

History of St. Joseph Parish continued.

1925 – 2003

History of Two Early Organizations



In the 20's and early 30's the Knights of Columbus, the Holy Name Society and the Catholic Women's Club was organized. The Holy Name Society has not continued here but The Knights of Columbus certainly have. The Knights were founded in 1882 by Father Michael J. McGivney, whose cause for canonization was opened in 1977. In Polk County, the fraternal organization of Knights was first chartered in Lakeland in 1924. Because the Winter Haven Group was especially strong, meetings alternated between Lakeland and Winter Haven. James Keefe of Winter Haven was the first Grand Knight and Matt Smith was another early Grand Knight. Meetings were held in Father Farley's home in Lakeland. In 1928, according to the Polk County *Knights of Columbus Bulletin*, council 2505 was moved to Winter Haven and had headquarters in Lyceum Hall.

In 1959, the local council 4726 was chartered and named *The Dr. Lawrence J. O'Rourke Council* in honor of Dr. O'Rourke, a charter member and generous donor of the Knights. Originally, thirty members were on the Winter Haven roster. At one time, most of the men of the parish were members of the Knights. In 1969 a K of C Hall was purchased at 3308 Avenue W, N.W. In 1980, the Knights numbered 289 with a range in age from 18 to 80. At the time of this writing in 2003, there are 350 Knights in the parish. There have been 36 Grand Knights, among them Paul Wells and Chuck Langbein, who are charter members.

One of the principal aims of the Knights of Columbus is the support of charities. For example, in 1980, the Knights contributed to more than

20 organizations in the Winter Haven and Central Florida area. The Shriner Burn Hospital, Meals on Wheels, the American Red Cross, and the Lions Club's Eyesight Program. They contributed to the building funds of St. Ann Catholic Church in Haines City, St. Thomas Catholic Church in Bartow and St. Matthew Catholic Church in Winter Haven. Scholarships by the Knights were offered to students at Santa Fe High School and St. Joseph School.

Today the Knights contribute some \$60,000.00 raised principally from funds generated by twice weekly bingo games at the hall. They continue to offer financial support to organizations such as Hospice, Farm Workers, Seminarians, PRIDE and DARE, the Religious Retirement Fund, the medical mission to the Dominican Republic, St. Vincent de Paul society and Habitat for Humanity.

The Catholic Women's Club grew out of an Altar Society that existed in 1915. It was organized by the Duggan sisters and Mrs. Cogsdale. By 1929, the CWC listed 33 members, which grew to 50 by 1935. Early presidents were Mrs. Ford J. DeHaven, Sr., Mrs. R.C. Erwin, Mrs. Ted Reilly, and Mrs. Mary Louise Gerguson, who was later Mrs. Robert Shriver. Activities listed in the president's record book for 1935-36 show the enterprise and ingenuity of these ladies. There were study clubs, dances for older children, picnic-swimming parties, Sunday night lawn suppers, picture show ticket sales and card parties. This organization continues to this day.

Because the younger women could not meet during the day, the Junior Catholic Women's Club was organized in 1945. Early activities were sewing layettes for needy infants and care of the altar and altar linens, as well as providing weekly flower arrangements and decorating for special feast days.



In 1952, the group became the St. Joseph Guild and became affiliated with the National Council of Catholic Women, the Orlando Diocesan Council and the Western Deanery. The main money making projects are the Religious Gift Shop sales and the annual Welfare Coffee. From these proceeds, the Guild has made quarterly contributions to Catholic Charities, the St. Vincent de Paul Society, Family Emergency Services, and the Women's Pregnancy Center. The Guild also works with other causes in the community and its members serve in other ministries in the church and community.