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In occasione del 131° Convegno Supremo annuale dei Cavalieri di Colombo, che si è tenuto nei giorni scorsi a San Antonio in Texas, il Cardinale Segretario di Stato Tarcisio Bertone, a nome del Santo Padre Francesco, ha fatto pervenire al Sig. Carl Albert Anderson, Cavaliere Supremo, il messaggio che riportiamo di seguito:

● **MESSAGGIO**

Dear Mr. Anderson,

His Holiness Pope Francis was pleased to learn that from 6 to 8 August 2013 the 131st Supreme Convention of the Knights of Columbus will be held in San Antonio, Texas. He has asked me to convey his warm greetings to all in attendance, together with the assurance of his closeness in prayer. He has also asked me to express his esteem for the ideals of faith and fraternity embodied by your Order, its commitment to the Church's mission, and the many works of charity and evangelical witness undertaken by the Knights in their local Councils, parishes and communities. In these first months of his pontificate, he has been comforted by the messages of prayerful encouragement and spiritual solidarity which he has received from so many Knights and their families.

His Holiness was pleased to learn that this year's Supreme Convention has drawn its theme – *Be Protectors of God's Gifts* – from his homily at the Mass inaugurating his papal ministry, which by a happy coincidence fell on the Solemnity of Saint Joseph. As protector of the Holy Family, the humble carpenter of Nazareth is a model of

the manly virtues of quiet strength, integrity and fidelity which the Knights of Columbus have sought to preserve, cultivate and pass on to new generations of Catholic men. It was in fact as a protective association that your Order was founded in the late nineteenth century, in response to the need to promote the material and spiritual welfare of working men and their families, the dignity of labor and the demands of social justice, and the advancement of the Church's mission. In fidelity to this founding vision, the Knights continue to play an outstanding role in helping Catholic men to respond to their vocation to be "protectors of creation, protectors of God's plan inscribed in nature, protectors of one another and of the environment" (*Homily*, 19 March 2013).

Among the first acts of his pontificate, the Holy Father wished to add the name of Saint Joseph to each of the Eucharistic Prayers of the Mass. It is his hope that the Knights, in venerating the memory of this great Saint, will beg his intercession for the protection of the many blessings which the Lord has poured out upon them and their families, and work with ever greater commitment for the spread of the Gospel, the conversion of hearts and the renewal of the temporal order in Christ (cf. *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 7). Conscious of the specific responsibility which the lay faithful have for the Church's mission, he invites each Knight, and every Council, to bear witness to the authentic nature of marriage and the family, the sanctity and inviolable dignity of human life, and the beauty and truth of human sexuality. In this time of rapid social and cultural changes, the protection of God's gifts cannot fail to include the affirmation and defence of the great patrimony of moral truths taught by the Gospel and confirmed by right reason, which serve as the bedrock of a just and well-ordered society.

For this reason His Holiness once more expresses his appreciation of the clear public witness offered by the Knights of Columbus in protecting the right and duty of believers to participate responsibly, on the basis of their deepest convictions, in the life of society. In his Encyclical *Lumen Fidei*, he pointed out that faith, precisely because it embraces God's truth, sheds light on the authentic meaning and purpose of life, strengthens the bonds uniting individuals and communities, and thus serves as a trustworthy foundation for building a just and humane society (cf. Nos. 50-51). As the present Year of Faith draws to its close, the Holy Father asks each Knight to rekindle through personal prayer, ongoing catechesis and works of charity, the light of faith – *Lumen Fidei* – which expands our horizons, opens our hearts to love and guides our steps as individuals, families and nations along the path of hope to which God constantly guides us and all of human history.

With these sentiments, His Holiness commends the deliberations of the 131st Supreme Convention to the loving prayers of Mary, Mother of the Church. Assuring the members of the Supreme Council, and all the Knights and their families, of a grateful remembrance in his prayers, he cordially imparts his Apostolic Blessing as a pledge of joy and peace in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Please accept my own prayerful good wishes for the occasion.

Yours sincerely,

Tarciso Card. Bertone, S.D.B.
Secretary of State

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