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AGUA VIVA



Altar
Servers
Advancing

April 2022

Our Special Issue Cover, April 2022



Our cover image was a gift from professional photographer and Our Lady of Grace parishioner Diana Ivone from Artesia, New Mexico. Diana covered the Rite of Elections celebration for the eastern vicariates on March 4, 2022. In this picture, she captured the advance of three altar servers from Our Lady of Grace. Of the many beautiful pictures Diana sent, this one seemed perfectly timed for the coverage of altar servers in this special April 2022 issue of *Agua Viva*.

"We heard the call Sunday for someone to take pictures of the Rite of Election the next weekend. I told my husband we needed to do more for the church."

—Diana Ivone, Our Lady of Grace parishioner and photographer

Why focus on altar servers?

While there are a variety of articles in this issue, it is *primarily* focused on those who serve the altar in mass. These young, lay members of our parishes serve as role models for us, even as their every action is designed not to draw attention to themselves. An online set of guidelines, called "[10 Things Every Altar Server Should Know](#)," gives us a sense of the delicate balance every good altar server must negotiate, and why their service is "vital" (if often invisible) to all of us:

- Remember, everything you do—people are watching. They love to see you serving. So, do what you do reverently and carefully.
- Actions Speak Louder Than Words - Nothing about your appearance should draw attention to itself.
- Everything you do should focus attention on the altar not the altar server.
- Never rush. Believe it or not that helps people to get into the right, reverent frame of mind for worship.
- The way you worship will raise the hearts and minds of all the people. If you are reverent and silent and sincere, you will help everyone else worship more deeply.
- Do the actions with solemnity and dignity. This visual language helps raise people's minds to God. It works without them even being aware of it.
- You are in fact MORE than necessary. You're vital because you are performing not just a functional role but a symbolic role and symbolism is the language of worship.

So, while altar servers draw attention away from themselves, this issue is dedicated to them and their vocational energy, their early arrival to the church before mass, their reverent procession down the aisle, their quiet presence on the altar, and their promotion from squire to knight and beyond.



Inside this issue

Not Extraterrestrial.....	3
Sisters of Our Lady of Sorrows.....	5
Christopher Coker, Bishop's Knight	6
Father Chris, Mentor.	10
The Magical Shot.....	11
Program Guidelines.....	12
Photo Gallery	14
Making a Difference..	16
Church in Focus.....	18



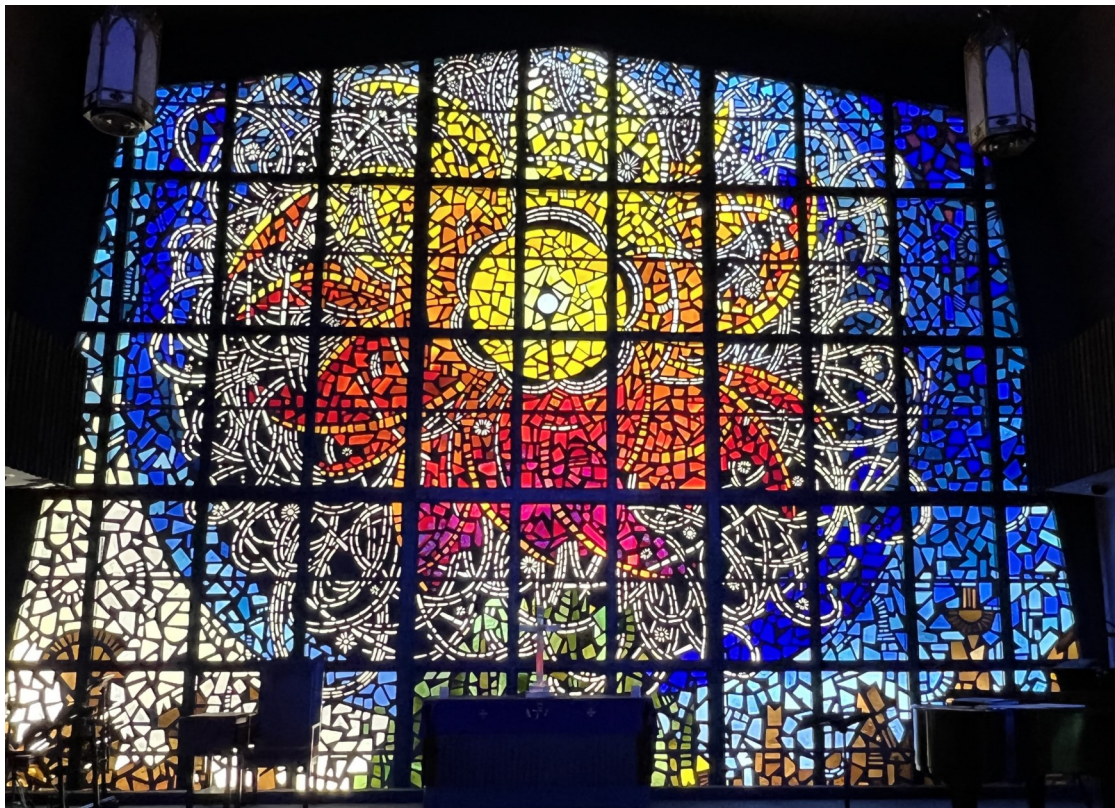


PHOTO of the north chapel window courtesy of Rev. Jaroslaw Nowacki (Fr. Jarek), Chaplain of the New Mexico Military Institute and pastor of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary parish in Roswell, NM.

This is the largest of the windows, titled “The Creation of Life.” (Compare it to the “pre-creation” version on page 5).

Not Extraterrestrial but Supernatural

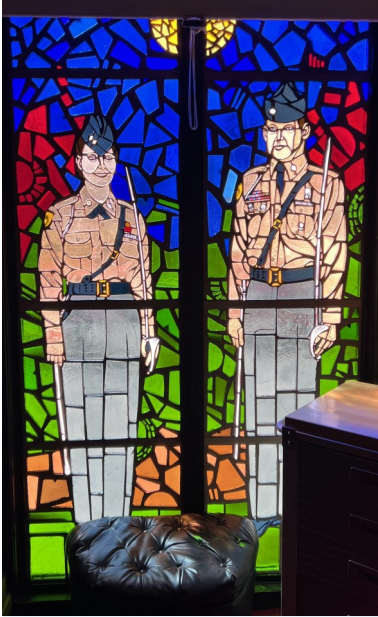
Fr. Ivan Torres

Driving through Main Street in Roswell will take you past the beautiful steeple of St. Peter’s, the International UFO Museum, a charming downtown, streetlights with ‘alien faces’ and the infamous McDonald’s shaped as a spaceship; but while one would expect some of that in Roswell, NM, you might be more surprised to see a large cluster of Gothic Revival buildings as you pass under the skybridge which connects them to the sports fields on the opposite side of the street. Roswell is indeed most known by its history of intrigue and government suspicion around the July 4, 1947 mystery, but UFOs are not the only fascinating piece of history, and not the only international mark, that this city boasts.

The New Mexico Military Institute, [NMMI] which sits on a 300-acre campus designated on the National Register of Historical Places, was founded in 1891 and operates under a Board of Regents that report directly to the Governor of New Mexico. NMMI is a home for the nearly 1,000 high school and junior college students who reside here for their schooling, and it claims a student body from over 36 different States and 33 foreign nations who come to the Institute for its impressive academic program, competitive athletic possibilities, and disciplined military exercises. There are many notable alumni such as Conrad Hilton, Paul Horgan, and Peter Hurd (and more recognizable to many today, Owen Wilson), but none of the school’s impressive statistics are what I love most about it.

While a tourist in Roswell might be surprised by the impressive Gothic Revival buildings which NMMI calls home, a visitor of the institute might be equally surprised to find a spiritual haven among the rigor of the cadets’ formation. Sitting on the South-East corner of the campus, surrounded by large shade-giving trees, a small garden and greenhouse, sits the most beautiful building the impressive campus boasts. Walking into the NMMI Alumni Memorial Chapel, one immediately feels a sense of peace as sunlight enters the space with the blues, reds, and yellows of the many stained-glass windows which fill

Continued on page 4



All NMMI PHOTOS: courtesy of Fr. Jarek, NMMI Chaplain.

Key facts about the NMMI Alumni Memorial Chapel:

- ◆ The 12,000 sq ft. Chapel was constructed around 1975
- ◆ The purpose of the Chapel is to serve as the Cadet's spiritual center and a place of refuge for those of no faith.
- ◆ The chapel is dedicated to NMMI alumni who lost their lives in military service
- ◆ Architect: Ray Mitchem, Roswell, NM
- ◆ Contractor: Compton Construction, Roswell, NM
- ◆ Art Glass: Designed and produced by Smith & Smith, Fort Worth, TX
- ◆ Pews: Designed and produced by John B. Haldiman, Class of '52, Phoenix, AZ

[Link in above heading to NMMI fact sheet used for this listing.]

Not Extraterrestrial but Supernatural, *continued*

its walls. Moving just east of the sanctuary space, a faithful Catholic will find another red light, this one flickering in the sacristy and signaling the Presence of Christ who rests in that tranquil space for any cadet to come and pray with Him.

While the chapel was built as an inter-denominational worship space, and the stained glass represents not the angels and saints but an abstract image of Creation, the sanctity of the space is still tangible. Small boxes line the walls of the worship space, hiding within them triptychs which open to reveal the Stations of the Cross, and a Crucifix and Statue of St. Michael are brought out for Mass each week. It is in this space with the backdrop of an approximately 30ft by 60ft wall made of stained glass, that the Sacred Host is elevated each week above the altar as Christ speaks through His priest saying, "this is my Body." Here we find the greatest part of the Institute, as nearly 100 cadets gather around the altar for the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. These children boarding without family become a true family in faith, and we become their fathers as they seek Absolution and Communion, counsel and fraternity.

"You may come to Roswell for the extraterrestrial memorabilia, but you would be more edified by the supernatural that fills the chapel of this remarkable school and the hearts of the youth who respond to His invitation."



You may come to Roswell for the extraterrestrial memorabilia, but you would be more edified by the supernatural that fills the chapel of this remarkable school and the hearts of the youth who respond to His invitation. As cadets they seek honor, duty, and achievement, but as Catholics we invite them to the greater virtues of faith, hope, and charity, and we pray that the young men and women here formed into model citizens might more importantly be formed into citizens of heaven.



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NMMI PHOTOS:
courtesy of Fr.
Jarek, NMMI
Chaplain. The
south chapel
window [right]
depicts “pre
creation” or the
beginning of
time.



Sisters of Our Lady of Sorrows

Sr. Heather Sikes, OLS

Our religious family began in Italy in 1839 with Blessed Elisabetta Renzi. As Sisters of Our Lady of Sorrows, we are renewed daily through our union with our Eucharistic Lord and the Word of God. Mary, the Mother of Jesus, united with her Son by an intimate bond, is the model of our vocation and mission. It is from Mary that we learn to be women of strength, standing in faith and love, particularly in times of difficulty, as she did at the foot of the cross. The Eucharist, Sacrament of love, sign of unity, and bond of charity, constitutes the center of our community life.

We consecrate ourselves totally to Jesus Crucified and find interior strength in faith and love, which come from Christ and lead us back to Him. Faithful to our Charism, we live out our missionary zeal as modeled by our Foundress, Blessed Elisabetta Renzi, who lived and worked solely for the love of God. Following her example, we place ourselves at the service of the Church and the people of God in our ministries of education, catechists, and social services for the poor around the world.

The Sisters of Our Lady of Sorrows have been present in Las Cruces since 2014. For more information, visit www.ols.org or on Facebook at facebook.com/SistersOLS.



*“It is from Mary that we
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Christopher Coker promoted to Basilica of San Albino's first Bishop's Knight of the Altar



After the knighting ceremony on 6 February 2022, and while mass continued, Coker maintained his watchful eye on fellow altar servers from a kneeling bench at the right of the altar. Modeling the right behavior is part of a Knight's responsibility. Note Coker's new Bishop's Knight emblem, gold background with red cross.

MESILLA, NM: At the 11:00am Sunday mass on February 06, 2022, 14 year old Christopher Coker was promoted to Knight of the Bishop. This is the first Knight of the Bishop for The Basilica of San Albino. To achieve this milestone, Christopher had to meet the minimum qualifications for each of four phases on the way to Bishop's Knight of the Altar. He had to learn and live the general rules and advance from Apprentice to Squire to Knight to Bishop's Knight by completing an increasingly more complex tasks, taking and passing tests at each level, and consistently performing at greater levels of engagement along the way. At all phases, his character and integrity were at issue; just like with medieval knights, the Knights of the Altar are bound to strict codes of conduct and collaboration.

Christopher first heard about the Knights of the Altar program when Fr. Christopher Williams came to the Basilica in 2017. Coker had already been an altar server at the Basilica for a year at that point, having moved in 2016 with family from Virginia and finding a parish home in the historic church.

And what was his impetus, once he had achieved his First Holy Communion, to becoming an altar server? Nathan Coker playfully prodded his son, "Do you remember how you first became an altar server?" Christopher hesitated, then grinned without uttering a word. Both parents chime in, "We bribed him. 'If you do it, we will take you to Caliche's.'" Caliche's is a locally (some would say globally) renowned frozen custard drive-through.

But, the motivation soon became less about frozen custard and more about Christopher's own sense of accomplishment. He recalls he was the fourth to become a squire in that first cohort and progressed quickly. He credits his ability to make it through the ranks in record time to two primary influences: (1) being home schooled by his mother, Viviana, allowed him to attend daily mass in the morning before beginning his studies; and (2) he says Fr. Christopher was "generous with opportunities"

to fulfill the program's requirements. Christopher's father says that his son also "made himself available" to respond to the call for altar service. This is what ultimately placed Christopher on the "starting crew," what he calls the list of altar servers likely to be called first when needed.

Christopher's professional demeanor and disposition as an altar server are impressive. The week after the knighting ceremony, he was serving the Bishop at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Heart of Mary for the Wedding Anniversary Mass. Serving at the altar, Christopher never wavered, never seemed to become self-conscious (as teens might do) with his very visible presence on the altar. He stood tall, looked where he was supposed to look, handled tasks seamlessly and deferentially, was clearly the polished altar server, holding the book and looking straight ahead. This is a disciplined knight whose demeanor is inspiring.

And yet, Christopher wasn't born this way; this is learned discipline. Viviana tells a story about toddler Christopher. "Every mass ended outside," because the toddler was unable to sit still or remain quiet for long. She would usher

"I can elaborate on that."

—Christopher Coker



PHOTO courtesy of Viviana Coker: Pre-school Christopher initially had trouble remaining still and quiet during daily mass, as preschoolers do.

her son from the church and stand outside with him until the end of the service. "We just kept bringing him to daily mass" despite the toddler's early inability to adopt the solemnity and reverence of more seasoned parishioners. Over time, Christopher became more comfortable and confident about his role in the daily ritual. "The more the child is exposed, it brings more closeness to Jesus," says his mother.

Christopher recalls the honor and importance of being able to serve at Bishop Baldacchino's Installation Mass on July 23, 2019. Six months later, the COVID-19 pandemic posed a hurdle for



Viviana and Nathan Coker, relax for a pose after the knighting ceremony is completed.

altar servers who were unable to serve while churches were closed or limited in their seating capacity. While the pandemic may have slowed down the process of advancing through the ranks of the Knights of the Altar program, Christopher continued to attend daily mass. His mother recalls that the patience and perseverance she needed when Christopher was a toddler was also required to help their child continue with the program. "Since it's an honor [to be in the program], sometimes we have to put aside things at home for the moral development of our child. We have to sacrifice some things to gain other ones. Our faith is

Continued on page 8

Coker promoted to Bishop's Knight at Basilica, *continued*

very important to us.”

“I am blessed to be a stay-at-home Mom,” Viviana continues. “And home-schooling is not for everyone.” But these two attributes of life in the Coker household meant Christopher’s spiritual development could remain a priority, even during a challenging pandemic.

I asked the family about the role of the more-advanced altar servers in training the newcomers. Quickly, Christopher took the reins: “I can elaborate on that,” said the 14 year old. “I became the Arch (or first) Knight three years ago. This means I had more experience than anyone else in the altar server program. It also meant that I could administer tests to the younger members.”

Clearly, Christopher Coker is articulate, humble, and fluent with the vocabulary he’s amassed in the Knights of the Altar program. He says words like “elaborate” without prompting (though his father, Nathan, later jokingly asked his son to “elaborate” on his early reluctance to become an altar server. That’s when the Caliche’s bribe was revealed.)

With that kind of parental devotion and playfulness, it’s no wonder Christopher has such an easy, joyful smile. When describing the program, he also exhibits uncommon humility, using “we” and “our” more frequently than the first person pronoun.

“It’s kind of a fun group. Most of the members know each other well. We make friends easily, but it also has a serious side. We really have to pay attention to what we’re doing on the altar. I remind the younger ones to be respectful because



‘this is your job!’ So, it’s both easy-going and demanding.”

Christopher pauses a moment and looks away as a slow, sincere smile draws across his face. “You’re training one of the less experienced ones,” he explains, “and then you see them do it perfectly for the first time.” He beams momentarily with the pride of a good teacher.

And then he becomes more descriptive, in part because he can see the potential the program has to attract others. “At the altar servers’ meetings, we go over the mass, do rehearsals, play games by asking the younger ones to learn their vocabulary of altar server terms. We ask them to ‘get me a chalice’ or ‘get me the ciborium.’” Christopher then explains that while the younger members in the program are taught by Father Christopher and Ronny Limon, (Altar Server Director and head sacristan at the Basilica), it was

Christopher’s honor to help with the more experienced altar servers. “We study to become a sacristan or the Master of Ceremonies.”

He stops, as if aware his terminology might seem daunting to someone just starting out. He offers an anecdote from his own experience, perhaps designed to steady the newcomer. “At some point, you can’t keep worrying about messing up. I once fell off the sanctuary while bringing the cross down. You learn from other



PHOTO courtesy of Viviana Coker. *Destiny? Nathan Coker helps his young son try on a helmet.*

altar servers a lot. They'll help you out. It may be intimidating at first, but soon you figure it out."

Viviana adds to her son's comments by reminding him that "you guys are also role models for other children who attend mass. You are being observed. This program can bring other children, plant a little seed in their heart." Notably, Viviana also teaches catechism to second graders, those children poised to make their First Communion and become eligible for serving at the altar. She has asked Christopher into her class to talk about altar serving and his commitment to the ideals of the program.

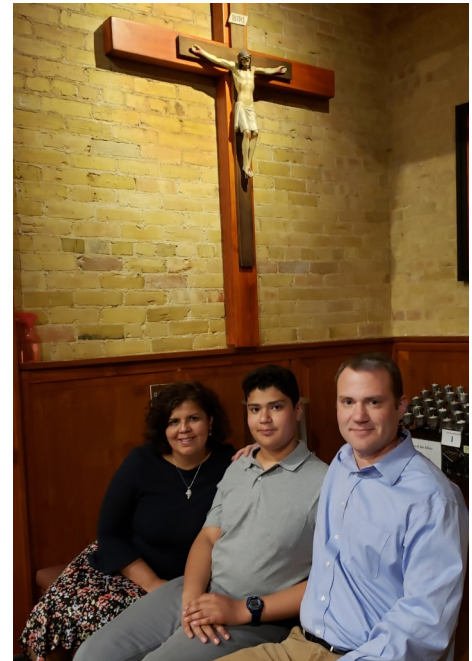
And when asked, yes.



Christopher Coker can elaborate on that.



The Bishop's Knight's Ceremonial gear was gathered by Fr. Christopher Williams and includes a helmet, belt, shield and sword. Other Knights in the program may qualify for promotion before too long, but Coker will not wear the ceremonial gear again. Only his Bishop's Knight emblem, with its gold background, will distinguish him from other knights.



After the interview, the Coker family respectfully obliged the photographer's request and gathered at the back of the Basilica for a dignified portrait worthy of the accomplishment



And then this happened...because, family.

Very Rev. Christopher Williams Mentor of Knights

LAS CRUCES, NM: Fr. Christopher Williams was an associate priest at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in Las Cruces when then rector Fr. Bill McCann asked him to develop a program for training altar servers. By September of 2017, when Fr. Christopher was appointed to lead the Basilica of San Albino, he brought the Knights of the Altar [KoA] program with him.

From the beginning, Fr. Christopher emphasized the importance of teaching the altar servers to strive for excellence, but he also developed a program that worked “like a social group based on spirituality. Like a youth group,” Fr. Chris explained, “though it draws kids into sacramental life after first communion. It takes the place of a youth group.” He admits this isn’t always an easy transition for some children. “Often kids come for the social aspect; often, they do not go to mass regularly.” But, over time, and with dedication, the group at the Basilica evolved to appreciate a sacramental life—with a social after every meeting.

Sometimes, too, it takes a little ingenuity and the willingness to hunt for resources you can adapt and make your own. Father Christopher said he found a template for the KoA Manual he distributes to newcomers to the program. He adapted what he found to what he thought would be appealing to aspiring knights in the Basilica’s program and enhanced it with “inspiring pictures.”

When asked about having boys and girls in the Basilica’s program, Fr. Christopher explains that “girls can often be better altar servers....because they are more focused and pick up things really quickly. The boys can get disheartened by how easily the girls pick it up.” Currently two of the altar servers in the program are girls. Still, the hardest mass to serve, regardless of gender, in is the Bishop’s mass. “Because of the Bishop’s mitre and crozier, and the use of incense otherwise used only for solemnities... It’s more complex, more to consider.”

For those considering inaugurating a Knights of the Altar program at their own parish, Fr. Christopher recommends instituting two “essential” criteria in the initial design: (1) strong engagement by the parents in the form of a collaborative support network, and (2) “have one Ronny Limon.” Ronny runs the meetings if Father cannot be there. He’s been a parishioner at San Albino’s since he was a child and is now head sacristan. He prepares the mass and heads the training of altar servers. “Having Ronny makes the effort as stress-free as possible. We go at the child’s pace. Every promotion ceremony is part of a mass.” That way, parishioners become familiar with the process, the program and the children in it. “When the community starts to partake in the process, the program becomes stronger,” claims the Very. Reverend Christopher Williams, Mentor of Knights.



After Mass: Bishop Baldacchino (center back), Christopher Coker (center front), five of Coker’s fellow Knights of the Altar, and Fr. Christopher Williams (with the Knight’s shield, lower right) pause to commemorate the event with a group photo.



This moment and the magical feature of iPhone's "Live Photos"

Advances Chevalier au nom de Dieu



Debbie Herrera, diocesan Tribunal staff and Mother of Knights, sat near me in the front pews of the Basilica of San Albino's on the morning of February 6th, both of us attending mass and awaiting Christopher Coker's promotion to Bishop's Knight. I had a loud, complex and awkward Canon camera to work with, but Debbie had her smaller, quieter, quicker iPhone handy. Now, it turns out that an iPhone takes "Live" photos, or 3-second mini-videos recording what happens 1.5 seconds before and 1.5 seconds after the picture button is pressed. At the moment Christopher started getting "dubbed" from shoulder to shoulder, I raised my camera

and snapped the above shot, the first tap to Christopher's right shoulder. Debbie, on the other hand, snapped her iPhone some time in the middle between shoulder taps and caught the exact three seconds of the full dubbing gesture in one sweeping motion, right shoulder to left. Amazing.

Once she discovered what she had captured, her son and my daughter worked to convert the *Live Photo* into a mini video. I then posted the video on Facebook and on YouTube. The Facebook post, linking to the YouTube video, generated in its first hour a higher reach and more engagements (comments, shares, likes) than any post from the Diocese before or since. It was enormously popular, precisely because the odds of capturing the entire 3-second "accolade" or dubbing gesture in a single shot are beyond calculation.

So, what's so important about capturing this moment? Since the Middle Ages, it turns out, the "dubbing" or "accolade" is **the central act** in the rite of passage ceremonies conferring knighthood. The tap with the knighting sword on either the right or left shoulder, *or both*, is still accepted to be the point at which the title is awarded and the "dubbed" **advances to Knight**. This is still the tradition in the United Kingdom today, as it was at the Basilica that sunny February morning. In Speech Act Theory, this is one of those rare moments where the world changes from one 3-second instant to the next, as in the saying of "Three, Two, One, blast off!" or "I now pronounce you husband and wife!" While I didn't hear Bishop Baldacchino say "Advances Chevalier au nom de Dieu" or "Advances Knight in the name of God," the dubbing action serves as an elegant and symbolic substitute. You can find the magical shot on YouTube [here](#) and watch the world, especially Christopher Coker's world, change in an instant.



History and Guidelines for Knights of the Altar Programs

Excerpts from the Handbook Fr. Christopher Williams created and some history of the program are provided here to assist those considering the development of their own Knights of the Altar [KoA] program.

History [adapted from Wikipedia]

Fr. Francis E. Benz, a priest in the Archdiocese of Saint Paul, Minnesota, was the first to formally organize and found the society for altar boys in 1938 when Archbishop John Gregory Murray granted his approval to the organization. The organization has these following objectives:

- 1.) To form a worthy guard of honor to our Divine Eucharistic King, in whose service we willingly assume the dignity and honor to become Knights of the Altar.
- 2.) To render faithful, reverent and edifying service to God by assisting his visible representatives, the Bishops and Priests, in offering the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and in all other liturgical and devotional functions.
- 3.) To enkindle greater piety and devotion in the hearts of the faithful of the congregation whom we represent at the altar, by reverently performing the duties of our holy office and by a good example in our daily lives.
- 4.) To foster vocation among members.

In 1974, when K of A representatives gathered in Rome during its 35th anniversary that coincided with All Saints Day, Pope Paul VI sanctified boy servers in the Sacred Congregation to the Pontifical Work for Ecclesiastical Vocations when he said that "Mass servers as the first seminary."

In 1978, a revised K of A Handbook was published (first edition was in 1971), with a new program, revised materials, and a renewed effort to promote K of A society and to foster vocations.

In 2008, the Knights of the Altar Society, North America was established and is "actively engaged in

rebuilding the organization." [Editor's note: it is difficult to find an active website for the organization in the U.S.] The most thorough material came from Fr. Christopher Williams' heavily-resourced Handbook.

From the Basilica of San Albino's Knights of the Altar Handbook

Qualifications:

1. Candidates should be of excellent character, pure of heart and soul. This is demonstrated by having a special love for Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament that is practically visible in visitations with Our Lord as He waits in the silence of the tabernacle--and by receiving Him frequently in Holy Communion.
2. Secondly, the Knight must be intelligent--demonstrated by learning the prayers of the Mass and the movements around the altar so that no hesitancy is exhibited when performing these actions.
3. Third, the knight must be trustworthy and reliable: this is demonstrated by being on time when scheduled to serve Mass. "Be on time" is an ironclad rule for any true Knight of the Altar. [Any sacrifice to be on time is small in comparison to that which Jesus sacrificed for each of us.]
4. Fourth, present a neat and clean appearance when performing their duties--as a true knight would never appear before his lord in disarray. No casual, recreational clothing or footwear, no uncombed hair should be exhibited in the presence of the Lord of lords.

General Rules:

All Knights of the Altar are expected to take an active part and a lively interest in the social activities of their group. Athletics, drama, sports, music, singing and various other activities shall be fostered and encouraged--each helping

Knights of the Altar every opportunity to develop the best qualities of mind and heart. Realizing there is unity in strength, the Knight of the Altar is expected to learn to pool his or her individual interests with the interests of the majority. Success is only realized when all work together for the common end.

Method of Advancement (adapted from the Basilica's Handbook):

1. Apprentice: have received First Holy Communion and begin, on a trial basis, to establish appropriate behaviors during Mass while studying altar servers and taking on assignments.
2. Squire: for advancement to Squire, the Apprentice has to have attended meetings of the Knights of the Altar, serve as a cross-bearer at Mass, pass a knowledge test, demonstrate sufficient good will in performing the requirements and duties of service. Upon promotion to Squire, the altar server will receive the emblem of the Squire and the Certificate of the Squire.
3. Knight: for advancement to Knight, the Squire must have attended at 10 meetings, served at least 15 times at Mass (five times each as a cross-bearer, a candle-bearer, and book-bearer), and volunteer at least two times for parish functions. He or she must also show sufficient good will in performing the requirements and duties of service as well as pass the knowledge test to become a Knight.
4. Knight of the Bishop: for advancement from Knight to Knight of the Bishop, the Knight must serve at Mass as a boat-bearer and a thurifer at least five times each (and must pass the relevant tests on these activities). They must take and pass the test on how to use the vimpas, mitre, and crosier. They must attend at least 10 more meetings of the Knights of the Altar as a Knight.

They must have served during at least two Mass of the Triduum, served at least one Easter Mass and one Christmas Mass, and shown sufficient good will in performing the requirements and duties of service. Knights must frequently help train Apprentices and Squires in meetings. They must also submit a letter of intent and have been approved for advancement by the Director and the Pastor. Once approved, the Director will inform the Bishop of a new Knight pledged to his service. The promotion ceremony asks the new Knight of the Bishop to renew the Knighthood Pledge, receive the emblem of a Knight of the Bishop, and receive the certificate of the Knight of the Bishop. A Bishop's Knight must also continue to serve (perfectly), continue to train Squires and Knights, lead by example and persuade others to achieve at higher levels in addition to praying the rosary (daily if possible) and prayers asking for Mary's protection, and exhibiting love and devotion to the Blessed Virgin.



PHOTO: [Diana Ivone Artesia](#).

The Gallery

"You are in fact MORE than necessary. You are vital because you are performing not



just a functional role but a symbolic role, and symbolism is the language of worship.”



Making a Difference

'Let us not forget: war is madness'

By Tony Magliano

In the days leading up to President Putin's decision to order invading Russian troops into Ukraine, Pope Francis, in an apparent effort to jolt the conscience of the Russian leader, as well as the consciences of all of us, made this appeal: "Let us not forget: war is madness."

He lamented, "Those who wage war forget humanity. How sad it is when persons and peoples think about waging war against each other."

And to all this madness the Holy Father boldly declared, "Put down your weapons! God is with the peacemakers, not with those who use violence." (see: <https://bit.ly/3Kb7zP0>).

Tragically, the world is once again seeing, and millions of innocent Ukrainian civilians experiencing, the madness of war.

Also sadly, there are the Ukrainian soldiers who lie dead. And the Russian soldiers who reportedly were given very short notice that they were being ordered into combat to fight Ukrainians, who also

lie dead (see: <https://bit.ly/3C8xeow>).

With NATO weapons pouring into Ukraine, together with wide economic sanctions launched against Russia, Putin has warned that his finger is on the Russian nuclear button. We are frightfully close to the ultimate madness of nuclear war.

If this scares you, good, it should! And it should scare us into fervent prayer and determined action based on Gospel-centered peacemaking.

When will we finally understand that the Gospel rejects war and violence in all its forms? The first Christians knew this well. And they lived it. Often to the point of shedding their blood instead of that of their attackers – as do over 360 million Christians today (see: <https://bit.ly/3IHtHQK>).

For the first three hundred years of Christianity, followers of the nonviolent Jesus renounced all blood-spilling. Their words and actions consistently, compassionately, and courageously said no to abortion, no to the death penalty, no torture, and no to war! No exceptions!

The late preeminent Catholic biblical scholar, Fr. John McKenzie said, "If Jesus does not reject violence for any reason, we do not know anything about Jesus. Jesus taught us not how to kill but how to die."



Kyiv, Ukraine: 25 March, 2022 - **MADNESS:** Anti-tank hedgehogs on Maidan Nezalezhnosti, in Kyiv. [PHOTO: Editorial use only, free from [Depositphotos](https://www.depositphotos.com).]

Not just those in power, but each one of us needs to actively commit to building a new world model, a new paradigm based on the Gospel call to social justice, peace, and love.

We need to replace the current economic and political “structures of sin,” as St. Pope John Paul II labeled them – which favor the rich and powerful to the detriment of the poor and weak – with the “culture of encounter,” as Pope Francis urges; cultures of encounter which nurture universal fraternity and solidarity for the common good of all, where everyone has a seat at the banquet of life.

To help accomplish this new Gospel-based, human-centered global paradigm, we need to courageously denounce and defund all wars and armed conflicts – as well training for war, the making of weapons, the selling and transfer of weapons – in Pope Francis’ words the “diabolical and perverse logic of weapons” which, he says are far from the will of God (see: <https://bit.ly/3CaoOgp>). Military budgets need to be drastically cut, transferring those funds to meet desperate needs of countless poor and hungry fellow human beings.

Furthermore, it is essential that Catholic social

teaching – the church’s best kept secret – be thoroughly taught in all Catholic schools and parishes – including all seminaries which generally only require one course (see: <https://www.crs.org/resource-center/CST-101>).

A required time of international Peace Corps type service or religious service like Maryknoll Lay Missioners (see: <https://mklm.org/>) would also be instrumental in helping us to see the other as brother and sister.

Then Pope John Paul II summed it up well: “Today, the scale and horror of modern warfare – whether nuclear or not – makes it totally unacceptable as a means of settling differences between nations. War should belong to the tragic past, to history; it should find no place on humanity’s agenda for the future.”



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Kharkiv, Ukraine: 24 March, 2022 - **MADNESS:** Volunteer at the remnants of the cluster part of the "Smerch" projectile [a heavy multiple rocket launcher] in the territory of the Memorial to the victims of totalitarianism in Kharkiv. [PHOTO: Editorial use only, free from [Depositphotos](https://www.depositphotos.com).]

Church Sketch: Our Lady of Purification in Doña Ana

Our Lady of Purification Catholic Church (or Yglesia de Nuestra Señora de Candelaria de Doña Ana) is a historic church built around 1844. It is the oldest example of an adobe **vernacular**¹ church in southern New Mexico. The building has a cruciform or cross-shaped floor plan with thick walls made of adobe brick. Each brick was molded by parishioners and carried up to the site from the valley land below. The dirt floor had to be wetted periodically to keep the dust down until it was covered in the 1920s with hardwood. The design includes a flat roof using the traditional **viga** (beam) and **latilla** (small poles laid across the vigas) ceiling, and sealed with packed mud that required routine maintenance.

The church is also a **contributing building**² in the Dona Ana Village Historic District, listed on the National Register in 1996. The church website notes that the earliest years of the church required a priest to visit from present day Juarez, Mexico. After the Mexican American war broke out in 1846 and the village of Mesilla was created in 1848, the resident priest from the new San Albino church (now Basilica) would travel to Doña Ana once a month to perform mass. In 1852, when Las Cruces was founded, the resident priest from Santa Genoveva (Saint Genevieve) would come to Doña Ana to give mass inside the church.

During the remodeling of the church in the early 1900s, the bell tower was added, the windows enlarged, and the round window in front was added. A drop ceiling was applied to the interior to cover up the vigas and latillas. A choir loft was also added along with wood pews and a new altar. The purpose of the remodeling was to give the church a more “European look,” but it significantly damaged the structural integrity of the vernacular design in the process.

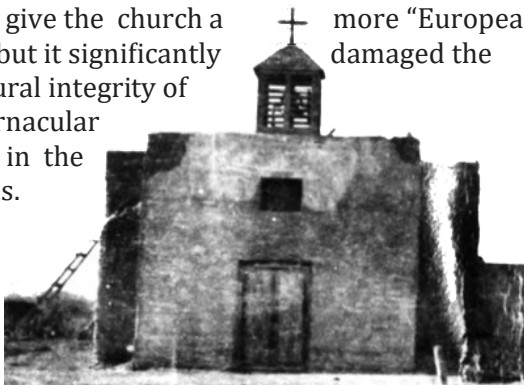


PHOTO: c. 1909 Wikinotes, re: National Park Service.

The most damaging changes included the use of cement plaster instead of traditional lime plaster. The cement, combined with newer concrete slabs at the



PHOTO: c. 2009 Wikimedia.

church’s perimeter, trapped moisture inside the adobe walls, damaging them. By 1983 the church was deemed unsafe, forcing the move of all church functions, including mass, to the parish hall.

Throughout the 1980’s, the community and Mary Jane Garcia, State Senator and founder of the Doña Ana

Village Historic Preservation

Committee, worked on a plan to restore the church. They received funding for a Summer Youth Training program in Doña Ana and contracted with Cornerstones, a non-profit organization out of Santa Fe that had worked on similar adobe restoration projects throughout the state. Cornerstones was able to secure private funding and transformed the Summer Youth program into a year-round job training and educational program for Doña Ana youth.

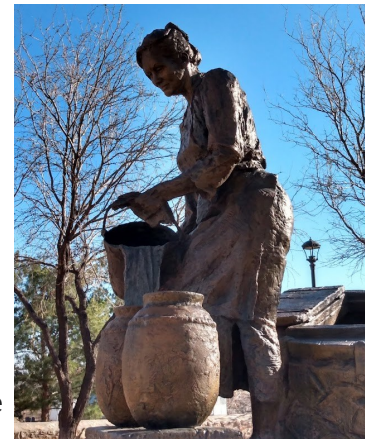


PHOTO: courtesy of Holly Kurtz. 2006 sculpture of Doña Ana by Reynaldo Rivera in Our Lady of Purification’s churchyard.

Under the guidance of Cornerstone employees and the dedicated labor of area teenagers, Nuestra Señora de la Candelaria was fully restored in 1999 using traditional earthen architecture techniques. Today, the older building continues to be used for special occasions.



ENDNOTES

1. Vernacular buildings usually serve immediate, local needs and use regional materials that reflect local, cultural traditions.
2. The church “contributes” to the historic and architectural integrity that make the district significant.

