



Knights of Columbus

St. Oliver Plunkett Council 13440

Knights News



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Chaplain Father Cyriac	Grand Knight Javier Tavira	Deputy Grand Knight Carey Scruggs	Financial Secretary Frank Montelione	Treasurer Mark Layton	Advocate Ray Prosek	Warden Richard Bellnier
Recorder	Chancilor Bill Childress	One Year Trustee Fritz Siler	Two Year Trustee Robert Barnard	Three Year Trustee Todd Morrow	Inside Guard Patrick Chiah	Outside Guard John Spudich

Around the Council

It's hard to believe that we now have to write "2026" on our documents. The Holidays are over and for me, thankfully. Time to get back to business.

Council 13440: Recent and Upcoming Activities

Council 13440 has been bustling with activities, bringing the community together through various events and initiatives. Here's a look at some of the recent highlights and upcoming events.



The Christmas party was held on December 20th and was a joyous occasion attended by more than 40 people.

The event was filled with festive cheer, delicious food, and wonderful company. It was a great opportunity for members and their families to celebrate the holiday season together.

Successful Monastery Sales

Our Monastery Sales have been a great success, thanks to the hard work and dedication of our members. The sales not only helped raise funds for our council but also supported the monastery and its mission. We are grateful for the community's support and look forward to continuing this tradition.



Men's Bible Study

We are excited to announce our upcoming Men's Bible Study sessions. These will be held on **January 22 and February 12**. These sessions provide a wonderful opportunity for spiritual growth and fellowship. We encourage all men in the community to join us for these enriching discussions.

Devine Mercy Chaplet

On **February 8**, we will be praying the Devine Mercy Chaplet after

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From The Desk Of The District Deputy

Welcoming the New Year: Renewed Outlook for Council 13440



Dear Brothers of Council 13440,

As we stand at the threshold of a new year, it is a time for reflection, renewal, and hope. The calendar turning brings not only a fresh start but also an opportunity to reaffirm our shared mission and values as Knights of Columbus. Together, we have navigated challenges, celebrated successes, and strengthened our fellowship. Now, as we look ahead, let us embrace a new outlook for our council and rediscover the true gift of membership.

Embracing the Promise of the New Year

The beginning of a new year is more than a change in date; it is a call to action and growth. For Council 13440, this means recommitting ourselves to the virtues that define us: charity, unity, and fraternity. Let us resolve to foster deeper bonds among our members, support our parish and community with renewed vigor, and seek out new ways to serve those in need. Each Knight brings unique strengths to our council—let us encourage one another to share these gifts for the benefit of all.

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all masses. This is a beautiful and powerful prayer that brings us closer to God's mercy. We invite everyone to join us in this spiritual practice.

Council 13440 is committed to fostering a strong sense of community and spirituality. We look forward to seeing you at our upcoming events and thank you for your continued support.

Hosting Donuts and Coffee

On **February 22**, we will be hosting donuts and coffee. This event is a great way to start the day with good food and great company. It's an excellent opportunity for members to catch up and for new members to get to know the council.

Our council will depend in the future on new and younger members to take over the reins of leadership. Recruiting isn't hard, you just need the "hutzpah", as my late Jewish wife would say, to approach men you see regularly at mass.

It's up to all of use to recruit. If you have a prospect, use his or your cell to go to www.kofc.org and have the prospect fill out the form right then and there. Remind them to watch for an email to confirm. That's it.

Until Next Month

Vivat Jesus

The Gift of Membership

Membership in Council 13440 is more than a title; it is a blessing and a responsibility. Through our collective efforts, we make a tangible difference in the lives of others and uphold the noble traditions of the Knights of Columbus. Whether you are a long-time member or newly joined, your presence enriches our council. The friendships formed, the faith shared, and the works accomplished together are gifts that grow with each passing year.

This year, let us celebrate the gift of membership by actively participating in council events, lending a hand to our charitable initiatives and inviting others to join our brotherhood. When people unite with a common goal, they find both strength and happiness—and together, they can achieve remarkable results.

Looking Forward: Council United

As we look to the future, let us envision Council 13440 as a vibrant, welcoming, and dynamic force for good. Let us be the council that inspires, supports, and uplifts. Whether through service projects, faith-based activities, or social gatherings, there is a place for every member to contribute and belong.

We encourage all Knights to bring forth ideas, volunteer their time, and reach out to one another. Our council thrives

on the active participation of its members, and every voice matters. In unity, we find strength; in fraternity, we find joy.

Conclusion

As we begin this new year together, let us do so with optimism and determination. The gift of membership is a treasure—let us cherish it, nurture it, and share it. May Council 13440 continue to grow in faith, service, and fellowship. Happy New Year, Brother Knights!

Vivat Jesus!

SK Robert Barnard PGK



If Jesus Were on Social Media Today

Almost every night we pray the Rosary while following it on YouTube. While praying the

Rosary last night a thought came into my head. I thought about the song "Superstar" sung by the Judas character in "Jesus Christ Superstar" in which he said, "If you'd come today you could have reached a whole nation, Israel in 4 BC had no mass communication."

I've thought what if He were here today. If Jesus were walking the earth today, He wouldn't ignore social media. He'd be right in the middle of it—not chasing attention, not trying to build a brand, but using the biggest public square in history the same way He used hillsides, synagogues, and crowded streets.



Jesus always went where people already were. Today, that's online.

His posts wouldn't be slick or carefully curated. No filters. No influencer energy. Just short, uncomfortable truths that stop you mid-scroll.

"Love your enemies."

"Forgive them."

"What good is it to gain the world and lose your soul?"

Those kinds of posts wouldn't trend for long, but they'd stick with you.

Platforms, Podcasts, and YouTube

Jesus wouldn't stick to one platform. He'd probably use X to drop a sentence that completely reframes an argument and then disappear. No back-and-forth.

On Instagram, I don't see Him posting selfies. I see Him

posting people—the ones nobody notices. The poor. The sick. The lonely. The people algorithms don't reward.

YouTube? It wouldn't be flashy. No overproduced thumbnails or dramatic music. Just long conversations and simple stories. Parables, really. It would be like Franklin Roosevelt's Fireside Chats. The kind of content most people say they want but rarely have the patience to sit through. And that would be the point.

If I'm being honest, podcasts might suit Him best. Long-form conversations in a world addicted to clips. Less talking, more listening. Then one question that hits harder than an hour-long monologue.

"Why are you afraid?"

"Who is your neighbor?"

"Do you actually want to change?"

Jesus wouldn't argue the way we do. He wouldn't respond negatively. He wouldn't try to dominate the conversation. Sometimes He'd answer with a story. Sometimes He'd say nothing at all.

That silence would drive people crazy.

Some would say He's too political. Others would say He's avoiding politics. Religious influencers would feel exposed. At the same time, secular audiences would be uncomfortable with His refusal to water down words like sin, repentance, and accountability. He didn't like Performative Faiths that are done primarily for show or to gain approval from others, rather than stemming from genuine belief or conviction. Remember the Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican (Tax Collector), found in Luke 18:9-14, where Jesus contrasts a self-righteous rich Pharisee who boasts in prayer with a poor tax collector who humbly begs God for mercy, showing that God favors the humble over the proud in prayer, not wealth or status.

He wouldn't fit neatly into anyone's camp. He never has.

Who He'd Put on the Mic

If Jesus had a platform—YouTube, podcasts, social media—He'd use it to amplify people nobody else is listening to. Widows. Immigrants. Prisoners. Single parents. The exhausted. The written-off. Maybe He would have guests like Mary Magdalene, even Pontius Pilot and some of the Pharisees.

He'd bring them onto the podcast. Share their stories. Respond to comments buried at the bottom of the feed.

And let's be honest—He'd probably lose his sponsorship. Maybe even banned.

Why People Would Unfollow

At first, His audience would grow fast. Compassion

always draws a crowd. Hope does too. But eventually, people would leave—not because He was mean, but because He was demanding.

"Take up your cross."

"Forgive again."

"Give more than you're comfortable giving."

"Follow Me."

Why It Still Matter today? Jesus has never been good at building comfortable audiences. It wouldn't be to build a following, but to guide people away from superficial displays and towards genuine transformation. If Jesus used social media, podcasts, and YouTube today,. Not to win arguments. Not to dominate the platform. But to point people toward something deeper, harder, and real.

And in a world obsessed with being seen and heard, He'd still be asking the same question—now through screens and earbuds instead of dusty roads:

Who do you say that I am?

Intention For The Month Of January

The Holy Name of Jesus:

Our Strength, Our Hope, Our Call

Each year the Church invites us to pause and reflect on the Holy Name of Jesus, a name that is far more than a title or a word. It is a name that carries power, mercy, and salvation itself. For us as Knights of Columbus—Catholic men called to faith, charity, and fraternity—the Holy Name of Jesus should be at the very center of our lives and our mission.

Sacred Scripture reminds us, "*At the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth*" (Philippians 2:10). The name of Jesus is not simply spoken; it is revered. It represents the Son of God who became man for our salvation, who suffered, died, and rose again so that we might have life.

From the earliest days of the Church, Christians understood the power of invoking the Holy Name. The saints preached it, martyrs died proclaiming it, and ordinary believers found courage and peace by calling upon it in times of trial. St. Bernard of Clairvaux described the Holy Name of Jesus as "*light when it is preached, food when it is thought upon, and healing when it is invoked.*" Those words still ring true today.

As Knights, we live in a world that increasingly dismisses or even mocks the name of Jesus. His name is casually misused, stripped of reverence, and pushed

to the margins of public life. Our response must not be anger or withdrawal, but faithful witness. We honor the Holy Name by the way we speak, the way we act, and the way we serve others—especially the most vulnerable.

When we volunteer in our parishes, support families in need, defend the dignity of life, or simply strive to be better husbands, fathers, and brothers, we proclaim the Holy Name without saying a word. Our actions give credibility to our faith. They show the world that the name of Jesus still transforms hearts and communities.

The devotion to the Holy Name also calls us to personal reflection. How often do we truly pause to pray using the name of Jesus? A simple prayer—“*Jesus, I trust in You*” or “*Lord Jesus, have mercy on me*”—can center our hearts in moments of stress, temptation, or uncertainty. The Holy Name reminds us that we are never alone.

As we reflect on the Holy Name of Jesus, let us recommit ourselves as Knights of Columbus to live in a way that honors that sacred name. May our words reflect reverence, our deeds reflect love, and our lives reflect Christ Himself.

May the Holy Name of Jesus be our strength in weakness, our peace in turmoil, and our guiding light in all that we do.

Vivat Jesus.

Historical Witnesses to Jesus Christ January 2026

Exploring the Historical Footprint of Jesus

We often are confronted by sceptics with the statement that Jesus never really existed and his followers concocted the whole Jesus Story in the Bible. This remark is not posed as a question; they see it as fact. We hem and haw trying to postulate an answer and usually come up blank. During the month that I publish the Knightly News I come across articles that would be pertinent and relative to our organization. The following is a historical fact, and I present it to you so you can be armed and prepared to defend our beliefs. *The Editor*

The question of Jesus Christ’s historical existence has long occupied scholars, theologians, and skeptics alike. While the New Testament remains the most detailed account of his life and teachings, recent studies emphasize that the historical footprint of Jesus extends well beyond Christian Scripture. A diverse collection of ancient sources—Roman,

Jewish, and even openly critical voices—provides independent testimony to the presence and influence of Jesus in the ancient world. These references, scattered across different genres and cultural contexts, collectively form a compelling body of evidence that bridges the domains of faith and history.

Imagine discovering Jesus not only in religious texts but also in the writings of those who had no allegiance to the Christian movement. Roman historians, for example, often recorded political disturbances, social tensions, and notable figures of their time. Their mentions of early Christians and the figure at the center of their devotion demonstrate that the movement had already reached the attention of imperial chroniclers. Jewish scholars, writing from a perspective often critical of emerging Christian claims, likewise acknowledged the existence of a teacher whose followers continued to grow in number. Even early opponents of Christianity, whose writings were intended to challenge or undermine the new faith, inadvertently preserved historical traces of Jesus by addressing the movement he inspired.

Taken together, these sources offer what can be described as a “fresh perspective,” one that situates Jesus within the broader historical landscape of the first century. Rather than relying solely on theological testimony, these independent accounts strengthen the case for Jesus as a figure whose life left a measurable imprint on the ancient world. They reveal that Jesus was not merely a subject of internal Christian reflection but a person whose influence was recognized across cultural and ideological boundaries.

In presenting this array of ancient witnesses, we underscore the continuity between faith and historical inquiry. This approach does not attempt to prove theological claims; instead, it highlights the convergence of multiple voices—some sympathetic, others indifferent or hostile—that collectively affirm Jesus’ presence in history. This convergence enriches our understanding of Jesus not only as a religious figure but also as a man whose life and impact were significant enough to be recorded by diverse observers.

Ultimately, these ancient sources are valuable components of the historical record. They serve as reminders that the story of Jesus Christ is not confined to sacred texts but is woven into the broader tapestry of ancient literature. By drawing attention to these independent attestations, we invite readers to appreciate the depth and breadth of historical testimony surrounding one of history’s most influential figures.

His Holiness Pope Leo IV’s prayer intentions for January and February:

dit: Vatican Media **By Francesca Pollio Fenton**

The pope's Worldwide Prayer Network has released Pope Leo XIV's [list of prayer intentions](#) for the year 2026.

Every month, Pope Leo asks Catholics around the world to pray for a particular intention. This initiative is accompanied by a video in which the pontiff expresses the reasons why he has chosen that particular intention.

Below is the complete list of Pope Leo's prayer intentions for 2026.

January: For prayer with the word of God

Let us pray that praying with the word of God be nourishment for our lives and a source of hope in our communities, helping us to build a more fraternal and missionary Church.

February: For children with incurable diseases

Let us pray that children suffering from incurable diseases and their families receive the necessary medical care and support, never losing strength and hope.

Recent Court Decisions

Federal appeals court affirms: religious organizations can choose to hire only fellow believers

Federal Appeals Court Upholds Religious Hiring Rights in Washington State

A federal appeals court ruled that religious organizations may hire only employees who share their beliefs, even for non-ministerial roles. The 9th Circuit held that Washington State cannot apply its nondiscrimination law to Union Gospel Mission because the First Amendment's church-autonomy doctrine protects internal decisions tied to a group's faith and mission. The court emphasized that forcing a ministry to employ people who reject its teachings would interfere with its religious purpose. This decision builds on earlier Supreme Court cases expanding protections for religious hiring and marks the first appellate ruling to apply those protections beyond ministerial positions.

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Supreme Court Rules on Religious Discrimination in Wisconsin Unemployment Tax Exemption Case

The Supreme Court unanimously ruled that Wisconsin violated the Constitution when it denied a Catholic social ministry the same unemployment-tax exemption granted to churches and other religious groups. Writing for the court, Justice Sotomayor explained that the state engaged in religious discrimination by withholding the exemption

simply because the ministry does not proselytize and serves people of all faiths—practices that are themselves rooted in Catholic teachings *scotusblog.com*. Because the state's approach favored some religious models over others, the court held that it amounted to denominational discrimination and failed strict scrutiny. Concurring opinions by Justices Thomas and Jackson offered different perspectives on the ministry's relationship to the diocese and on how federal tax law treats similar exemptions, but all nine justices agreed the state's denial was unconstitutional.

About the Newsletter

In April 2025, Sir Knight Frank Montelione, the Editor and Designer, started publishing the Knightly News newsletter. Frank, a former Grand Knight for Bishop Verot Council in Indialantic, Florida, has also served as a State Officer and was assigned as a district Knights of Columbus Charities Project Manager on the central east coast of Florida. While serving as Deputy Grand Knight, he initiated a newsletter for the Bishop Verot Council, which continues to be produced. The Knightly News began in a similar fashion and has now become a monthly resource for Council 1440.



Comical Closers

St. Peter and the Tour of Heaven

A man arrives at the Pearly Gates and St. Peter offers him a tour.

They pass a large room filled with people singing joyfully.

"That's the Lutherans," Peter says.

They pass another room with lively music and clapping.

"That's the Pentecostals," Peter says.

Then they pass a small, quiet room with people kneeling reverently.

"Who's in there?" the man whispers.

St. Peter whispers back,

"That's the Catholics... they think they're the only ones here."

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The Parking Lot Miracle

A woman prays desperately on her way to Mass, "Lord, if You give me a parking spot close to the church, I'll go to daily Mass all week."

Suddenly, a spot opens up front.

She looks up and says,
“Never mind, Lord—I found one myself.”
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The Knights' Fifth Degree

A man asks a Knight,
“What are the degrees of the Knights of Columbus?”

The Knight replies,
“Charity, Unity, Fraternity, and Patriotism.”

The man says, “That’s it?”

The Knight says,
“No, there’s a fifth, unofficial degree.”

“What’s that?”

“Learning how to sit through meetings, cook at fundraisers, and still say,
‘Sure, I can help with that.’”

