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Some Knights of Columbus donations are a little bit questionable

Nicole Sotelo | Feb. 2, 2012 Young Voices

Next month, the Knights of Columbus will celebrate the 130th anniversary of their incorporation as a benefit society. Founded by a young parish priest and parishioners, the Knights united to serve their community with a special focus on supporting widows, orphans and those in need.

Since then, the order has grown to 1.8 million Catholic men worldwide, rightly proud of their reputation for parish involvement, volunteer service and charitable contributions. In recent years, however, top officials at the Knights of Columbus have been funneling the organization's "charitable contributions" not only to charity, but to politics of division.

In 2008 [1] and 2009 [2], the Supreme Knight's charitable report shows the organization gave more to "family life" projects than they did to "community projects." On the surface this sounds benign, but "family life" is the Knights' terminology for predominantly anti-gay initiatives, whereas "community projects" represents soup kitchens and food pantries.

Among the "community projects," the Knights contributed $5,000 to disaster relief in Indiana and $3,000 to the community soup kitchen in New Haven, Conn., where the organization is headquartered, according to the 2010 Annual Report of the Supreme Knight [2]. This deserves applause, until you learn that under the same category of "community projects," they financed a $530,000 contribution to the Becket Fund, an organization of politically controversial lawyers. Do these lawyers really need the Knights' charity?

Additionally, in 2009 and 2010 [3], Knights officials contributed $200,000 as noted in annual reports to Vox Clara, the bishops' committee responsible for turning back the clock on the liturgy and implementing the recent controversial language changes in the Mass. They have been a significant funder of the committee [4] since 2006.

Over the same time period, the Knights donated almost $1.2 million to fund the bishops' newly created committee that works against equal protection for gays and lesbians and dubbed it "charity" in their annual report.

The Knights note in their reports that they give approximately $500,000 each year out of their "charitable contributions" toward the Catholic Information Service, a program ostensibly designed to educate people about Catholic teachings. The program, however, goes beyond even normative church teaching and might even surprise some bishops.

For example, on the topic of same-gender orientation, the Knights' pamphlet ignores that the bishops acknowledge homosexual orientation and instead purports: "... The only genuinely [sic] sexual orientation is heterosexual. ... There are no homosexuals but only heterosexuals with a homosexual problem" (excerpt from *Same Sex Attraction: Catholic Teaching and Pastoral Practice* [5], pg. 6).

In the Knights' pamphlet on women, the author writes that the "the key feature of femininity [is] *receptivity* ... to *accept*

and *affirm* everything simply as it is. This is contrasted with the masculine soul, which reflects God's creativity, and which has been fashioned to take initiative -- to 'make' and to 'do'" (excerpt from *The Gift of Woman* [6], pg. 11, italics not mine).

Where do top officials of the Knights acquire the resources to fund all this programming? Take a look at your insurance policy or your yearly charitable contributions. You may be indirectly supporting some of these programs.

As word spreads about what a small circle of high-level Knights are doing with the annual "charitable contributions," this reputable fraternity could lose the trust of supportive Catholics. The Knights' reputation could be lost not only if they continue funding programming that goes against what the majority of Catholics believe, but funding what is disproportionate to their claim of serving the most vulnerable.

After 130 years, at their core, is the Knights of Columbus organization still a benefit to society? Yes, but who they benefit is in question.

More:

- 2009 Annual Report of the Supreme Knight [1]
- 2010 Annual Report of the Supreme Knight [2]
- 2011 Annual Report of the Supreme Knight [3]

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