



Knights' News

Knights of Columbus • Council # 7773 Paradise, CA • November 2023

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Men of the Word The Good News



A Bible Study for Men

GRAND KNIGHT'S NOTATIONS

Special Camp Fire Anniversary Issue Heroism in Paradise--By Andrew Fowler, Columbia Magazine, February 2019

David Lemire was dropping off his 10-year-old daughter at school last November when he noticed smoke moving over the steeple of St. Thomas More Catholic Church. Minutes later, the smoke became darker. Then dense ash the size of potato chips starting falling from the sky.

Lemire became worried and informed Greg Kidder, the facility manager at St. Thomas More, that he was leaving with his daughter and son to pack supplies.

Today, ash is all that remains of approximately 19,000 buildings, including the homes of 69 Knights, in Paradise, Calif. At least 86 people lost their lives and 90 percent of the town's residences were razed in the state's deadliest and most destructive wildfire. Dubbed the Camp Fire, because it began on Camp Creek Road in Butte County, the blaze burned for two weeks, scorching over 150,000 acres.

Heavy winds caused the inferno to spread rapidly Nov. 8, and within hours it engulfed Paradise. Many of the town's 27,000 residents, including members of St. Thomas More Council 7773, barely escaped, leaving their possessions behind.

"Paradise has been compared to Hiroshima after the Bomb," said Grand Knight Jim Collins. "It's not much of an exaggeration."

Several members, including Lemire and Kidder, acted swiftly to save others, even as their own homes were about to be devoured by the flames. Joined by Collins and other local K of C leaders, they have since been instrumental in relief efforts. Meanwhile, Knights around the country also responded, sending supplies as well as donating more than \$200,000 to assist in the recovery.

ESCAPE FROM PARADISE

When Lemire returned home with his children Nov. 8, he told his daughter to start filling the truck with clothes and other provisions while he checked on their elderly neighbor, Peggy, whom he had been helping for the past year. **(Continued on p. 5)**

DISTRICT DEPUTY REPORT

The month of November is dedicated to those who have gone before us as we begin the month by celebrating the *Feast of All Souls* on November 2. I'm certain all of us remember friends, relatives, priests, and Brother Knights who have had a significant influence on our lives. Please take a moment to remember them, thank them, say a prayer for them, and celebrate their legacy which lives on with us.

The month of November is also a month to be thankful, as we acknowledge God's blessings in our lives and that of our families. Two charities are paramount this time of year. The first is "Coats for Kids" -- a program to provide coats to children in need as temperatures drop and winter sets in. Coats are available from the Supreme Council at a reduced cost and can be ordered by clicking [here](#). For further information on the "Coats for Kids" program click [here](#). In lieu of purchasing coats and distributing them directly, donations can also be made to the Supreme Council's "Coats for Kids" program by clicking [here](#).

"Food for Families" is also a timely program as Thanksgiving nears and food lockers are challenged to keep up with demand. Hold a church or council food drive and ensure there is sufficient supply to meet the seasonal demand. Sponsor a Thanksgiving dinner for one or more families in need or serve food at a local shelter for the homeless. For every \$500 or 1,000 pounds of food donated, the Supreme Council will refund \$100 back to the council -- up to a maximum of \$500 per council per fraternal year. For further information on "Food for Families" click [here](#).

The COR (Latin for heart) religious formation program continues to mature and take shape with more and more materials becoming available through the Supreme Council. "Men of the Word" is a new twelve-part bible study program which can be ordered in its entirety at a cost of approximately \$15.00 per person (in quantities of ten or more). It includes a full curriculum for monthly meetings, ranging from Creation to the Acts of the Apostles, with important training on *Lectio Divina* and key discussion points. It is highly likely this program will be implemented at one or more parishes in District 2 in the near future. Watch for announcements in your parish bulletins with meeting dates and time. For further information on "Men of the Word" click [here](#). **(Continued on page 4)**

Calendar of Events**November / December**

Nov. 1	All Saints Day Mass at noon
Nov. 2	All Souls Day Commemoration at STM at 6pm
Nov. 5	End of Forty Days For Life
Nov. 8	K of C Officers meeting at 9:00am
Nov. 8	Camp Fire 5-yr Ecumenical Service, Billie Park 9am
Nov. 11	Veterans Day K of C flags on Skyway and Elliott
Nov. 15	K of C Business meeting at 7:00 pm, Rosary at 6:30 am
Nov. 23	Thanksgiving
Dec. 2	Camino at STM (K of C 10am to 3pm)
Dec. 13	K of C Officers meeting at 9:00am
Dec. 20	Knight's meeting, Rosary at 6:30pm, Business at 7:00pm

NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS:Charles Knechtel—18thLeo Bourgeois—19thMark Fowler—19thBruce Epperson—22ndMatthew Samson—22ndJohn Smith Jr—27thJim Collins—30th**CHANCELLOR'S REPORT**

Please continue to pray for those on our prayer list: Greg Wright, Greg Foreman, Leo & Beverly Benedetti, Ron Martin, John Thomas, Jim and Lani McManus, Leo Bourgeois, Richard Reniero, Greg and Kathy DeCristofaro (cancer), Gina and Duncan Barnard, Israel Garcia, Barbara Brown, John Johnson, Karen Philips, Jerry Foster, Kim Keysling (K.O.'s daughter), Jeff Tolly, Barbara Collins, Bob Smith, Deacon Ray Helgeson, Brooke Westman, Denise Hughes and Pope Francis.

Please remember those who are serving our country in the armed forces and those who fell victim to the natural disasters and the Corona Virus. Pray for all the health professionals, all our police and law enforcement officers, firefighters, EMT's and all who are trying to keep us safe. Pray for our brothers and sisters and allies who were left behind in Afghanistan. Pray for Israel and all the innocent victims of war. Pray for America which stands for One Nation under God, with Liberty and Justice for ALL.

For additions, deletions, corrections, please call your Chancellor, Greg DeCristofaro at 873-4132.

KNIGHT HUMOR—

Old Guys' Ponderings...

- Still trying to get my head around the fact that 'Take Out' can mean food, dating, or murder.
- The older I get, the more I understand why roosters just scream to start their day.
- I woke up this morning determined to drink less, eat right, and exercise. But that was four hours ago when I was younger and full of hope.
- The biggest joke on mankind is that computers have begun asking humans to prove they aren't a robot.

DISTRICT DEPUTY REPORT (CON'T)

Wishing you all a happy and healthy Thanksgiving! Thank you for your charity and service!

May God bless,

Dave Abbott, District Deputy 2 - 530-680-0401 -- dabbott79@gmail.com

KNIGHT'S CORNER

Many thanks to Dave Lemire, Jim Cleary, Jim Collins, Greg Kidder, Kevin Kriebel, Michael Krzanich, Scott Kelly, Francisco, Deacon Tom and Gerald Regalia for taking down and storing our tents. Also, we'd like to thank the following Knights and Lady Knights in cooking and serving our Columbus Day Dinner after mass making it very successful. Helping were Dave Lemire, Kevin Kriebel, Dave Young, Michael Krzanich, Fred Schlup, Greg DeCristofaro, Greg Kidder, Chris Rehmann, Clair Lemire and John and Jo Thomas.

We would also like to thank all of you who participated in the 40 Days for Life. The 40 Days for Life will end on November 5th. On December 2nd STM will host the Camino from 10 am until Noon. Lunch will be served after the devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. We will once again have the privilege of serving our faith community and helping with clean-up. There will be a sign-up sheet at our business meeting.

There is still a need for helpers at the Food Pantry at the First Baptist Church on Clark Road. Come and join Greg and Kathy D.C., Ron Martin, Phil and Susan Barteck, Dee Cox, Louise Cambray and Kathy Keys and Deacon Mike. See Greg DeCristofaro for details or call him at 873-4132.

INSURANCE INFO

LIFE INSURANCE • DISABILITY INCOME INSURANCE • LONG-TERM CARE INSURANCE • RETIREMENT ANNUITIES

We are pleased to have **Jeffrey A. Tolley** (License # OM31427) as our Knights of Columbus Fraternal Insurance Agent. He can be reached at: 530- 514-4395 or at: jeff.tolley@kofc.org

GRAND KNIGHT'S NOTATIONS (con't)

"I told her, 'Look, we got to get out of here, I think there's a serious fire coming up the ridge,'" Lemire recalled.

Peggy refused to leave. But over the next half hour, the situation became critical. Lemire heard the sound of exploding propane tanks and people screaming in the distance. The sky became pitch black. "I ended up having to pull her from her bathroom to the front door, and she started crying," he said. "I kept saying, 'I love you. I can't leave you here!'"

Lemire helped Peggy to her car, raced back to collect her medicine and then evacuated the premises. By now, the raging fire had reached his own doorstep, and there was no time left for Lemire to hook up his trailer. As he drove through the inferno, he told his children to keep their heads down and away from the windows.

"Fire was on both sides of the street," Lemire said. "I could hear the whistling of the propane tanks, the relief valves going off. I could hear explosions. It sounded like a war zone."

Lemire would know. A veteran of the Iraq War, he retired in 2007 after 25 years of service in the U.S. Army and U.S. Air Force. He and his children prayed during the 20-mile drive to Chico, a trip that usually took 40 minutes but lasted more than five hours.

Kidder, meanwhile, was busy coordinating the evacuation plan back at the church and school, together with St. Thomas More's pastor, Father Godwin Xavier. When he had first seen the smoke a few miles away, Kidder was unconcerned, since previous fires had always been contained. Before long, however, an emergency order to evacuate was issued.

"It was a matter of hours," recalled Kidder, whose priority was the safety of the more than 220 students. A steady flow of parents soon began picking up their children.

"When we got most everyone off the property, we were down to 23 students, and we had to load them into cars," Kidder said.

The cars, driven by staff, headed to an assembly point in Chico. Kidder stayed behind to check every room in the church and school and to shut off the gas and electricity.

"It was one of those things where you just act," he said. "For me, it was executing the plan — processing what needs to be done, and crossing things off my list."

STICKING TOGETHER

In Chico, Jim Collins made an effort to contact all of the Knights in his council, and he learned that 69 had lost their homes. "In my own neighborhood, six homes out of about 60 were left," he said. "In other areas, where you had 100 homes, it was zero. Kidder also made phone calls to confirm the welfare of parishioners. "The day after the fire, I just focused on our people. We made a gallant effort to gather them and keep them together," Kidder said. "What they had was gone." Lemire went from shelter to shelter offering his services, volunteering up to 20 hours a day. He became a hub of information and helped place about a dozen families in homes.

The St. Thomas More community initially found refuge at the Newman Catholic Center in Chico, as well as support from St. John the Baptist Church and Chico Council 1137.

GRAND KNIGHT'S NOTATIONS (con't)

Later, the parish set up administrative offices at Our Divine Savior Catholic Church, also in Chico. There, Knights from Paradise collaborated with members of Henry F. Giroud- Robert Heimann Council 13765. Council 1137 also set up a centralized distribution center and hosted free dinners for displaced parishioners.

When Kidder arranged a campground in an empty lot next to the church, Lemire offered to put to use the engineering skills he learned in the military. He cleared the land and, together with local Knights, installed plumbing, septic tanks and electricity. The lot now houses five RVs, including one for a widow of a Knight who died several days after the wildfire started.

For many, the big question is whether they will rebuild in Paradise or not. "A lot of people have been walking around in a zombie-like state, just overwhelmed by having to rebuild and trying to figure out their next move," said Collins. To assist victims, Collins established a disaster relief initiative to distribute supplies and funds to those in need, with the motto "Arise and Rebuild." Following Sunday Masses, Collins and other Knights, including Kidder, have handed out pillows, blankets, backpacks filled with supplies and over \$10,000 in gift cards. The initiative has also raised \$140,000 to cover one year of rent payments for 10 families in the community. "If we just chip away at it, person by person, and we use the money wisely, we should be able to plug the holes in the dike and help folks get back on their feet," said Collins.

MOVED BY CHARITY

Nearly two months after the Camp Fire left his neighborhood in ruins, Collins was allowed to evaluate the damage to his home. "We have water now, but we can't drink it because it hasn't been purified," Collins said. "We're one of the lucky ones; at least we have something to go back to."

Kidder and Lemire both lost their homes. It took Kidder almost a month to find a semi-permanent residence, an apartment in Chico, for him and his wife. Lemire currently lives on the campsite he helped set up and continues to maintain while assisting other service projects in the area. In the weeks following the fire, Lemire heard from Peggy's daughter, who thanked him for saving her mother's life.

"The Knights at all levels have jumped in there and participated in the outreach," said Kidder. "There's guys within the parish who are saying, 'I need to become a Knight, because they really take care of each other.'"

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For the most current information please check our Website:

NEW: <http://kofc-ca-d2.org/council-7773>