

Biennial Meeting of the 4th Degree, SC District, De Soto Province

April 13, 2024, Transfiguration Catholic Church, Blythewood, SC

- Meeting called to order by District Master at 10 AM
- Appointment of Pilot, Inner Sentinel, Outer Sentinel and Secretary
- Certification of Travel Cards
- Opening prayer led by Michael A. Allen, District Master (Celtic Prayer)
- Pledge led by Gary Hart, Acting District Marshal
- National Anthem led by Max Gorensik
- Appt of Committee on Credentials-District Secretary
- Appt of Committee on Resolutions-No Resolutions to report.
- Reading of Communications and Previous Minutes- Motion to abstain from reading by Gary Hart, Acting District Marshal. Charley Francis, PFN of Assembly 1714 seconded the Motion.
- No communications
- Report of District Master- Read Supreme Master's Report and gave his report (See Attached)
- Question raised about combining the 4th degree with the CUF degree. State Deputy Jeffrey Crouch commented that they are two separate organizations and that have two separate bylaws.
- Question by Ron Searl, Regional Marshal, about having color guard or honor guard by 4th Degree at the CUF degree. Has that been communicated to the Council GK. State Deputy Crouch responded that it will be.
- There was a question about having a 4th Degree Exemplification held in the Bluffton/Beaufort area.
- Question about a clearing house to share best practice ideas.
- Question about inviting potential 3rd degree members to 4th degree meeting to see what its all about. Vice Supreme Master commented on it and concurred about the State Deputy thoughts on the question.
- Max Gorensik commented on the possibility of scheduling future exemplifications.
- The District Master put out a request for a potential District Pilot position that would be similar to the State Warden to maintain the equipment of the District Assembly and set up for exemplifications.
- Nominations for District Master were submitted. The following nominations were set forth-Mike Allen, Frank Burke, and Jeff Crouch. All were voted in favor of submitting the three nominations to the Supreme Master.

- Audit Committee-Ron Searl, Chris Mongone, and Bill Shoemaker
- The Audit Committee reviewed the audit of the District finances and signed the audit marking the District Assembly in good standing.
- The District Master presented Civic Awards and Star Assemblies from the prior fraternal year.
- Gary Hart, Acting District Marshal, spoke about training. He taught on the use of silent commands, the sword, wearing of the beret, and gloves in mass.
- Daniel Barton, Vice Supreme Master, spoke and gave his comments on patriotism. He also spoke about changes to the 4th Degree Exemplification that are planning on coming. He stated that they should come out in 2025 and it will be open to family members. The Order is working on a survey of all those who served in Korea or Vietnam. The newest country the 4th degree is going into is South Korea. If anyone knows of any veterans that served in Korea that are 4th degree and have a sword that they would like to donate to South Korea, to please submit that information to the DM and/or VSM.
- SD Jeff Crouch spoke. He spoke about the Supreme Knight's challenge at the state convention last week. Patriotism is love for anything. Patriotism can go outside of just love of country. We have love for Christ and love for our church. Support your council. Show your brother knights what it means to be a Sir Knight. We've averaged over 600 new knights each year. SC District under Mike Allen is doing better than other districts in the province. The 4th degree can't be a second thought to the councils. 4th degree honor guards should participate in the CUF. As sir knights lead council members to patriotism.
- Meeting was adjourned by District Master Michael A. Allen and a lunch provided by the Assembly at Transfiguration Parish followed the meeting.

--- Minutes prepared by Christopher R. Hilditch, District Secretary.

SUPREME MASTER'S REPORT
113th SUPREME ASSEMBLY MEETING
NEW HAVEN, CONNECTICUT
SEPTEMBER 9, 2023

It is my duty pursuant to Article III, §8(d) of the Laws and Rules Governing the Fourth Degree of the Knights of Columbus to annually report to the Supreme Assembly. This report marks my first to this assembled body, and I would be remiss to not begin by expressing my gratitude to our Worthy Supreme Knight for his confidence in me to serve as his Supreme Master. Further, I wish to express my appreciation to the Supreme Officers and Directors for their confidence in my abilities as demonstrated by their vote in Mexico City this past February to appoint me upon the Supreme Knight's recommendation.

Further, I recognize that my ability to perform effectively in my first five months is directly attributable to the support of the Vice Supreme Masters who have long endeavored to keep the light of the Fourth Degree shining bright. In particular, I wish to acknowledge today the service of those Vice Supreme Master's whose terms ended on August 31, 2023: Richard P. McDermott (Healy Province), Micheal Thumm (Calvert Province), Denis Lapointe (Champlain Province), Thomas M. Monahon (DeSoto Province), Craig Larson (Marquette Province), Matthew Maly (Guadalupe Province), Alexandro Xavier Isaac (de Jesus Province), Andy Sambrielaz (Fraser Province), Walter J. Wych (Jogues Province), and David M. Ryan (Serra Province).

I also thank all the members of the Supreme Staff who worked to make this Supreme Assembly Meeting a success, especially Stephen Feiler, Daniel Isabel, Tom Hamling, Karen Brady, Gary Morrisey, Tom Milardo, Nicole Simone, and Michele Naglieri. I know many others assisted, and even if not named herein, I express my sincere gratitude.

Specifically, I would like to thank Vanessa Kelly for her support of my wife, Theresa, in preparing for this meeting, and her willingness to stand in for Theresa because of our absence due to my recent surgery.

Finally, I know that my success and the success of all the Fourth Degree, each and every day, is attributed to Justyna Padilla, who has worked many long hours across many months to make this meeting a success. We are all indebted to Justyna for her tireless service to the Order, and we thank you.

It would be easy to report to you that the state of the Fourth Degree is strong, but that would not be the case. I do not say this to be despairing but instead to honestly assess where we are at this moment so that we can more capably advance toward our goals. At the same time, I do not say to you that the state of the Fourth Degree is weak. In fact, it is incredibly strong, when measured from the perspective of our ability to have persevered through a global pandemic during a time of momentous change in the Fourth Degree.

Instead, I say to you that the state of the Fourth Degree is enduring. We have weathered the storms of pandemic and change that have tossed us about the turbulent seas of time, and now, we mend our sails, determined to continue our journey in the service of the Church. Our ability to do so is attributable to the demonstrated leadership of our former and returning Vice Supreme Masters, and now contingent upon our new Vice Supreme Masters who will be installed this evening at beautiful, historic St. Mary's. As we have endured these challenging times, let us now commit to advancing the cause of the Fourth Degree by reenergizing and reengaging the patriotic arm of the Order.

It begins with each of you.

To progress, we must first evaluate where we are. Last year, the Fourth Degree was challenged to grow by one new assembly per district, which means we should have grown by 129 new assemblies. Instead, we only grew by 32 assemblies, a mere 24.8% growth. We must and will do better! In spite such low growth, I want to express my gratitude to Vice Supreme Master Anthony Nazario whose 19 new assemblies amounted to 59.3% of the overall new assembly development Order-wide.

The Philippines ability to develop new assemblies reflects their consistent rate of growth in Membership, which is beyond impressive. In recent years, due to the challenges of the pandemic, the Fourth Degree was encouraged to reach at least 50 percent of its annual quota. However, two provinces nearly reached 100 percent. De Jesus Province led all provinces with 96.65% increase in membership, closely followed by the Magellan Province with a 95.04% increase. My sincere appreciation goes out to Former Vice Supreme Master Alexandro Isaac of Mexico and current Vice Supreme Master Anthony Nazario of the Philippines. Several other provinces did exceed the 50% requirement. My sincere appreciation goes out to the following former and current Vice Supreme Masters:

SUPREME MASTER'S CIRCLE OF HONOR		
III	Chris Foley	Reddin
IV	Brian Heger	DeSmet
IV	Alexandro Isaac	De Jesus
II	Craig Larson	Marquette
I	Matt Maly	Guadalupe
II	Rich McDermott	Healy
I	Anthony Nazario	Magellan
II	Peter Parrish	Bienville
II	Ed Ponder	Hennepin
IV	Andy Sambrielaz	Fraser
III	Joseph Schaecher	Blanchet
I	Wally Wych	Jogues

You have proven your ability to accept and meet a challenge. Your dedication and devotion during these recent trials is a credit to all the Order. However, if we are to preserve the Fourth Degree for future generations, we must now rise to the challenge of increasing membership. We must entirely devote ourselves to turning the rising tide of diminishing growth. Last year, we initiated 12,971 new members while reinstating 774 Sir Knights for a combined growth of 13,745.

Conversely, 1,714 Sir Knights were suspended. Another 320 withdrew their membership, and 3,397 were moved to affiliate membership status, decreasing our growth by 5,431 members. Meanwhile, time took its toll as 8,869 Sir Knights went home to their Lord. At the end of the fraternal year, our net gain was -555 members. In 2022, we grew by 12,608 members, only to realize a net gain of 155 new Sir Knights.

We must endeavor to reverse these numbers, and we must do so now. The life of the Fourth Degree depends on it, and I have selected each of you to lead the way to saving our beloved degree from extinction. The days of complacency are at an end. No longer can we point to pandemics and turbulent waters of change to give ourselves a pass. In the past year, while the Fourth Degree continued to decline in membership, the Knights of Columbus achieved its highest membership growth in more than eight years, a direct result of the highest first quarter of growth in more than forty years.

As the Order records unprecedented growth, the Fourth Degree declines, and we, gathered here today, bear the responsibility for preserving the patriotic arm.

The moment is piled high with challenges, and in our ranks, as Thomas Paine penned more than two centuries ago, are summer soldiers and sunshine patriots who when put to the crisis will shrink from the challenge, but not you. Not ever you!

Although the moment is piled high with difficulties, we recall the words of Sir Knight John F. Kennedy, who at his inauguration in 1961, told the world, "I do not shrink from this responsibility -- I welcome it!"

And in the spirit of those words, we are blessed to be that generation of Sir Knights called to defend the Fourth Degree in its darkest hours, and in spite of these challenges, I know that none of us would ever exchange places with any other leader in any other time of the patriotic arm of the Order.

It begins with our commitment to growth, and so today, I tell you that nothing less than 100% membership growth this fraternal year will stem the tide that now seeks to engulf us. I am relying on each of you to rise to this challenge. Not only in words but in actions. Not only in idealistic notions but by dedicating yourself to thoughtfully planning for and managing growth in your province while training your district masters to do the same. You must plan, prepare, and execute membership plans, and understand that hope is never a plan!

Today, we will begin that process. Unlike past Supreme Assemblies, our goal is to quickly dispense of the business required of us here today (notwithstanding this address) and to move on to training sessions designed to prepare you for your roles as Vice Supreme Masters. For far too long, Vice Supreme Masters have been tasked with an incredible responsibility without being trained to perform their duties. That time is ended.

Since taking office, I have concluded that the Supreme Master alone cannot managed the responsibilities of this office, which is why I am proud to announce the establishment of a staff to help each and everyone of you succeed. Please join me in welcoming PSD/FVSM Michael Porter of Tennessee as Chief of Staff and Director of Training. FVSM Micheal Thumm of Maryland as Director of Ceremonials. PSD/FVSM Matt Maly of Oklahoma as Director of Communications. PSD Bret Ladenburger of Wyoming as Director of Membership, and PSD Ron Boyce of Oregon as Director of Programs. Soon, they will be joined by a Director of New Assembly Development, and collectively they will work to ensure your success in all areas of the Fourth Degree.

Any leader will tell you that to achieve success in membership growth, we must have success in how we operate as assemblies. The lifeblood of a successful assembly is its programs. It is programs that engage the membership and draws the interest of new members.

We must embrace innovative programs to not only reenergize the Fourth Degree, but to increase our presence in the lives of the councils and parishes that make up the assemblies. I challenged each of you this year to work with your state deputies to ensure that the Fourth Degree is committed to helping each of them accomplish their goals for their respective jurisdictions. To that extent, I ask each of you to endeavor to bring the Third and Fourth Degrees closer in mission and purpose. We are not separate organizations, but much like the Church different parts of the same body.

Last year, we grew as an Order by 90,000 new members. Let us endeavor to bring twenty-five percent of those new members into the Fourth Degree, growing by 22,500 members this year. Far too often, we seek to recruit members who joined long ago and have grown complacent in their membership. Instead, let us now reach out to those men newly joined to our ranks. Let us reach out to them while their hearts are still on fire. And let us do so by having a greater presence at the outset of their lives as Knights.

We can achieve this by having an increase presence in the Exemplification of Charity, Unity, and Fraternity by offering to our councils an honor guard to enhance the splendor of the degree, allowing new members to see their future as patriotic members of the Order.

Equally important to building relationships with your state deputies is to build relationships with the hierarchy of the Church in your province. In particular, by being properly informed of the need for change to ensure the survival of the Fourth Degree, our priests, bishops, and cardinals can become our greatest allies in successfully completing the transition to the new regalia while ending the continued, but rare, use of the retire regalia in their dioceses. Avail yourself of the opportunity to meet with the hierarchy, introduce yourself, and let them know you are there to serve them as needed.

Today, we stand at the threshold of our rebirth as the Fourth Degree. We eagerly look forward to our 125th Anniversary in seventeen months, and the opportunity that this presents to make the Fourth Degree relevant once more. Now is the time to reengage our assemblies with new programs, and before the

opportunity slips away, it is time to dedicate ourselves to conducting a census of Brother Knights in our ranks who served in the Korean War and Vietnam Conflict. We must secure the history of their sacrifice before it is lost to memory, and once done, we must then reach out to Brothers from Desert Storm and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan so that their records of service may be preserved in the Order's archives along with those Brother Knights who served in the Spanish American and First and Second World Wars.

As we momentarily reflect upon the service of our veterans, it is appropriate that we recall and offer a silent prayer for the memory of Former Supreme Master Nestor Barber of California who passed away on August 20th. Nes led the Fourth Degree with distinction from 2000-2004. We give thanks to his leadership and more importantly his example as a Catholic gentleman.

I would also like to take a moment to express my gratitude to another proud veteran who served with distinction in the United States Marine Corps, completing several tours of duty in Vietnam. Past State Deputy Chuck Gallina has given many years of dedicated service to the Order and in particular to the Fourth Degree. Through his commitment and dedication to duty, he has ensured that year in and year out the Supreme Convention has been enhanced by a well-trained and presentable Honor Guard and Color Corps. Moreover, he has been the heart and soul of the Warriors to Lourdes program which not only brings healing to wounded warriors, but oftentimes, saves lives. There are not enough words to express to Colonel Gallina how proud we are of him, and I know that later today Mike Thumm will expound on these thoughts but let me congratulate you Chuck on a career of excellence while extending you warmest wishes for a long and happy retirement.

Finally, let me close by giving thanks to Supreme Master Emeritus Dennis Stoddard for his thirteen years of service as Supreme Master, tying him with Daniel McCormack as the third longest serving Supreme Master. I draw strength from the examples of his life as both a Marine and a Vietnam veteran, a law enforcement officer and teacher, and especially as Supreme Master where he never hesitated to do what was right for the Order, even when it was not popular. Dennis never listened to the voices of dissent and derision, but always focused on the need to ensure the survival of the Fourth Degree so that it could continue to play a vital role in the life of the Order and the Church.

Thank you so very much and may God bless both Linda and Dennis as they now enjoy the fruits of their labor in a well-deserved retirement.

My Vice Supreme Masters, as I conclude these remarks, I know that each of you are eager to begin your service, but like all great leaders, you are aware of your limitations and abilities. Perhaps, you feel complex and conflicting emotions about how you will be capable of performing in the days of ahead when so much is at stake.

Tonight, you will stand in the majesty of St. Mary's Church where Blessed McGivney first conceived of this great Order of which we are privileged to be members. As you stand there, know this. In your mothers' wombs, when He counted all your days, He counted among them this day and this moment. He has created you for greatness in the service of His divine Church.

This evening, you will be presented with the provincial sword of your province. It is not yours and soon you will pass it on to your successor. Instead, you are called to keep it safe and shining bright, so that one day a Vice Supreme Master in another 125 years will be able to look back at this moment and give thanks to you for your willingness to serve, to preserve the Order, and boldly lead.

This is your time. Deliver yourself into His hands and listen always to the Holy Spirit as He guides you each and every day.

Vivat Jesus!



Knights of Columbus

South Carolina State Council

2024

The Official Report for the South Carolina District of the DeSoto Province

At the outset, let me first Congratulate SK Daniel E. Barton for being the fourth South Carolinian to serve the Order as Vice Supreme Master. And thank you to Michael McCusker, Supreme Master for having faith in me as a replacement for Daniel's unexpired term. Our Supreme Knight reminds us that "We have weathered the storms of pandemic and change that have tossed us about the turbulent seas of time, and now, we mend our sails, determined to continue our journey in the service of the Church." As Sir Knights we have a special duty to stand by our post as men of recognized civic virtue, faithfulness in Church and in family life and fidelity to the promises we have made. We must be determined to embrace our church and our priests even more. Do not let our current difficulties deprive us of the most precious gift we have: our faith. It is our choice.

Membership

The Patriotic Degree continues to be strong in South Carolina. The South Carolina District hosted two exemplifications bringing in 70 new members or 43% of our goal for this Fraternal year. I want to personally thank SK James Roche and SK George LaPierre for their leadership in facilitating these Exemplifications. We must continue to recruit new Sir Knights. A reminder that every new Member third degree Knight – plan to recruit them from the new degree to the next scheduled fourth degree exemplification.

Exemplifications

My thanks to the Sir Knights who assisted in hosting exemplifications this fraternal year, and thanks to our degree staffs. To build a healthy fourth degree district in South Carolina we need new Sir Knights in every part of the state. Experience shows that having exemplifications in all areas of the state make it convenient for busy younger men to join our ranks as Sir Knights. Currently we are planning exemplifications in Spartanburg, Orangeburg (Spanish), and Myrtle Beach. Contact me or the District Secretary to discuss scheduling one in your area.

New Assemblies

This year we welcomed in our newest assembly, The Pier Georgio Frassati Assembly #3984 in Carolina Forest. A local assembly means less travel time for Sir Knights which has proven to increase participation at meetings, functions, and honor guards. A new assembly can be formed with as few as 30 members. South Carolina has 64 Councils and 31 Assemblies so there are still opportunities to form additional assemblies. I have been in conversation with several men around the state interested in creating new assemblies. If your council is interested in starting a new assembly, please let me know so we can get you up and running.

Serving Those Who Served

The Fourth Degree Knights are a volunteer partner with the Veterans Affairs Medical Facilities in Augusta, Georgia, Charleston, and Columbia, South Carolina in a program known as "Serving Those Who Served". Established in 1946, the Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS) has become the largest volunteer program in the Federal Government. If you are interested in serving as a representative please contact me, we need all the help we can get.

Warriors to Lourdes

Several years ago, we made a promise to our Faithful Friar, Fr. Higgins, to send a South Carolina Veteran to Lourdes every year. Then COVID happened and that pledge was placed on the back burner. This year I have asked Faithful Navigator and State Warden nominee, Patrick Noone to take on the challenge of raising funds to resurrect the Warrior to Lourdes project in South Carolina.



Knights of Columbus South Carolina State Council

Honor Guards

Without exception, honors by the Honor Guard shall be offered to deceased Sir Knights, their immediate family members, Council members and to their immediate family members provided a request is made. It must be distinctly understood that the wishes of the family of the deceased member are paramount and will be given the fullest consideration as to the selection of elements of the Honor Guard involved if any. It is my opinion that no Knight or family of a Knight that passes expecting his brothers to gather around him in honor and send him off in prayer should be left unaided during their time of loss. Keep in mind that no matter the wishes of the family or last request by a brother Knight, under no circumstances will the old regalia be used in any ceremony at any time for any reason.

A Final Thought:

How many times do we hear about how busy this or that person is? It's a common complaint from all quarters (including my own) these days. A recent reflection from Dr. Tod Worner caught my eye and I believe it worth sharing with you. GK Chesterton observed: "comradeship and serious joy are not interludes in our travel; but ... rather our travels are interludes in comradeship and joy, which through God shall endure forever." How descriptive of the Knights. A band of brothers – comrades in charity whose joy and happiness comes from our deep commitment to each other and to helping those in need. Brothers let us focus less on building our resume of busyness and more on our principles of charity, unity, fraternity, and patriotism building toward those sturdy bonds of comradeship and shared joy in the life of Christ.

Many Thanks

To all who have helped me get through this year as your Master. To the Sir Knights from assemblies that hosted exemplifications for your efforts in putting on first class events. To Father Robert Higgins who served as Faithful Friar again this year. To the degree teams for your time and effort in traveling, memorizing your parts and dedication to advancing the Fourth Degree. To Chris Hilditch and Tom O'Donnell for all their administrative support. To Daniel Barton for his advice and encouragement as our Vice Supreme Master. To my wife Debbie for sharing her organizational skills, her help putting together the banquets and ladies events for the exemplifications and keeping me in line and always being at my side for support. And finally, to my Brother Sir Knights for defending the faith and supporting our veterans.

Respectfully submitted,
Michael A. Allen, PSD
District Master, South Carolina