

Opening Address for the State Conference Knights of the Southern Cross NSW

Once again I must thank you Bro. Manny for inviting me to attend the State Conference of the Knights of the Southern Cross NSW. I tend to feel as sense of belonging here, having been to your last two conferences. Then recently during WYD I worked cooking sausages with members of the Epping Branch and manning the KSC booth with Barry, Basil and others at the vocations expo. It was while at our WYD booth that a young man came up and said, “Knights – that sounds cool. Do you wear cloaks and carry swords?”

“No”, I replied.

“Well then why you call yourselves Knights?”

In our opening prayers we recite the International Alliance Prayer in which we say “May we always keep before our eyes, Jesus Christ Our Saviour, the Ideal of the Christian Knight and do all things for the love of him.” We pray this prayer at the opening of all our meetings so it seems to me that it is important from time to time to reflect on what we are really saying. “Keep before us the Ideal of a Christian Knight” What does this actually mean?

When I thought about this and did some research I found the common ideals or virtues of a Christian Knight to be those of Loyalty, Justice, Largesse (which means Generosity without the need for recognition or reward) and Courage in the face of adversity. Knights were also regarded as Protectors and Defenders. Given these, and I’m sure that we could think of others, how do we as Knights of the Southern Cross stack up as the Ideal Christian Knight?

Let us take the first of these Loyalty – I believe that when we become a member of our Order we take a pledge to be loyal to our Catholic faith and ultimately to our Saviour Jesus Christ. We also pledge to be Loyal to the Church and our Australian Bishops and Priests. Importantly we pledge to be loyal to ourselves, each other and the Order.

Through our actions I believe we show our loyalty in a number of ways. We are always ready to stand up for our faith, Support our Bishops when called upon. Provide support for the education of our priests. As well as supporting each other when need requires it. We also maintain a strong fraternal bond which has been an important reason why we have endured for 90 years.

A Knight are obligated to practice the Virtue of Justice – Again in our opening prayers we ask “May You who love Justice, let us not offend against Justice or Charity” I believe that this not only calls us to act justly but also to stand up for Justice, after all, this was one of the reason our order came into existence. We do, across Australia, seek to respond to Social justice issues and work to support the marginalized within our communities such as the poor, the disabled, the aged and our indigenous people.

Largesse or Generosity - A Christian knight is called upon to be generous in the giving of the time and means in the service of others. Such giving is done without the thought of recognition or reward. An important part of our Catholic faith is the call to service as we follow the example of Jesus who said ‘I came not to be served but to serve. Our upholding of this ideal is seen in the many charitable works we do in our various branches across the order in supporting our local communities, across the State and in a number of cases overseas communities as well.

As Knights we must have courage – Courage to act against injustice, courage to speak out when the values we believe in come under threat. During WYD it was amazing so see the thousands of young people who had the courage to openly display their faith for all to see. A young person from our parish

who spoke at mass about his experience mentioned the fact one of the great things he got out of coming to Sydney was that he realized it was OK to openly show his Faith. Sometimes it does take courage to stand up for our faith and our values. But I believe that if we call ourselves Knights that is what we are called to do. I also feel that one our roles post WYD is to support our youth to find and maintain this courage so they are able to live their faith openly and with commitment in the face of the many conflicting pressures they face in our increasingly secular society.

I also mentioned that Knights were also protectors and defenders. Later on this afternoon Mr. Rocco Mimmo will be speaking on the topic “Defending our Christian Values in Australia”. An important topic indeed.

In our submission to the United Nations asking for NGO consultative status I mentioned that as Knights we seek through our actions to defend Australian Values and ethics that are aligned to our Christian values and ethics. I was later asked to clarify who and what we were defending against. I’m sure that Rocco will expand on this in his talk.

In Australia there is a set of values which Australian citizens are asked to live by... I’d just like to mention a few that are pertinent to the values we hold and defend as Knights

- ***Respect for the freedom and dignity of the individual*** – In which the rights of all individuals especially the poor, the disabled, the sick, the elderly, and indigenous Australians are protected.

We stand up, to the best of our ability, for the rights of these people against any who would seek to abuse or alienate these peoples within our community. We also stand up for the right to life of all from the moment of conception to the moment a natural death. One way we do this is through our various Bio-ethics Institutes.

- ***Equal opportunity for individuals, regardless of their race, religion or ethnic background***

Our organization was founded on seeking justice for those who were denied equal opportunity in the workforce because of their religious affiliation. We continue this fight as long as similar injustices occur be it in employment, education, health care or support. This particularly applies to Aboriginal Australians, migrants and refugees and the aged

- ***Respect, tolerance, fair play, and compassion***

We defend the right of “A Fair Go” against those who would impose unfair restrictions on individuals and groups, who show intolerance to others and who would seek to impose values which are contrary our Christian values.

There are many factors in this global society that can impact on the Australian way of life and the values we hold. In the Objects of our Order we aim to “Promote the Advancement of Australia.” And “TO foster the Christian way of life through out the Nation”. To do this we must promote the values we hold as important and oppose any who would endeavour to undermine them.

Brothers the Founding Fathers of our order and similar orders overseas had good reasons for using the title **Knights** when they adopted the name the Fraternal Order of The Knights of the Southern Cross. It therefore behooves us to think deeply about what we are asking when we pray “keep before our eyes the Ideal of the Christian Knight” and how this calls us to act as we go about our work as members of this wonderful Order we all belong to.

Brothers It gives me great pleasure in opening the State Conference of the **Knights** of the Southern Cross NSW