

SECRETARIAT OF STATE

No. 306.587

From the Vatican, 11 July 2016

Dear Mr. Anderson,

His Holiness Pope Francis has been informed that from 2 to 4 August 2016, the 134th Supreme Convention of the Knights of Columbus will be held in Toronto, Canada. He has asked me to convey his warm good wishes to all present, together with the assurance of his closeness in prayer.

The theme of this year's meeting — *A Light to the Nations* — stresses the missionary spirit which has characterized your Order from its earliest days as a fraternal association committed to strengthening the faith of its members and assisting those in need through corporal and spiritual works of mercy. In fidelity to the vision of Venerable Michael McGivney, the Knights have consistently sought to embody the missionary dimension of our Christian faith, which finds its highest expression in service to the Lord in the least of his brothers and sisters (cf. Mt 25:40). As Pope Francis has insisted, all of us who have known the love of God in Christ Jesus are called to be "missionary disciples", proclaiming the joy of the Gospel by our generosity and concern for the needs of those around us (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 119).

That same missionary spirit has been evidenced in the traditional support of the Knights of Columbus for the needs of the universal Church and, in an exemplary way, for the intentions of the Successor of Peter. Especially close to the Holy Father's heart in these days are the afflictions of our brothers and sisters in

Christ throughout the world suffering from poverty, injustice, exile and, increasingly, violent persecution. He once more thanks the Knights for the strenuous efforts being made to defend their human rights and legitimate aspirations in the public forum and to provide for their needs, particularly through the Christian Refugee Relief Fund and numerous other initiatives of practical support and solidarity. In these days, as the Church celebrates the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, he asks the Knights and their families to pray in a particular way for an outpouring of God's mercy and the grace of conversion upon all those whose hearts have been darkened by hatred, brutality and ruthless disregard for human life and dignity.

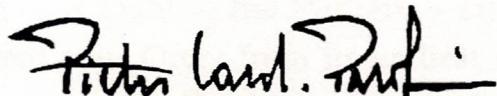
At every level, the Knights of Columbus have always been concerned to accompany men in their Christian vocation, especially as husbands and fathers, and to support the Church's efforts to build strong Catholic families. This support was especially evident in the Knights' contribution to two significant events in the life of the universal Church during the past year dealing with the family and its mission: the World Meeting of Families in Philadelphia and the Synod of Bishops on the Family. As those events made clear, and His Holiness stressed in his post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, it is in the heart of the family, as a domestic church, that Christian spouses are called to exercise their baptismal mission of bearing witness to the faithful love and redemptive grace of Christ. At a time when the natural institution of marriage is gravely threatened, not least by legislative proposals that disregard its specific character, this witness is essential for the defense of the family and the strengthening of its indispensable role in fostering the growth of individuals in maturity, the cultivation of community values and the moral progress of society as a whole (cf. *Amoris Laetitia*, 52).

The Holy Father trusts that the Knights' new initiative — *Building the Domestic Church While Strengthening Our Parish* — will assist parents in their efforts to foster an environment of prayer and closeness to the Lord at home and to participate actively as a family in the liturgical and apostolic life of the local Church. Fathers have an essential mission in this regard as models

and guides for their children, especially as teachers of prayer. As His Holiness has insisted, "it is essential that children see that, for both their parents, prayer is something truly important"; indeed, "moments of family prayer and acts of devotion can be more powerful for evangelization than any catechism class or sermon" (*Amoris Laetitia*, 288). In Saint Joseph, protector of the Holy Family and patron of the universal Church, Christian fathers will find an inspiring example of quiet masculine strength and fidelity to their own vocation within the family.

With these sentiments, the Holy Father commends the deliberations of the Supreme Convention to the intercession of Mary, Mother of the Church, and assures the Knights and their families of a special remembrance in his prayers. With great affection he imparts his Apostolic Blessing as a pledge of strength and peace in the Lord.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Pietro Cardinal Parolin".

* Pietro Cardinal Parolin
Secretary of State