



Retention Strategies



Fraternal – First and Foremost

Throughout history fraternal societies have grown and flourished for many reasons. Some promoted social integration for their members, others provided economic security to members and their families through the sale of insurance. Some of these fraternal societies came into existence to strengthen common ties of a religion among their members while others served to give social status to their members.

The Knights of Columbus was founded by Father Michael J. McGivney as a society to promote fraternity among Catholic men. That fraternity – the sense of brotherhood among members and the families of members – remains, along with its Catholicity, the defining characteristic of the Order's identity.

To maintain a strong, friendly and fraternal atmosphere among Knights and their families, councils should conduct programs that build camaraderie and pride in membership. These fraternal programs don't have to be complex.

Council Directories

Each year, publish a council directory for distribution to members. Include current listings of supreme, state, district, council and circle officers. List each member's name, address, telephone number, e-mail address and day of birth. You may also want to feature the names of wives and other personal information such as occupations. Listing occupations provides free advertising for the Knights who provide the services. Include a yearly calendar of council activities inside the directory's front cover.

Honor Achievers

Sponsor periodic "Recognition Nights" to honor outstanding members. Pay tribute to those Knights who participate in council projects. Present them with a plaque or some other appropriate award, such as one of the many certificates available from the Supreme Council office. See the Knights of Columbus Certificates flyer (#2640) for a listing and photos of available certificates. Among them are a "Certificate of Appreciation" (#1462) that can be presented to any member in "gratitude for his dedication, loyalty and inspirational leadership"; a "Giver of Life" certificate (#1444) for members who regularly participate in council-sponsored blood drives; and a "Knight of the Month" certificate (#1476) and a "Knight of the Year" certificate (#1545) for presentation to honorees of these programs. Recipients should be chosen for exemplary service to Church, community, council, family and youth. A generic certificate (#2898) is also available.

Help Members Facing Hardship

Your council may consider paying dues for members in real need who are unable to pay them. These Knights may have been unemployed for an extended amount of time or be unable to work because of medical reasons. A man should never have to give up his membership in the K of C because he is unable (not unwilling) to pay dues. Knights can also aid a member in finding new employment by helping him with writing a resume, practicing job interview techniques with him, or just letting him know about job openings. Councils can also help Knights facing difficult times by aiding with chores around their homes or simply driving them to medical appointments. Remember, charity begins at home, so make an effort to assist needy Knights and their families.

Commemorate Special Moments

One way to promote fraternity is to simply recognize the important moments in the lives of members, Squires and people who are important to your council by sending Knights of Columbus greeting cards. Birthday (#757), Anniversary (#1484), Get Well (#1483), Sympathy (#1932), Thank You (#2010) Congratulations (#2087), cards are available in English, French and Spanish from the Supreme Council Supply Department for 25 cents each. These cards come with envelopes. Please use a Requisition Form (#1) when ordering.

Remember the Sick and the Departed

Make it a policy to include prayers during meetings for Knights and family members who are ill. Arrange for council members to visit a brother Knight or family member who may be hospitalized, living in an extended care facility, or homebound. Pray a decade of the rosary with the person to lift his or her spirits. Offer to assist family members of a hospitalized Knight by driving them to the hospital for a visit. Offer to stay with the homebound Knight or family member while care givers go out for shopping, a movie or some other activity.

When a Knight or a member of his family becomes seriously ill or is hospitalized, send out postcards or put a listing in the council's newsletter, asking that this individual be remembered in the prayers of his fellow Knights. Encourage members to telephone, e-mail, write to or visit the bedridden Knights or family members.

The death of a loved one can be devastating for a family. At such times, Knights can help ease the suffering of the family of deceased members in many ways. By attending the wake service for a deceased Knight or a Knight's family member, council members show the fraternity that are an integral part of the Order. A "Knights of Columbus Memorial Service" (#2942) is available for \$1 per booklet (limited to 2 per order). Also, present the family of the deceased with a Resolution of Condolence (#1450, English; #1450F, French; #1450S, Spanish). These resolutions are available from the Supreme Council Supply Department for 25 cents each. Council members can also assist survivors by helping at a post-funeral brunch or luncheon.

Once the funeral is over, Knights should continue to be of service to a deceased member's widow and family. Invite them to council activities, especially memorial Masses for departed members. Stay in touch with the widow to see if there is any work that needs to be done around her home such as roof repairs or repainting. Be sure that she remains on the mailing list for the council newsletter. Offer to help her prepare her yearly income tax return or with repairs to her car. Provide her with transportation when needed.

Without its fraternal and Catholic nature, there wouldn't be much left to the Knights of Columbus. This fraternity, or sense of brotherhood, is the "unwritten" benefit of membership. It's something that is easy to take for granted, but needs the effort of each and every member to stay alive.