

Patriotism, Independence Days and the K of C

What does patriotism mean? Where and when do Knights celebrate independence days?

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In early July, the two nations in which the Knights of Columbus was first established both celebrate their independence: Canada on July 1 (“Canada Day”) and the United States on July 4 (“Independence Day”).

Independence days are typically celebrated with public displays of patriotism, including parades, picnics, fireworks displays and speeches at civic events. Members of the Patriotic Degree of the Knights of Columbus – the Fourth Degree – will often be found turning out in full regalia at these ceremonies.

Patriotism has been one of the four principles of the Knights of Columbus since the Fourth Degree was established in 1900, with a ceremony on February 22. Each of the major jurisdictions of the Order has its own version of the Fourth Degree Ceremony. Each focuses on the distinctive history of

Catholicism and the Knights in that particular country, which can be explored in the latest book [*Knights of Columbus: An Illustrated History*](#).

PATRIOTISM AND FAITH

In 2005, not long before he died, St. John Paul II published what was to be his last book, *Memory and Identity*. He discusses good and evil, church and state, freedom and democracy, and the Communist and Nazi totalitarianism which produced so much human tragedy during the 20th Century.

The saint drew a careful distinction between nationalism and patriotism.

“Whereas nationalism involves recognizing and pursuing the good of one’s own nation alone, without regard for the rights of others,” he wrote, “patriotism ... is a love for one’s native land that accords rights to all other nations equal to those claimed for one’s own. Patriotism, in other words, leads to a properly ordered social love.”

St. John Paul II notes that the word patriotism comes from the root word *patria*, meaning “home” or “native land.” It is related to the Latin word *pater*, meaning “father,” and so we sometimes speak of “fatherland” or “motherland” as well. “The concept of patria includes the values and the spiritual content that make up the culture of a great nation,” the pope wrote. “The very idea of ‘native land’ presupposes a deep bond between the spiritual and the material, between culture and territory”.

For members of the Knights of Columbus, for whom faith and patriotism go hand in hand, St. John Paul II’s is a concise description of the relationship between the two: the Fourth Commandment, which tells us to honor our father and mother, obliges us to honor our homeland as well.

“The spiritual patrimony which we acquire from our native land comes to us through our mother and father,” he says.

“Patriotism is a love for everything to do with our native land: its history, its traditions, its language, its natural features. It is a love which extends also to the works of our compatriots and the fruits of their genius. Every danger that threatens the overall good of our native land becomes an occasion to demonstrate this love. ... The native land is the common good of all citizens and as such it imposes a serious duty.”

PATRIOTISM ACROSS THE WORLD

Here are some of the independence or national days celebrated by countries in which the Knights of Columbus are present:

St. Lucia Independence Day – February 22

Dominican Republic Independence Day – February 27

Lithuania Independence Day – March 11

Cuban Independence Day – May 20

Philippines Independence Day – June 12

Canada Day – July 1

American Independence Day – July 4

Bahamas Independence Day – July 10

French National Day – July 14

National Liberation Day of Korea – August 15

Ukraine Independence Day – August 24

Guatemala Independence Day – September 15

Mexican Independence Day – September 16

Polish Independence Day – November 11

Panama Independence Day – November 28

Want to know more about where Knights are located? Serving overseas in the military and would like to find a council near you? Search for your nearest local council by clicking [here](#).

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