

Transcript of Acceptance Speech  
Dan Werner—KC State Deputy  
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I'd like to begin with a brief prayer. Please stay seated.

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Amen. Heavenly Father, thank you for the strength, talent, passion, and commitment of the men seated here and the men they represent in their councils back home. During the next two years and beyond, give us the courage and energy to do your work here on earth. Remind us that we, as brother Knights, are called to "go make a difference" every day. Amen. In the name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit, Amen.

Brother Knights, it is a humbling—humbling—experience to stand before you and to thank you for electing me to serve as your leader during the next two years. When I attended my first state convention in Sioux City in 2003, I had no idea that in eleven years, I would be standing at a state convention to address you as the State Deputy-elect. It's been a fascinating journey for me, and my sincere hope is that some of you here today end up experiencing the same type of journey.

My theme for my time as State Deputy will be "Go Make a Difference". Last year, while thinking about potential themes, I attended a KC meeting where the attendees were thanked a number of times for making a difference. I left that meeting to attend the Saturday evening Mass at our parish, and the closing song was "Go Make a Difference". How many of you are familiar with that song? If not, you are going to be hearing it over the next two years. The lyrics of the verses include, "We are the hands of Christ reaching out to those in need. We are the light of the world, not to be hidden but be seen. We are the salt of the earth, called to let the people see the love of Christ in you and me."

And to me, those lyrics capture what we do as Knights of Columbus. We stand up for life. We support vocations to the religious life. We support individuals with intellectual disabilities. We help the disadvantaged. We support the youth of the church. We support our parishes, our communities, our pastors, our dioceses, and our bishops. I am proud—so proud—to be part of an organization that does so much to make a difference, and I hope you are proud also.

During the next two years, I am going to focus on three specific points of emphasis.

The first is the primary duty of a State Deputy--to grow the order. To me, that doesn't just mean that we try to bring more members in, although that is important and we will do that. Besides focusing on **recruitment**, we are going to focus on **retention**--keeping our existing members, building and developing **relationships** with our members so they stay engaged, and approaching our former members and **re-inviting** them to join us. If you counted, that adds up to four "R's": recruitment, retention, relationship-building, and re-inviting.

To me, growing the order also means that we develop ourselves spiritually. We need to provide our members, no matter where they live, with opportunities to develop spiritually. I take this idea very seriously and a number of you have approached me with your ideas as well. I look forward to additional dialogue before moving forward with some spiritual development opportunities for everyone.

Growing the order, to me, also means we work on our infrastructure. We identify talented, motivated, positive, and professional people to lead our order going forward. These people exist; I have met them, and some of the “best and brightest” are here in this room. I am deeply grateful for all of our candidates who ran for state office this weekend. We need to thank every one of them for stepping up and saying, “I want to be part of the state leadership team going forward”, even though they knew there was a chance they would not be elected. I would like to see more candidates stepping up in the years to come, and more emphasis at the state level in identifying our future leadership.

My second point of emphasis is our first principle, charity. I joined the Knights of Columbus because I wanted to be part of a charitable organization. We all should be proud of the millions of dollars we have donated to various charitable causes over the years. Let that point sink in—millions of dollars. We have given \$13 million dollars to the Iowa Special Olympics alone. But regardless of how much we have donated, there are many more needs for us to address. And many—I realize not all—councils have funds available to donate. I am going to place an emphasis on the support of charitable causes during my time as State Deputy. I believe this will help attract Catholic gentlemen to our order. As the song says, “We are the hands of Christ reaching out to those in need”.

The third point is somewhat related. The Iowa Knights of Columbus do so many good works and so many different types of good works. But we don’t do enough to tell our story, or to publicize the work we do—perhaps because we are humble and we don’t engage in charity because we want recognition. Or, perhaps we just don’t know how to go about communicating. Developing a method of positive, professional communication will also help in attracting new members and keeping our current members engaged. As the song says, “We are the light of the world, not to be hidden but be seen”.

Those three points again: grow the order; support charity; tell our story.

We talk about our offering men “the experience of a lifetime” as Knights of Columbus. Through the rest of this weekend and as you drive home, please think about how you can step up your involvement with the Knights of Columbus.

If you stop and think about it, your service to the Knights of Columbus has already made a difference in your own personal development. I am a more spiritual person because I am a Knight. I understand more about running a business meeting, speaking in public, recruiting, and recognizing volunteers because of the leadership roles I have held during my time as a Knight, and I would guess you have learned about yourself through your involvement with the Knights of Columbus. I would like to invite you to thoughtfully discern about the ways you could help the local and state Knights of Columbus and experience your own level of spiritual and personal development.

There may be some of you, after discernment, who feel, due to health, job, or family issues, that you simply are not able to devote more time or energy to the Knights of Columbus at this time. I understand that, and I urge you to keep doing what you are doing—going out and making a difference every day as a Knight of Columbus.

But I also think there are many of you who are open to stepping up and taking on an additional role. For those of you who have never served as a Grand Knight, I encourage you to consider taking on more responsibilities at the council level so you can move into the Grand Knight position. For those of you who have been Grand Knights, please consider whether you would be open to becoming a District Deputy, perhaps by serving as a District Warden first. Some of you may have special skills in the areas of technology, public relations, finance, or other areas where the State Council needs support. Please feel free to visit with me or one of the other state officers about these positions.

Thank you for all you currently do, all you have done, and all you will do to support our pastors and bishops, our Church, and our order. Remember, “We are the salt of the earth, called to let the people see the love of Christ in you and me.” And I appreciate your support as together, we go and make a difference in our corner of the world, the state of Iowa. Thank you.