

## Into Your Hands



When they hand you over, do not worry about how you are to speak or what you are to say. You will be given at that moment what you are to say. For it will not be you who speak but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. (Matthew 10: 19-20)

Last Tuesday, we celebrated the Feast of Deacon St. Stephen, the first martyr. Luke's dramatic narrative of the event reads like a screenplay, and has served as a teaching point for countless religion classes and pastoral homilies. And tonight, I'd like to bring it before the Council as an example of what our Order is all about.

When our Order was founded in 1882, the country was still recovering from the Civil War. Irish Catholic immigrants were looked down upon as a lower class, were not allowed to purchase land, and were subject to taxes not levied against other religions. Furthermore, there were no social services or networks to assist those injured, maimed or killed in the accidents suffered in menial low-level industrial jobs. Hence the need for our Order's first principle "Charity" – to care for the injured, their widows and orphans.

Also flourishing at that time were political groups, fraternal lodges and secret societies that not only excluded Catholics, but publicly spread vile and libelous rumors and accusations. Our conflicts with the Socialists, Free Masons and Ku Klux Klan are well-documented and beyond the scope of this reflection. Suffice it to say that the issue of Catholic men being

American patriots still continues to rear its ugly head. Hence the need for our Order's fourth principle "Patriotism" – and the establishment of the Fourth Degree of the Knights of Columbus in 1900.

At this point, I'd like to flash back to Sister Mary's 4<sup>th</sup> grade catechism class.

Question: What are the Two States of the Church?

Answer: The Church Militant and The Church Triumphant.

These are terms we may not have heard for a long time, and their meanings are easily misunderstood. The *Catholic Dictionary* defines "Church Triumphant" as:

The Church of all those in heavenly glory who have triumphed over *their* evil inclinations, the seductions of the world, and the temptations of the evil spirit.

In other words, they've won the Game. On the other hand, The Church Militant is:

The Church on earth, still struggling with sin and temptation, and therefore engaged in warfare with the world, the flesh, and the devil.

In case you forgot, each and every one of us took an Oath, as Catholic gentlemen, to uphold the teachings of our faith; to be role models for our families, our parishes, and our country; and to exemplify the principles of Charity, Fraternity, Unity and Patriotism. The social, political and spiritual challenges St. Stephen faced are not much different from those we face today as men, as parents, as parishioners, as citizens. So how are we supposed to go forth into 2018 loving and serving the Lord and one another? Just remember that Jesus promised that:

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Can I get an Amen?