

From Fixer-Upper to Monastery

Knights transform an old rectory to welcome Carmelite nuns to their Connecticut diocese

By Fred Afflerbach July 25, 2023

A vacant house is a sad site: shuttered windows, locked doors. No one coming and going, no one laughing — and no one praying. The rectory at St. Emery Parish in Fairfield, Connecticut, became such a place after St. Emery merged with nearby Holy Family Parish in 2019. The pastor of St. Emery was reassigned and the rectory was closed.

But not for long.

In 2022, Bishop Frank Caggiano of Bridgeport invited a pair of Carmelite nuns from Texas to take up residence at the St. Emery rectory and transform it into a monastery. But the 90-year-old, three-story brick building was sorely in need of a transformation. That's when Knights from four local councils rolled up their sleeves to complete a renovation worthy of a Home and Garden TV show.



More than two dozen Knights and other volunteers spent several weeks this past spring prying up ratty carpet from the rectory's floors, replacing its water-damaged ceiling tiles and repainting 17 rooms. By the time they were done, they had filled two-and-a-half 20-yard dumpsters with debris. Knights later installed ceiling lights and fire alarms and contributed funds to pay for professional landscapers to remove trees and install a privacy fence.

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Minutes of the July Business Meeting

The meeting was called to order at 6:36 PM on July 11, 2023 by Grand Knight Machovec. Guest DD Morris was present at the meeting. The Trustee one year, Recorder and Inside Guard were excused. Roll call followed our Chaplain leading us in prayer. The Warden led us in the Pledge of Allegiance. Minutes from June were approved as written.

Membership Report

Two prospects were given a form 100.

Grand Knight Report

GK Machovec thanked the dinner host for providing the meal.

Chaplain's Report

This day was the feast of St Benedict. Charity, Unity and Fraternity – Christ calls us to Unity with Him and one another. Fraternity – Our bond of Fraternity is strengthened by the Holy Spirit.

Treasurer Report

Checking account balance - \$8,000
A check of \$5,000 was sent to open a CD with Edward Jones.

Financial Secretary Report

Income – \$50 rib dinner
\$75 dinner

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July Meeting Minutes**Continued from page 1:****Bills**

Mrs. Schmidt - \$400.16 for the fishing day trip.

Brother Strazzo - \$110.54 Rib dinner, 125.87 Donut

Sunday

Communications

No Communications

Programs Director Report

Family fishing day July 1 – Bro Schmidt gave an update. 25 participants, and was a great day. Wine and cheese after the first Saturday vigil mass. First Tuesday night of the month 5:30 Rosary. September host to be determined. Fifth Sunday Rosary before the 10 AM mass will be on July 30. A leader is needed. Every second Sunday the Council sponsors donuts after the 10:00 mass. Volunteers are needed to help set up, serve and clean up. Not in August due to the installation of officers. Installation of officers on August 13 after the SKD 10 AM mass at St. Pats and potluck in the hall. Sept 30 Tri tip dinner.

Unfinished Business

It was M/S/A to pay the bills.

New Business

The SKD secretary reached out to the council to ask if we would cover the cost of food supplied at the blood drive for Fr. Relihan. The cost of \$164.90 was M/S/A.

Advocate Report

No report

Chancellor Report

No report

Insurance Agent Report

The agent is Dave Moeller. Contact information is forthcoming.

Vocations Report

No report

Fourth Degree Assembly

Patriotism degree, next meeting July 27 in Jackson.

District Deputy Report

DD Morris shared that there is a Chapter meeting on Saturday July 13.

Good of the Order

Please pray for the repose of the souls of Deacon Jaime's sister and Donald Riggle. Pray also for Sharon Mangini, Mike Strazzo, Mark Koenig Jr., Steve Oneto, Deacon Ed, and Fr. Relihan.

Lecturer Report

A presentation on Miracles was read and shown.

Chaplain's Summation

The meeting was closed in prayer by the Chaplain.

GK Machovec closed the meeting at 7:20.

Respectfully submitted by David Sanders

One Year Anniversary

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John H. Stapleton Council 2287 in New Canaan led the project, with hands-on help and financial contributions from Father Coleman Council 2616 and St. Pius X Council 16347 in Fairfield, as well as St. Matthew Council 14360 in Norwalk. Altogether, the Knights saved the diocese between \$12,000 and \$17,000.

Andy Mank, deputy grand knight of Council 2287, said the project was much more than cleaning up an old house. “We’re supporting a faith-based community and enabling them to carry on their mission of prayer, which impacts the entire diocese,” he explained. “That’s what it’s all about.”

The two nuns — Sister Maria of Divine Mercy and Sister Mary Ruth of the Eucharist — moved into the monastery in April.

“It’s been so encouraging and heartwarming,” Sister Maria said. “Coming in when you didn’t know anyone in the diocese, it’s such a feeling of security to have the Knights’ help. It’s like having big brothers there for us, and we can turn to them as our needs come up. They transformed this place and made it so beautiful.”

With ample room to expand, the nuns hope to attract new vocations to their cloistered community, the Carmelites of Mary Ever Virgin.

Although the nuns have settled into their orderly routine of prayer and liturgy, there is still work to be done. Mike LaMagna, grand knight of Council 2287, says the Knights are in it for the long haul.

“We’re not done. Our goal is to be there for them. If they have things that need to be done around the area, shopping, upkeep, whatever they need, they know they can call on us,” LaMagna said. “It wasn’t a ‘one and done.’ Our goal is to be connected.”

FRED AFFLERBACH is a freelance journalist and a member of St. Margaret Mary Council 7600 in Cedar Park, Texas.



An upstairs hallway in the rectory is pictured before and after the Knights removed yards of carpeting and cleaned the wooden flooring



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.

Dinner Hosts

Joe Bertao August 14

Phil Gonzales Sept 12

Steve Frias Oct 10

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 David Moeller

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

Knights of Columbus Council 1849

Events Calendar 2023—2024

Officer meetings at Saint Patrick's Hall, first Wednesday at 6:00 PM of every month, starting July 2023 until June 2024.

Monthly Business meetings at Saint Katharine Drexel (St. Teresa of Calcutta Room) on 2nd Tuesday at 7:00 PM, starting July 2023 until June 2024. Dinner at 6:00 PM.

Family Fishing Day, Silver Lake, July 1st, 2023

Installation Mass and Picnic, SKD 10 AM August 20, 2023 (3rd Sunday)

Summer Dinner (Tri-tip), at SKD after 5PM Mass September 30, 2023 (5th Saturday)

Clergy Appreciation Dinner, date and location TBD

Tootsie Roll Drive, weekend of October 13, 14, 15, 2023

Mass for Departed Knights, SKD 10 AM November 12, 2023 (2nd Sunday)

Christmas Party, SKD 6 PM, December 15, 2023 (3rd Friday)

Winter Dinner (Fish), SKD 6:30 PM February 3, 2024 (1st Saturday)

Family Potluck, SKD 6:00 PM March 26, 2024 (4th Tuesday)

Spring Dinner (Ribs), SKD 6:30 PM April 20, 2024 (3rd Saturday)

Family Potluck, SKD 6:00 PM May 18, 2024 (3rd Saturday)

Hospitality Donuts every 2nd Sunday at SKD

Hospitality Wine and Cheese every 1st weekend Vigil Mass at SKD

Rosary before 10 AM Mass, SKD every 5th Sunday of months with 5 Sunday

KVGC Rosary Tuesday before the first Wednesday of each month at 5:30 at SKD – St. Maximillian Kolbe Room

August Calendar of Events

Wednesday, August 2: Officer Meeting at Saint Patrick's Hall at 6:00 PM.

Saturday, August 5: Wine and Cheese Hospitality at Saint Katharine Drexel after the 5:00 PM Vigil Mass.

Sunday, August 20: Installation Mass and Potluck at Saint Katharine Drexel at 10 AM.

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