



**Paul Upman**

*Chronicle photo by Laurie Stevens Bertke*

**BY LAURIE STEVENS BERTKE**

*Chronicle Writer*

Paul Upman serves as state deputy for the Knights of Columbus, the highest elected position on the Ohio state council. Mr. Upman, a member of Maumee St. Joseph, is a fourth-degree Knight who first joined the Catholic fraternal organization more than 35 years ago in Silver Springs, Md. He has been a member of the St. Jude Council in south Toledo since his family moved to the area in late 1976, and has held numerous leadership positions at the local and state levels over the years.

Ohio has about 60,350 Knights, with nearly 13,500 members in the Diocese of Toledo. Through fundraisers, they contribute hundreds of thousands of dollars a year to religious education, vocations, seminarians, Catholic high school scholarships and citizens with mental retardation.

Mr. Upman retired from a 40-year career in biomedical research in 2006. He and his wife, Lee, have four children, nine grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

**Q** What initially attracted you to the Knights of Columbus?

**A** I hate to admit it, but it was to have fun and play softball. But the Knights have a way of converting you over to their vision ... before long I was working bingo and standing outside of church collecting money for mentally retarded, and things like that. So it kind of creeps up on you.

**Q** You were recently elected as the state deputy for the Knights of Columbus in Ohio. What kinds of responsibilities go

along with that position?

**A** The election was Memorial Day weekend, and I officially took over July 1. It's often said that the state deputy's position is like the CEO and president of a corporation, because of all the business that goes on, particularly in a large state like Ohio. We're one of the larger jurisdictions in the order, and there are more than 60,000 members in the state.

And we do a lot of big charitable things, so there's lots of money coming in and being given out that we have to be good stewards of, so there's a lot of financial responsibility.

**Q** Do you have any specific goals you would like to see the Knights of Columbus focusing on during your term?

**A** I would like for the councils to adopt a theme that I put together, which is "Strong in Faith and Service; Let Us Share the Dream." The "Strong in Faith and Service" should be pretty obvious — we want them to be better Catholics, because the Knights of Columbus is a faith-based organization. That's what sets us apart ... from a lot of the others. You have to be a Catholic gentleman, 18 or over, to get in the Knights, and you have to be a practicing Catholic — not just in name.

So our programs and our theme are designed to get these gentlemen to be better Catholics, and to be strong in their faith. And with all that's going on in the economy, we're looking to stepping up the service end of it. In the past where a lot of fellows would reach in their pocket and donate something and just let it be that, now we have so many people out of work and you just can't do that. So there

are more hours, we think, available to do service projects or volunteer work.

The other part of our theme is directed toward remembering Fr. McGivney's dream, which was to have a Knights of Columbus in every parish, and to take care of our widows and children. [Father Michael J. McGivney founded the Knights of Columbus in 1882.] That's pretty much how the insurance end of our order got started. Something a lot of people don't realize is Knights of Columbus is one of the best insurance companies in the world.

**Q** Aside from the softball, what have you enjoyed about being involved with the Knights over the years?

**A** We did have fun doing all that, and things evolved. But I guess the most fun is in the people you meet all over the place, and the social interaction with those [people]. We might do, for example, a pancake breakfast to raise money for something, and you're there working with your brother Knights and their wives and families, and this is a lot of fun, and there's some satisfaction you get out of it because you're raising money for a cause.

There's always something going on socially. In addition to the hard work that we do, there's fun in it, too.

**Q** How has your involvement in the organization helped you grow in your faith life?

**A** Well, there are a lot of priests also who are Knights of Columbus. And usually every meeting we have, we have a chaplain there, and he's trying to keep us on track theologically, making sure we don't forget the religious side of what we're all about. So there's more interaction, I think, with the hierarchy of the church, and there's constant interaction with other Catholics who believe and think the same way you do. And so it's very easy, when you're with them, to say grace before meals, to say a rosary before a meeting, to have communion breakfasts where the whole family goes to church and then you go to breakfast together. So I think it just kind of naturally rubs off on you as you do all these activities with people who think and believe the same way you do. It certainly gets you more active at church — I probably wouldn't be a eucharistic minister or working at St. Luke's [Hospital as a eucharistic minister to the sick] for St. Joe's if I wasn't this active in the Knights.

To watch a video of highlights from this interview, visit [www.catholicchronicle.org](http://www.catholicchronicle.org) or [www.youtube.com/CatholicChronicle](http://www.youtube.com/CatholicChronicle).