

ONE NATION UNDER GOD



Brothers. This evening's reflection will be about the Fourth Principle of the Knights of Columbus – *Patriotism*. To quote our Supreme Council's website:

Members of the Knights of Columbus, be they Americans, Canadians, Mexicans, Cubans, Filipinos, Poles, or Dominicans, are patriotic citizens. We are proud of our devotion to God and country, and believe in standing up for both. Whether it's in public or private, the Knights remind the world that Catholics support their nations and are amongst the greatest citizens.

(Invite the Knights to stand and recite the *Pledge of Allegiance*.)

Francis Bellamy wrote *The Pledge of Allegiance* in 1892, but it was not officially recognized by Congress until 1942. The Pledge contained no reference to God until 1951, when the Supreme Board of Directors of the Knights of Columbus adopted a resolution to amend the Pledge of Allegiance to include the words "*under God*." Immediately, it became part of the opening ceremony of each of the 800 Fourth Degree Assemblies. The following year, our Supreme Council sent letters of request to the President, Vice-President, and Speaker of the House urging them to adopt the Pledge nationally. On Flag Day, June 14, 1954, President Eisenhower signed into law the addition of the words "*under God*" into the Pledge.

The President also sent the following "Thank You" letter to the Knights of Columbus for their role in the movement to include God in our nation's Pledge of Allegiance:

“We are particularly thankful to you for your part in the movement to have the words ‘under God’ added to our Pledge of Allegiance. These words will remind Americans that despite our great physical strength we must remain humble. They will help us to keep constantly in our minds and hearts the spiritual and moral principles which alone give dignity to man, and upon which our way of life is founded. For the contribution which your organization has made to this cause, we must be genuinely grateful.”

And what of the Freedoms for which we stand? President Roosevelt’s 1941 *State of the Union* address has become known as the *Four Freedoms* speech. He proposed four fundamental freedoms for all people in the world: Freedom Of Speech, Freedom Of Worship, Freedom From Want, and Freedom From Fear.

I would like to footnote that list to include *Spiritual Freedom*. In catechetical terms, *Spiritual Freedom* is more than the ability to choose between alternatives or paths. It is a concrete, free choice to choose one particular path. It is the movement of one’s whole self, the direction of one’s entire life. It is one’s passion, one’s love, one’s relationship to everything. The June 2018 issue of the Knights of Columbus’ *Columbia* magazine included an article entitled “Challenge the Culture.” It lists four things that Catholic men **must** do to defend the Faith and build a culture of Life in our secular society.

1. We **must** be men of prayer.
2. We **must** never lose hope.
3. We **must** show our friends and neighbors a better way.
4. We **must** be active and practical.

In conclusion, I would like to close this reflection the way I opened:

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Can I get an *Amen*?