude and made a number of enemies.

While Pope Damasus was alive, he could shield Jerome from criticism, but now Jerome faced the vengeance of the enemies he made. Both prominent pagans who resented his promotion of the faith and fellow Christians who lacked his wit attacked him with vicious rumors.

Among the rumors were accusations that he was behaving inappropriately with the woman we now know as Paula. At that time, she was one of his students in aestheticism.

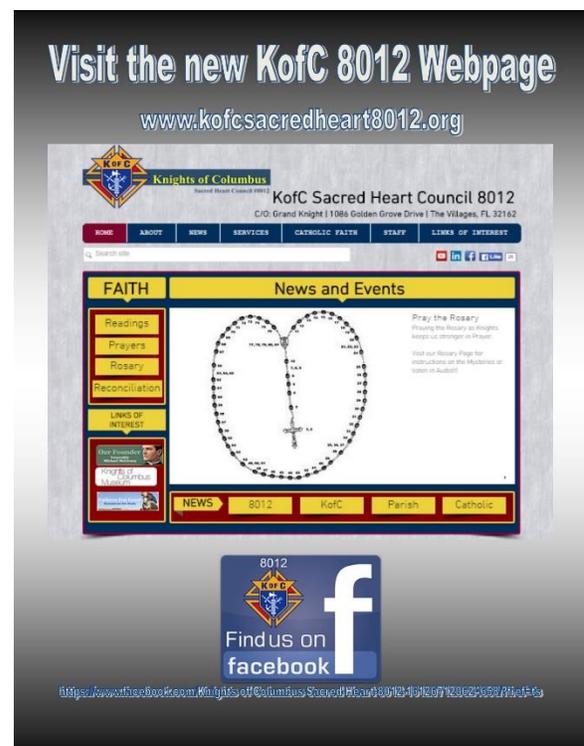
Paula was a widow with four children who deeply mourned the loss of her husband. Jerome provided counseling and instruction to her and she became a lifelong friend and follower of Jerome, assisting him in his work.

Eventually, Jerome decided to return to the Holy Land to escape the calumny in Rome. He headed east and arrived in Antioch in 386. Shortly after, Jerome was met by Paula, her daughter, and several other followers. The group went first to Jerusalem, then on to Alexandria, Egypt. They settled in Bethlehem and had a monastery built there which included dormitories for women. Jerome was a hard worker and he wrote extensively defending the virginity of Mary, which some clerics dared to question. He also engaged in several debates against various other heresies including a lengthy battle with his old friend Rufinus. Jerome was easily upset, and even the venerable St. Augustine exchanged words with him. Eventually, Jerome and Augustine repaired their relationship and were able to correspond as friends and colleagues. Of all the things that made Jerome famous, nothing was so legendary as his translation of the Bible. Jerome began work while he was still in Rome under Pope Damasus. He spent his entire life translating the scriptures from Hebrew and Old Latin.

In the year 404 Paula died, later to become a saint of the Church. Rome was sacked by Alarc the Barbarian in 410. These events distressed Jerome greatly. Violence eventually found its

way to Bethlehem disrupting Jerome's work in his final years. Jerome died on September 30, 420. His death was peaceful and he was laid to rest under the Church of the Nativity. His remains were later transferred to Rome.

Saint Jerome is the patron saint of archaeologists, Biblical scholars, librarians, students and translators. His feast day is September 30.



Visit the new KofC 8012 Webpage  
[www.kofcsacredheart8012.org](http://www.kofcsacredheart8012.org)

**Knights of Columbus**  
KofC Sacred Heart Council 8012  
C/O Grand Knight | 1186 Golden Grove Drive | The Villages, FL 32112

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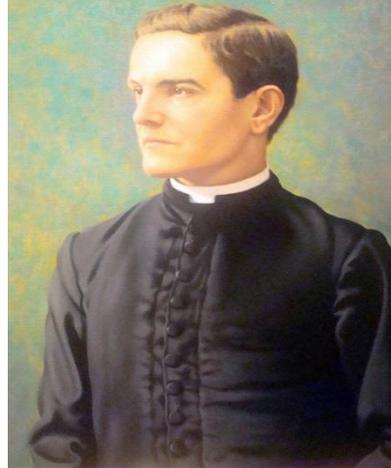


Knights of Columbus  
**INSURANCE**  
YOUR SHIELD FOR LIFE

Life Insurance Myth 8: If I buy a term policy and still need protection when the term ends, I can always renew the policy.

That's true if your plan is renewable – some aren't and renewal premiums are usually very expensive – but keep in mind a few important factors. First, you will be older, which guarantees you will pay higher premiums than you did when you bought previously. Second, your health conditions may have changed, making you potentially uninsurable. Speak to me before making a decision that may seem cost-efficient today but could prove costly in the future.

For more information please contact:  
Gary R. Armbruster, PGK, FICF, Field Agent (352) 816-6226 or email Gary.Armbruster@kofc.org



***Congratulations to all Knights who are celebrating their anniversary of membership:***

***Rudy M. Lohse 29 yrs.***

***Dennis J. Pasch 23 yrs.***

***Leonard Lanzillotti 21 yrs.***

***Fr. David P. Vivero 21 yrs.***

***David B. Ethier 9 yrs.***

***Baltazar G. Evidente 1 yr.***

***John Marshall 1 yr.***

***Angel L. Pagan 1 yr.***

Knights of Columbus -  
 Sacred Heart Council 8012  
 Annual Golf Outing –  
 October 14<sup>th</sup>



The Links At Spruce Creek  
 South



The outing will be a shotgun start. Best Ball Outing with a start time of approximately 8:00 AM. Signup a FOURSOME today (\$60 per golfer, which includes cart and food) or SPONSOR a hole for \$50. The net proceeds go to the *Champions For Champions* Program and the Knights of Columbus Sacred Heart Council 8012 social programs. Please contact Larry Powers at (352) 307-1212 (17881 SE 105<sup>th</sup> Ct.) or Larry Fusco at (352) 751-4301 (1086 Golden Grove Dr. The Villages, FL 32162) for further information or just send in the completed form with a check made out to “Knights of Columbus 8012 Outing”.

**Volunteers for this event are necessary in order to raise funds for the council.**

	NAME	PHONE	EMAIL
1			
2			
3			
4			
SPONSOR			

St. Louis, Mo., Aug 2, 2017 / 10:10 am  
([CNA/EWTN News](#)).- The Knights of Columbus on Tuesday announced it will raise and donate \$2 million to re-settle Iraqi Christian families displaced by the Islamic State in their home town of Karemlesh on the Nineveh Plain.

“The terrorists desecrated churches and graves and looted and destroyed homes,” Carl Anderson, Supreme Knight of the Knights of Columbus, said in his Aug. 1 remarks announcing the \$2 million project.

“Now we will ensure that hundreds of Christian families driven from their homes can return to these two locations and help to ensure a pluralistic future for Iraq,” he said. In order for Iraq to have such a future, he said Christians must be treated as “free and equal citizens” and not suffer the “religious apartheid” of previous years.

Anderson addressed the 135th annual convention of the Knights of Columbus held in St. Louis, Mo. Aug.1-3. 90 bishops and 12 cardinals were present, along with Knights councils from all over the world.

The Knights of Columbus is an international Catholic men’s organization founded, in Anderson’s words, to “strengthen the faith of Catholic men” and “protect their families.” Over 1.9 million are members of the organization, founded in 1882 by Venerable Fr. Michael J. McGivney.

The four pillars of the organization are charity, unity, fraternity, and patriotism.

An international aid organization as well, the Knights’ Christian Refugee Relief Fund has provided over \$13 million in aid to persecuted Christians since 2014, mostly in Iraq and Syria. In 2014, forces of the Islamic State overran large swathes of Syria and Iraq, killing or displacing many Christian families.

The group has since been forced back, losing

much of its territory, including the Nineveh Plain where many Christians lived.

Around 1.5 million Christians lived in Iraq before the U.S. invasion in 2003, but that number has fallen to below an estimated 250,000. The situation for Iraqi Christians is so dire, Anderson said, that “without substantial assistance” in the next two months, many of them might leave Iraq for good.

Christians have lived in the area for centuries, tracing their communities back to almost the beginning of Christianity. Some speak Aramaic, the language Jesus would have spoken, and various ancient shrines existed in the region, including the tomb of the prophet Jonah which was destroyed by Islamic State.

“These Christian communities are a priceless treasure for the Church and for humanity,” Anderson said on Tuesday. He called the Knights’ drive to raise money for them a “concrete step” to aid the beleaguered Christians.

The amount of \$2 million would also match the donation of the government of Hungary, which has helped resettle around 1,000 families in the Iraqi village of Telskuf.

The Knights will partner with the Chaldean Archeparchy of Erbil to help rebuild Karemlesh, which is just 18 miles east of Mosul.

Anderson said that while the town was controlled by Islamic State, homes were vandalized or destroyed and churches were desecrated. “We will give them and many others hope for the future,” he said.

The Knights will also partner with the U.S. bishops’ conference to sponsor a national day of prayer and a “week of awareness” for persecuted Christians, starting Nov. 26.

Those wishing to make a tax-deductible donation to the project for Karemlesh can do so

at [www.ChristiansAtRisk.org](http://www.ChristiansAtRisk.org), or by phone at 1-800-694-5713. 100 percent of the donations will go to the project.

In his annual address, Anderson noted other work the Knights had accomplished, including more than \$177 million in donations and over 75 million volunteer hours.

Local Knights councils had responded to various disasters and tragedies, including providing drinking water and sandbags to families in Louisiana after over 60,000 homes had been flooded by record rainfall, Anderson said. The Knights provided more than \$100,000 in emergency relief after Hurricane Matthew caused hundreds of deaths and billions of dollars in damage in the Caribbean and the United States.

The Knights also worked to provide for the spiritual life of families, he said, as the family which Fr. McGivney grew up in “was a true domestic Church.”

He said that Knights councils had organized pilgrimages in various dioceses for the Jubilee Year of Mercy, and had introduced a spiritual program for men based on a pastoral letter by Bishop Thomas Olmsted of Phoenix, “Into the Breach.”

Knights had also organized “Warriors to Lourdes” pilgrimages, taking wounded veteran soldiers to the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes for healing.

Anderson called the Knights to stand against the “polite persecution” of secular society, quoting Pope Francis.

St. Louis, Mo., Aug 3, 2017 / 02:56 pm ([CNA/EWTN News](#)).- The classic ceremonial hats and capes of Fourth Degree members of the Knights of Columbus that you may have seen at Mass or at parish events will now be getting a major alteration.

“This fraternal year, we make another historic change. The Board of Directors has decided that the time is right for a modernization of the Fourth Degree uniform,” Supreme Knight of the Knights of Columbus Carl Anderson announced on Tuesday at the Knights’ 135th annual international convention in St. Louis, Mo.

The Knights of Columbus is an international Catholic men’s organization with over 1.9 million members worldwide. The organization promotes four virtues of fraternity, unity, charity, and solidarity among its members.

The Fourth Degree uniform is worn by those who have reached the highest levels of the Knights of Columbus, at least 18 years of age and having been a Third Degree member in good standing.

Each degree is associated with one of the four virtues of the Knights, with patriotism being associated with the Fourth Degree.

Members of the Fourth Degree serve in honor guards for liturgical processions or in color guards at ceremonial events, hence the distinctive nature of their uniform.

The uniform of the Fourth Degree has changed throughout the history of the Knights, as previous versions included a top hat and a tuxedo with tails. However, it has remained relatively the same since 1940 – a plumed chapeau which can be worn with plumes of different recognized colors, a tuxedo, a cape, and a ceremonial sword.

Now, however, the Knights will be leaving behind the classic uniform for a “modernized” version, a blue blazer with the Fourth Degree emblem and dark gray slacks, a blue Fourth Degree tie, and a beret.

Vice supreme masters processed into Mass on Tuesday at the convention wearing the new uniform. Anderson then officially announced the change while delivering the annual report of

the Supreme Knight.

The board of directors for the Knights decided for the change, Anderson said, to “modernize” the dress uniform that is typically worn at ceremonial or solemn events.

“On a limited basis, assemblies may choose to continue using the traditional cape and chapeau for color corps at public events and for honor guards in liturgical processions,” Anderson said on Tuesday.

“However, the preferred dress for the Fourth Degree – including color corps and honor guards – is now the new uniform of jacket and beret.”

St. Louis, Mo., Aug 4, 2017 / 02:55 pm ([CNA/EWTN News](#)).- The urgency of the problems facing displaced Iraqi Christians has driven a new campaign by the Knights of Columbus to resettle an entire village in their homes, says a spokesman for the Knights.

The roughly 200,000 Christians still in Iraq – down from 1.5 million in 2003 – “are increasingly feeling a sense of hopelessness over the situation,” Andrew Walther, vice president of communications for the Knights of Columbus, told CNA on Thursday.

Even with Islamic State swept out of most of Iraq, many Christian families who lived in Mosul or on the nearby Nineveh Plain are not yet able to return to their homes, three years after being displaced by the group.

With their lives as internally displaced persons surpassing the three-year mark, “it was made very clear that if there weren’t concrete steps that showed people that moving home was possible in the next 30 to 60 days, there was a very good chance that many of them would just leave for other countries in the region, for wherever they could go,” Walther said.

The Knights of Columbus announced this week

that it was beginning a \$2 million drive to raise and donate money to resettle an entire village of families in Karemlesh, a town on the Nineveh Plain 18 miles outside Mosul. Most of the families are Chaldean or Syriac Christians, with some Shabak families, Walther said.

Supreme Knight Carl Anderson [announced the drive during his annual remarks on Tuesday](#) at the 135th annual international convention of the Knights of Columbus. The group is an international Catholic men’s organization with over 1.9 million members in councils all over the world.

“Now we will ensure that hundreds of Christian families driven from their homes can return to these two locations and help to ensure a pluralistic future for Iraq,” Anderson said on Tuesday announcing the drive. 100 percent of the funds raised would go to help Christians rebuild their homes.

The Islamic State swept through large swathes of Syria and Iraq in 2014, giving families of Christians and other religious and ethnic minorities an ultimatum – convert to Islam, die, or leave.

“When ISIS took the town, everybody fled,” Walther said, and militants began their campaign of cultural genocide: burning homes, desecrating parishes, destroying Christian symbols, and even digging up the body of a local priest to desecrate his grave.

“They wanted not just to erase the Christians from the town, they wanted to erase whatever was reminiscent of Christianity from the town as well,” Walther said.

Many Christians fled eastward to the Kurdistan region of Iraq, where around 70,000 Christians were living in and around the city of Erbil, dependent upon aid groups for their basic needs.

Since 2014, the Knights have already provided

over \$13 million in aid to Christians in Iraq and Syria who have suffered persecution, most notably at the hands of Islamic State.

The Knights also helped produce a report for the U.S. State Department, which requested it, detailing the violence and forced displacement inflicted upon Christians in Syria and Iraq. The report helped lead to the State Department declaring in March of 2016 that Islamic State was committing genocide against Christians, Yazidis, and Shia Muslims in Iraq and Syria.

The Islamic State has since been forced back from much of the territory it gained, including the Nineveh Plain and Mosul. "With the departure of ISIS as a meaningful military force, you have a lot of new opportunities, in terms of rebuilding and resettling, that you didn't have six months ago, three months ago," Walther said.

Now, however, many Christians have still not been able to return to their homes, which were vandalized, damaged, or destroyed by Islamic State militants. Their future is in question as they are currently living as displaced persons in Kurdistan. The situation is so bleak that local Church leaders are saying that if something is not done to remedy the problem, Christians could leave Iraq for good.

If that is the case, it would be an ideological victory for Islamic State, whose "program was the de-Christianization of Iraq, the total obliteration of any religious minorities," Walther said.

Furthermore, with Christians gone, it could further destabilize Iraq by helping eliminate religious pluralism. "Christians are an enormous example of forgiveness, and they've been praised by imams in Iraq, by television commentators in Egypt, for this capacity of forgiveness," Walther said.

And if the Christians have no more roots in the land where they have lived for centuries, a

priceless cultural vestige could be gone as well.

The government of Hungary has already given \$2 million to move around 1,000 families back to the town of Telskuf, Walther said, providing a working example that such a plan can be successful.

"We have a proof of concept, we know this can work, and we know that if it worked in Telskuf, there's no reason that it wouldn't work in a town also in Nineveh that is also predominately Christian that also has its population in Erbil," he said.

The money would go to provide materials for Christians to repair their homes from the destruction that Islamic State inflicted. "The families are actually putting their own lives back together with a little bit of assistance," Walther said. "The idea is to make these houses habitable."

And although a goal of \$2 million is lofty, it is entirely within reach if parishes and communities all over the world pitch in, Walther said.

"An individual can do this," he said. "A prayer group can do this. 20 people put in \$100, you can send somebody home. This is one of those things where people can do a concrete, tangible action that is a meaningful step in saving Christianity in the Middle East."

"It's a model that can allow Christianity to be transplanted back to where it was," Walther said. "It's an early step, but it's an important step if Christianity is going to survive in Iraq."

Donations to the project can be made at [www.christiansatrisk.org](http://www.christiansatrisk.org) or via phone at 1-800-694-5713. Donations are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law, the Knights said.

**Submitted By: Chris Romero, Chancellor**

