

Drawn to Christ's heart



The Knights of Columbus have been in the news lately. I can't even begin to tell you what this organization has done in my life, but I'll begin to try. It's the world's largest Catholic fraternal organization, and while I'm obviously not a knight, I've long felt like a sister who is better because of them.

The most recent example came just as they had become the stuff of headlines. Two U.S. Senate Democrats had given a judicial nominee a hard time for being a Knight. "Extremist organization" was the contention. I suppose they are right in a way – if an extremist is someone who tries to truly live the Beatitudes, who tries to take the Gospel seriously. Part of the reason we have all these religious-liberty clashes in the United States today is because of Catholics, frankly. The right answer to the question, "What is wrong with the world?" is always, "Me!" Take a look in the mirror and do an examination of conscience.

We're at the point where complaining about bishops is common, and obviously not unjustified in many cases for many reasons. But what about us? What about each and every one of us? Can they tell we are Christians by our love? Radical love? Selfless love? Death to self? Can they tell we are nothing without Jesus Christ and total surrender to the will of the Father? Do they see what life in the Spirit means when they watch us?

We don't always go out of our way to love. We aren't always the doctors and nurses and volunteers in the field hospital amidst so much misery in the world. The Knights of Columbus help us be who we are made to be. People of Christ, people seeing Christ in the world and serving him.

A recent example of my gratitude to the Knights happened while I was in Indianapolis just after New Year's – with over 17,000 young people, most of them college students. On Friday, I snuck out to the cathedral of Sts. Peter and Paul there, where the Knights of Columbus had brought the incorrupt heart of St. John Vianney (it went to SEEK next, but I knew between the lines and the schedule, it would be more of a challenge to spend time with the relic there). The Curé of Ars, as he is known, was a priest who gave of himself, as we all are called to. He famously poured himself out in the confessional, hearing long hours of confessions, taking on reparation and penance as a way of life, as we all ought to be doing – especially as we know more and more about the sins in the world and in our Church, which have ripple effects of pain and more sin.

After waiting in line for 45 minutes or so – I honestly wasn't looking at the time, I was so happy to be there, praying the Divine Mercy chaplet and Rosary in gratitude – I stayed weepy in the front row for another hour or so. That's how powerful an encounter it was with this incorrupt heart of a saint. I prayed for so many priests by name. I prayed for others I don't even know except in the mysterious connection through the Sacred Heart of Christ. I prayed for some very specific bishops, Pope Francis and Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, too. I prayed for the ones who might be in the need of the most prayers. And yes, I prayed for Archbishop Theodore McCarrick and everyone he has hurt.

And I prayed for the Church – that means you and me. That we may tend to the wounds of Jesus, and live in loving union with his pierced heart. The Knights are near to the heart of Christ and help draw us all near, too. They are no small part of the solution to our problems. Thanks be to God. May they always be so.

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