



KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS®

Minnesota Knights, Super Bowl Champion Matt Birk Raise \$25,000 for Haiti

By Joe Pappalardo 11/13/2019

Maple Grove, MINN.—A partnership between a parish from the United States and a Haitian parish became an even greater blessing after the church in Bouzy, Haiti, collapsed in a rainstorm. And the Knights of Columbus immediately came together to help.

St. Catherine d'Alexandre Church in Haiti was resilient: It had survived the 2010 earthquake. But the earthquake left it damaged, and when repairs couldn't be made for more than a decade, a rainstorm this past January finally brought the roof down.

Knights of St. Joseph the Worker Council 13359 stepped up to aid the Haiti parish in their fundraising efforts, hosting an Oct. 5 benefit dinner with former NFL Center and Knight Matt Birk.

"It's all pretty simple," Birk said in his address at the event. "At the end of life, we need to answer three questions. Did I love God? Did I love my neighbor? Did I use the talents God gave me to further his glory? That's it."

While Knights Patrick Farrelly and Dan Broten won't take credit, they and their fellow council can answer yes to all three questions. They organized the fundraiser dinner which, according to their estimates, may net \$25,000 for the church in Bouzy. That's on top of the parish's \$130,000 raised in a separate campaign, to which the Knights contributed \$2,500 as well as recruiting donors. All of this goes towards rebuilding the church.

Knights Serve and Honor Veterans "I felt inspired by the Holy Spirit and I thought that more was possible than we realized," Farrelly said regarding the decision to do a fundraiser that complemented the parish's efforts. "It's been a journey of love."

But it's not just about the money.

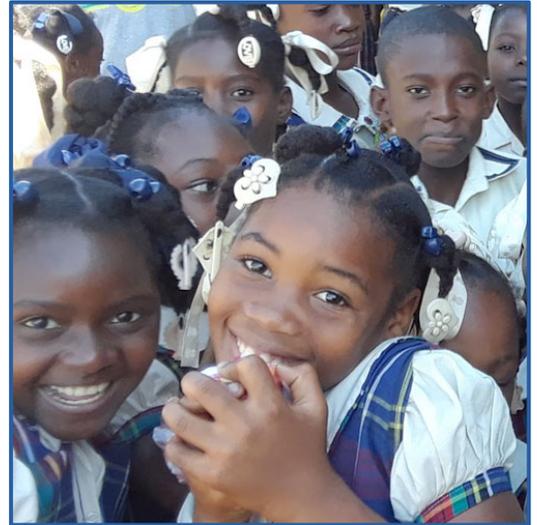
The partnership between St. Joseph the Worker and St. Catherine d'Alexandre parish predates the earthquake. A mission trip to a Haiti orphanage in 2008 prompted parishioners to consider a twinning program, where two parishes from different countries partner together, often to aid needy parishes like St. Catherine's. The two parishes partnered in 2009, and volunteers and Knights have made biannual visits ever since, forming a bond that has lasted nearly a decade.

"Over the years we have had to emphasize with each new pastor the relationship aspect rather than being the bank or the fix-it man," Father Mike Sullivan, pastor of St. Joseph. "As a result, when we go there or they come here, we truly seek ways to bond together."

The Knights and volunteers bring medical supplies, water filtration systems (and technicians to train parishioners in their use), soccer balls and even Knights of Columbus shirts for children to wear as soccer uniforms.

When the church roof collapsed, the congregation had to hold Mass under the eaves of the neighboring Catholic school, using a shelter constructed from debris. Parishioners pushed down the crumbling walls to make it safe for school children to still use the playground adjacent to the church. The local men had formed a group similar to the Knights of Columbus, called the Good Samaritans, and learned that they could be part of something greater.

"I have always been a Knight," St. Catherine's pastor Father Claude Telemaque said.



Father Claude joined the Knights of Columbus after he visited the American parish and learned about the Knights and their work. The Good Samaritans became a Knights of Columbus roundtable. Through their partnership, the Knights have helped the roundtable get uniforms for their members that double as choir outfits when they sing at Mass. The Knights have also provided a processional cross and memorial chalice for the parish to use.

"We try to surround men with other men of good faith practices, good morals and good parenting skills," Father Mike said. "The Knights of Columbus have always been a shining example of people working together to make the Kingdom of God visible in families, in the parish and in our towns."

Stemming from a love for God, the Knights' work to help their international neighbors is a witness to the way Catholics can put their talents towards furthering his glory. You can click [here](#) to contribute to the Hope for Bouzy initiative and read more about their efforts.