

125 Years of Patriotic Service (1900-2025)

The history of the Fourth Degree is marked by significant contributions to the Church and society.

By Columbia staff



A flag bearer wearing an American Expeditionary Forces uniform leads a Fourth Degree honor guard in the Armistice Day Parade in Taylor, Texas, on Nov. 11, 1925.

1886 — Knights of Columbus Board of Directors considers additional fourth and possibly fifth degrees.

1899 — Supreme Knight Edward L. Hearn forms a committee to develop a new degree. In August, board approves ceremonial with Catholic citizenship as its theme. Qualifications are membership in the Order for at least three years and meritorious service to Church and community.

Feb. 22, 1900 — Inaugural Fourth Degree exemplification takes place on Washington's Birthday in New York City at the Lenox Lyceum with 1,100 Knights present.

1900-1910 — Fourth Degree districts are formed, each headed by a master appointed by the board of directors. The uniform is styled according to formal wear of the day. Sir Knights carry a sword with cross-handle grip signifying Catholic knighthood.

July 14, 1907 — Canada's first Fourth Degree exemplification held in Montréal.

July 1910 — John H. Reddin, who from 1908-1910 led a board appointed committee to revise the Fourth Degree ceremonial and laws, is named first supreme master.

1912 — Sir Knights lead a great parade of patriotic and civic societies at the dedication of the Columbus Memorial in Washington, D.C.

April 12, 1917 — Upon U.S. entry in World War I, the Supreme Assembly sends telegram to President Woodrow Wilson swearing members' "allegiance to our Constitution and flag."

Nov. 3, 1917 — Supreme Assembly contributes \$10,000 to the Knights of Columbus Committee on War Activities.

May 5, 1918 — Mexico's first Fourth Degree exemplification takes place in Mexico City.

1920s — Members of the patriotic degree in Mexico and the United States support education campaigns in opposition to the Mexican government's anti-Catholic persecution and propaganda.

May 28, 1921 — Supreme Assembly establishes the Knights of Columbus Historical Commission "to correct historical errors and omissions, to amplify and preserve our national history, to exalt and perpetuate American ideals"

1924 — In promotion of patriotism, the Supreme Assembly establishes an annual essay contest for the nation's youth.

1930s — Fourth Degree Knights help lead an education campaign advocating for truth and justice to oppose the ideology of atheistic Communism.

September 1939 — Canadian Knights, including leaders of the Fourth Degree, begin organizing a K of C Huts program within two weeks of Canada's entry in World War II, providing service members moral and recreational support.

January 1942 — One month after the Pearl Harbor attack, Supreme Master Timothy Galvin introduces a new program titled "America Fights for God-Given Rights," to boost the nation's morale.

Dec. 2, 1949 — Philippines hosts its first Fourth Degree exemplification with 160 candidates in Manila.

1950 — The Fourth Degree celebrates Golden Jubilee.

April 1951 — The board of directors mandates that assemblies include "under God" when reciting the U.S. Pledge of Allegiance, three years before the change is passed into law.

1966 — The Fourth Degree Pro Deo and Pro Patria Scholarship Fund is established.

1970 — The constitution of the Fourth Degree indicates official regalia for color corps to be a Navy-type chapeau, cape, service baldric and silver sword.

1976 — The Fourth Degree provides support for the Fund for Religious Liberties.

1983 — Supreme Assembly gives a \$50,000 grant to the U.S. military ordinarate to establish an office to minister to chaplains, service members, personnel and families, and embassy staff in Europe.

June 19, 1983 — Some 350 Fourth Degree Knights form an honor guard during a Holy Year pilgrimage to the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C. Supreme Chaplain Bishop Charles P. Greco consecrates the second century of the Order to the Blessed Virgin Mary.