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by NCR Staff

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April 15, 2022
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In a perspective for NCR, Patrick O'Neill writes about being sanctioned by the Knights of Columbus for his federal conviction and sentencing after participating in the Kings Bay Plowshares action. Following are NCR reader responses to the commentary, which have been edited for length and clarity.

The piece by Patrick O'Neill was disheartening. It is especially ironic because one of the four core "principles" listed on the North Carolina Knights of Columbus website is :

"None of us is as good as all of us. Members of the Knights of Columbus all know that — together — we can accomplish far more than any of us could individually. So we stick together … we support one another. That doesn't mean that we always agree or that there is never a difference of opinion. It does mean that — as a Knight of Columbus — you can count on the support and encouragement of your brother Knights as you work to make life better in your parish and community."



One must wonder what would happen to Jesus if he came in the flesh again today. Would he would have been suspended by the North Carolina Knights of Columbus after he knocked over the booths of the money changers outside the temple?

I applaud O'Neill and every one of those blessed people who courageously confront evil, rather than condone it and for everyone who "works to make life better in (their) parish and community," often alone and in opposition to the culture.

MARY ANN DORSETT

Des Moines, Iowa

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This was a personal narrative and I applaud Patrick O'Neill for his courage and willingness to take a stand and live out the directives of Jesus. I am not a Knights of

Columbus member myself, so my take is from an outside perspective.

For Catholics, and frankly all non-Catholics, we must always be mindful of the fact that these self-identified "Catholic" organizations are not the Catholic Church. While they claim to subscribe and adhere to Catholic teachings, their position or statements on any issue are just that: their position based on their interpretation and/or filtering of Catholic Church teachings.

No better example is the last two elections where many of these self-proclaimed "Catholic" organizations took the public position of condemning one candidate and one party based on their position on one fractional aspect of Catholic social teaching. These organizations proclaimed it "sinful" for any Catholic to vote for them, while at the same time offering blanket absolution to any candidate — even if that candidate stood against most of the church's teachings — as long as they were in line with this one fractional view.

These organizations' narrow, filtered views were not in line with the actual teaching of the Catholic Church on social justice and voting as outlined in "Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship." Yet, under the mantle of "Catholic organization" — and frankly, sometimes with the tacit blessing-by-silence of errant priests and bishops — many Catholic voters were fooled into thinking that this was what their church was teaching and dutifully, if reluctantly, followed it. The Knights of Columbus, and its subsidiary media, was one of these organizations. And that deliberate misleading of the faithful is, in fact, "sinful."

GARY MAKOWSKI

Bellevue, Washington

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I support Patrick O'Neill. It's time for the Knights to change their name. Use a more Christian name such as "brothers" if you really want to follow the Gospel.

DOUG BLAINE

South Ozone Park, New York

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As a lifelong Catholic, I have the deepest respect for Patrick O'Neill's actions as reported in "I took part in an anti-nuclear protest. Then I was suspended from the Knights of Columbus" and congratulate him for being a shining example to us all of what it means to give full testimony to Catholic beliefs.

As to the Knights of Columbus, for a long time they've ceased to honor the intentions of its founder and have become mostly another social organization serving the interests of the world.

MANUEL PEREZ

El Paso, Texas

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What an honor for Patrick O'Neill to be removed from the Knights of Columbus. Ben Salmon, the only Catholic conscientious objector to World War I was removed from membership in the Knights of Columbus in 1918 because he refused to train to kill. Salmon is now being promoted for sainthood by Friends of Franz and Ben, a Catholic organization devoted to the nonviolent teaching of Jesus Christ.

You are in good company, Patrick.

JACK GILROY

Endwell, New York

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