

## Protecting Our Lady

Undeterred by damaging storms, Maryland Knights build a Marian grotto for their parish

By Cecilia Engbert

A strong snowstorm hit Holy Family Church in Mitchellville, Maryland, in January 2022, toppling trees and covering its outdoor statue of Mary with debris and snow. When Holy Family's pastor, Father Joe Jenkins, jokingly suggested it might be the perfect time to put a roof over Mary's head, he wasn't expecting members of the parish's Knights of Columbus council to take him seriously.

A year and a half later, Father Jenkins is amazed by the Marian grotto that now graces the parish property: a beautiful arched stone niche to protect Our Lady, built by members of Father Michael C. Kidd Council 14455.

"These guys are just incredible," said Father Jenkins, who is Council 14455's chaplain. "The grotto is the latest project of a whole string of things the Knights do here. It's like pearls in a crown; they keep adding another pearl."

Since it was established in 2008, the council has been life-giving to Holy Family, a small historic church built in 1890. The Knights recently transformed an old tractor shed into a prayer room where eucharistic adoration is now held weekly. Another shed was renovated into a parish meeting room.

Past Grand Knight Roy Cobo and Bobby Ramiro were the driving forces behind their latest project, the Marian grotto.

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### *Minutes of the May Business Meeting*

The meeting was called to order at 6:33 PM on May 9, 2023 by Grand Knight Justin Machovic. Guest DD Steven Morris was present at the meeting. The Recorder was absent and excused, all other officers were present. The prayer was led by Chaplain Garcia and Warden Schmidt led the Pledge of Allegiance. The minutes from the April were approved.

#### **Grand Knight Report**

The budget and presentation of the slate of officers will be presented during this meeting.

#### **Chaplain's Report**

Chaplain Garcia spoke about his experience of Holy Week traditions that he experienced on his recent trip to Spain.

#### **Treasurer's Report**

CD account balance \$1149.25

Checking account balance \$13311.77

#### **Financial Secretary's Report**

No bills or correspondence were presented.

Income: \$75.00 Dinner

\$79.30 Dues

\$1680 Rib Dinner

\$1834.30 Total

*Continued on page 2:*

**May Meeting Minutes**  
**Continued from page 1:**

**Communications**

None

**Membership Report**

No new candidates

**Program Director Report**

The Rib Dinner is May 13, volunteers are needed in all areas. Scholarship winner was selected by the committee and motion was made and seconded for an additional \$1000 scholarship. Wine and Cheese after the Vigil Mass on the 1<sup>st</sup> Saturday was well attended. Br. Koenig said he received enough donated wine from Charlie Spinetta to last about a year and a half. Knight's Donut Sunday is May 14, volunteers were recruited to assist. Family Fishing Day is planned for July 1, with the group meeting at SKD at 9:00. Currently planning to fish at Silver Lake depending on the conditions. July 1 is a free fishing day, No license is required. Monthly Rosary was led by SKD Academy with about 25 people in attendance. The June Rosary will be led by Knights, all are encouraged to participate.

**Unfinished Business**

None

**New Business**

GK presented the slate for election of officers.

Br. Nick Ragusano presented the proposed budget for FY 23-24. The budget was M/S and tabled for approval at the next meeting.

**Advocate Report**

No report

**Chancellor Report**

No report

**Insurance Agent Report**

No report

**District Deputy Report**

DD Morris thanked the council for the good work.

**Good of the Order**

Please pray for the repose of the souls of Cindy Aguilar, Dennis Chavez, Father Arrough Cindy Curtin, Beverly Woodard, Joe Diaz and Larry Stampfil. Pray also for Karen Rich, PDK Patrick Marr, Connor Curtin, Mark Koenig, Steve Oneto, Deacon Ed, Fr. Relihan, Donny Paige and Michael Shortino.

**Chaplain's Summation**

The meeting was closed in prayer by the Chaplain.

Submitted by Worthy Treasurer Bob Strazzo



## Our Lady

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“This project is an effort to bring the community back together and to renew joy and hope after so many bad experiences, including the COVID pandemic,” Cobo said. “We wanted to make something beautiful.”

The construction wasn’t without difficulties. To begin with, the Knights had to learn how to make a grotto. Once they had a plan and had selected their materials, the space around the statue had to be cleared and leveled before the foundation and framework could be constructed and the concrete poured.

Then, midway through the project, the parish was ravaged by a second storm. A microburst in July 2022 felled more than 50 trees on church property. The front of the church was damaged, the renovated meeting room was destroyed, and once again, Mary’s statue was covered, this time by fallen trees.



Ramiro drove to the church immediately after the storm, expecting the worst.

“And I was right,” he said. “Debris was everywhere. The whole compound was devastated.”

The storm caused thousands of dollars in damage. At the same time, Father Jenkins was in the hospital from a heart attack. While some parishioners started to feel disheartened amid the chaos, the Knights were more determined than discouraged.

“I resolved once again that we would complete this grotto project,” Ramiro said.

He and Cobo and their team of Knights — including Grand Knight Larnell Johnson, Nino Foronda, Kevin Renze and Mike Brillantes — cleared debris from the statue and got back to work.

“One thing that kept hope alive in the parish during that difficult time were the men working on that little grotto,” Father Jenkins said.

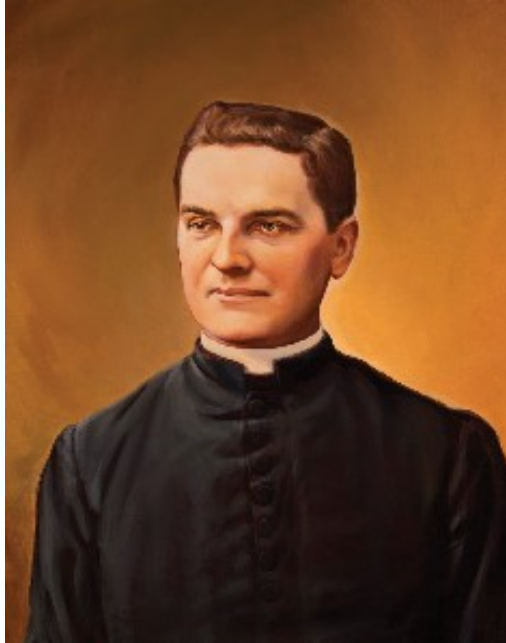
The Knights completed the grotto Jan. 7 and added a retaining wall and benches this spring. On May 7, nearly 200 parishioners gathered to dedicate the grotto with a May crowning. One by one, the children of the parish presented flowers to Our Lady, before Father Jenkins blessed the structure and led the congregation in praying the fifth glorious mystery of the rosary.

It was the best Mass turnout the church has seen since before the COVID-19 pandemic, Father Jenkins said.

“[The grotto] is not just a pretty decoration. It is quickly becoming a true place of pilgrimage and prayer,” he added.

Cobo is gratified by the parish response to the Knights’ project.

“It is rewarding to hear the appreciation of our pastor and the people who worship at Holy Family,” Cobo said. “They come out to see the grotto, offer flowers and pray there. Increasingly, people are taking pictures before the grotto after Masses. We are so glad to honor Mother Mary. We love her.”



Prayer for the Canonization of Blessed Michael McGivney Founder of the Knights of Columbus God, our Father, protector of the poor and defender of the widow and orphan, you called your priest, Blessed Michael McGivney, to be an apostle of Christian family life and to lead the young to the generous service of their neighbor. Through the example of his life and virtue, may we follow your Son, Jesus Christ, more closely, fulfilling his commandment of charity and building up his Body which is the Church. Let the inspiration of your servant prompt us to greater confidence in your love so that we may continue his work of caring for the needy and the outcast. We humbly ask that you glorify Blessed Michael McGivney on earth according to the design of your holy will. Through his intercession, grant the favor I now present (here make your request). Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

### **The Officers of Council 1849**

Grand Knight Justin Machovec

Spiritual Advisor Deacon Jaime Garcia

Deputy G.K. Matthew Waverly

Chancellor Phil Gonzalez

Warden Jacob Schmidt

Treasurer Bob Strazzo

Recorder Dave Sanders

Advocate Mark Koenig

Inside Guard Mark Watt

Outside Guard Charlie Esola

Trustees

Three Year Stephen Frias

Two Year Joe Trassare

One Year Jack Magee

Financial Sec. Tim Burr

Dist. Deputy Steven Morris

Field Agent Greg Bronson

All Council Officers (except Br. Charlie Esola) can be reached by email. Use the first letter of their first name, the entire last name, followed by: @kofc-1849.org

Sample: mkoenig@kofc-1849.org

## June Calendar of Events

*Wednesday, June 7: Officer Meeting at St. Patrick's Hall at 6:00 PM.*

*Tuesday, June 13: Business Meeting at Saint Katharine Drexel at 6:30 PM. Dinner at 5:30 PM.*

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