

OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP

ARCHDIOCESE OF DETROIT  
1234 WASHINGTON BOULEVARD  
DETROIT, MICHIGAN 48226

11 April 2012

Dear Brother Knights,

*Vivat Jesus!* As always, it is a great blessing for me to join you for the Michigan State Council Knights of Columbus Convention on Mackinac Island. As you know, the 2012 Convention comes at a critical time in the history of the Catholic Church in the United States.

On a number of fronts, the news has been extremely challenging for Catholics over the past year. And during difficult times, it is easy to lose sight of the critical truth that Jesus Christ is the Lord not only of our lives but of all human history. Yet our faith tells us that God in his Providence is guiding the course of events towards a victory of his design, and he is calling us *to take an active part* in shaping this victory. Among the many important works to which God calls us, I would like to invite you to consider two that are particularly urgent and timely.

First, we are all aware of a great struggle in which we Catholics and other people of faith are engaged: the struggle for religious liberty. That such a foundational liberty could face such an aggressive challenge in the “land of the free” is nearly unbelievable, and yet we need not only to recognize what is happening to our country but to stand up against this challenge with all of our strength. As you know, the now-infamous mandate of the United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is currently on its way to forcing churches, religious organizations, and individual employers to make an unthinkable choice: either to violate our consciences or to face devastating, government-imposed consequences.

As Supreme Knight Carl Anderson recently wrote in an article for the *National Review*, “Many religious believers...now foresee a future in which the rights of religious conscience are no longer welcomed in the public square and instead are being relegated to the tiniest of ghettos.” It would be an immeasurable loss to our great nation if this dark future comes to pass, as religion is forced to the margins of society. I invite all of you who are my brother Knights to do all that you can to take action on behalf of the cause of religious freedom. I recommend making regular use of the web sites of the Knights of Columbus, your home dioceses, the Michigan Catholic Conference, and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, so that you can become better informed about the struggle for religious liberty and learn concrete ways Catholics and other concerned citizens can take action.

The second good work I would like to highlight in this letter is our need to recruit more men for the priesthood. While this need may seem largely unrelated to the threat to our religious liberty, in fact I believe that having more priestly heralds of the Gospel of Jesus Christ will be of

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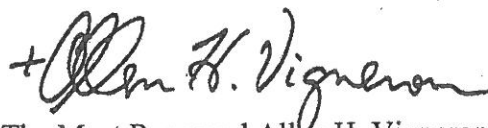
inestimable value in building the kind of culture here in the United States in which religious liberty would never be called into question in the first place.

Another way of putting the matter is to say that neither the decline in priestly vocations nor the recent attacks on religious liberty have happened in isolation from a culture which has increasingly turned against faith in God and against institutional religion, particularly the Catholic Church. As it has been with the disease, however, so it can be with the cure: the more we can do to increase the number of men willing to say "yes" to God's call the priesthood, the more the saving Gospel will be proclaimed in a culture starving for this Good News, even among those who don't recognize their hunger. And the more the Gospel is proclaimed, the better our society will become, because the truth of Jesus Christ is not meant only for Sunday, only to be heard inside our churches, but is the deepest truth about every human life and serves to build up and to ennoble every culture.

Of course, the Knights of Columbus have long been on the front lines of encouraging priestly vocations, and for that I am most grateful. Even so, I encourage you to redouble your efforts, and to think of creative new ways to help men hear God's call and to say a wholehearted "yes" in response, working whenever appropriate with your diocesan vocation directors and pastors so as to achieve the best possible results in this absolutely vital work. Please also pray, begging Our Lord that his Sacred Heart will be moved to empower our efforts and inspire the hearts of the men we invite to consider a vocation to the holy priesthood.

Finally, I want to assure you of my prayers for you and the members of your families. Entrusting all of you to the care of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Immaculate Conception, I remain

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Allen H. Vigneron". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'A' and a cross at the beginning.

The Most Reverend Allen H. Vigneron  
Archbishop of Detroit