

# **Bishop: Knights' founder is best example of how to be true pastors in world**

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (CNS) – How to be true pastors in the world.

That was the message Nashville Bishop J. Mark Spalding shared with members of the Knights of Columbus from all over the world as they, along with their families, gathered for the opening Mass of the 140th annual Knights of Columbus Supreme Convention Aug. 2 at Nashville's Opryland Resort and Convention Center.

Bishops, priests, deacons and religious from around the world also were in attendance.

At the beginning of his homily, Bishop Spalding noted this year's gathering was the first in-person convention since 2019.

Largely because of the COVID-19 pandemic, these last few years have shown it's even more important to be a pastor in the world, he said.

Bishop Spalding said those gathered for the Mass were "keeping in mind in a special way" the founder of the Knights of Columbus, Blessed Michael McGivney, priest and "pastor of people."

"We keep in mind his great example, and the readings and prayers today call us into what it means to be a pastor," the bishop said.

"Being a pastor ... is a great life. It's not an easy life, but it is a great life. We hear in Paul's letter to the Ephesians this morning what that life is about as pastor," he continued. "We heard it being spoken to us as unity, oneness in Christ,

the constant effort of a priest, of a pastor.”

Blessed McGivney’s “constant effort” was “to bring his flock together in Christ,” he said, adding that Knights have the responsibility to continue that.

“After the last couple of years, now we need to proclaim evermore that Christ is our light and our life. Go from this convention enthused, empowered to be evangelists in Jesus Christ,” Bishop Spalding said.

“Our world is starving for the presence of Christ in their life, and you can be that and lead them even more profoundly as pastors to other souls through word and sacrament,” he added, before posing a question to the congregation.

“What do we know as Roman Catholics?” he asked. “That Jesus Christ changes people’s lives for the better, that the more you come to know Jesus in word and sacrament, in his teachings, in his church, the better off you are.

“You know how to live your life. You know how to be inspired in your life. You know what direction it is. This is the work of our pastors, our priests, but it is the work of all of us as disciples.”

It was the mission of Blessed McGivney, he said.

“Father McGivney, he wanted to bring these dear men together in his time, and his spirit in Christ still brings men together,” Bishop Spalding said. “He made sure that these Knights would come together and do the good works in Jesus Christ, to learn how to be comfortable in the faith, and learn how to share the faith with others and tell their sons and their grandsons.”

“It is the good, it is the beautiful, it is the truth to follow Jesus,” he said.

“We have so many things around us in which we have men who are

lost and need to be found," he said. "We the Knights, we can be part of that good father that runs to your sons, literally and figuratively, in their life and brings them into the banquet, the banquet of Jesus Christ, the banquet in which Father McGivney knew to bring people close to others and then go out into the world and change it for the better."

Bishop Spalding gave three pieces of instruction to the Knights: The first was to support and encourage their pastors.

"Thank them for their 'yes' to their vocation. I know you do it already. I'm just affirming it and confirming it," Bishop Spalding said.

"A corollary to that," he said, is to call out men to consider "a vocation of service in the church," especially as priests.

"I thank you for all the support you have given, you are giving and will give to that great calling," he added.

Second, he said, is never forget to say, "I love you."

"When you say, 'I love you' to your wife, your children, your grandchildren," he said, "understand this: I want you to likewise say, 'I love my faith. I love my church. I love Jesus Christ. And as much as I love you dear son, dear daughter, I want the best for you, and if you can come into the faith and know Jesus even better, you'll know my love and how deep it is for you.'"

Bishop Spalding's final instruction was that the Knights continue to serve.

"Continue to always go out to the margins, to those least among us, to those who need to be defended and protected from conception to natural death, from womb to tomb," Bishop Spalding said.

"All of us are preachers, proclaimers, defenders, protectors of life from conception to natural death and every step along

the way," he told the Knights. "We love our people, and we give dignity to every person no matter what color, no matter what culture, no matter what language.

"They're ours in Christ Jesus. They're sons and daughters of God. You've been there, done that. Keep doing it."

*Peterson is on the staff of the Tennessee Register, newspaper of the Diocese of Nashville.*