

HISTORY

The Order was founded Nov 7, 1909 at Mobile Alabama.; by four priests of the St. Joseph's Society of the Sacred Heart (The Josephite Fathers) of Baltimore, Maryland - Fathers: Conrad F. Rebesh, John H. Dorsey, Samuel J. Kelly, and Joseph P. Van Baast, S.S.J.'s and the three lay men of the Diocese of Mobile - Messrs: Gilbert Faustina, Frank Collins and Frank Trenier, they have all now passed to their eternal rewards. The following are key events in the Order's history:

- The order was incorporated July 12, 1911
 - The Fourth Degree was authorized in 1917
 - The Constitution for Junior Knights was compiled by the Reverend Joseph P. Van Baast, S.S.J. and his committee
 - The Ladies Auxiliary was authorized and their constitution adopted at Opelousas, Louisiana, August, 1922
 - The constitution of the National Council was revised by committee August, 1925; August, 1929; October, 1936; August, 1948; August, 1951; August, 1971 and August, 1979 August, 1989 and August, 1999.
 - The Ladies Auxiliary was recognized as a Division of the National Council at Galveston, Texas, August, 1926
 - The Junior Daughters was established in 1930
 - The Constitution of the Junior Knights was revised establishing the Junior Knights as a Division of the National Council, effective October 1, 1935
 - The first official organ of the Order was The Shield published for the first time at Mobile, Alabama, November 1910, with Frank Trenier, Charter Member and National Secretary, as Editor.
 - The successor to The Shield is The Claverite, authorized in 1922 as a monthly publication, and its first Editor was Joseph H. Rieras who served until 1928.
 - The Claverite changed to a Quarterly Publication in 1948 at which time it was edited by the National Secretary. Presently, The Claverite is published biennially by the Executive Director.
- The following excerpt from the Josephite Colored Harvest tells the story:

AN IMPORTANT MOVEMENT FOR COLORED CATHOLICS

Article taken from The Colored Harvest Vol. VI, No. 2 - March 1910

On Sunday, November 7, 1909, in the city of Mobile, Ala., took place the "Initiation" of the first band of forty colored men, the nucleus of a fraternal society, which will be known as "The Knights of Peter Claver." This is undoubtedly the most important movement for colored Catholics that has taken place for many a day.

From the beginning, the missionaries to the colored people have been very much hampered by the fact that most all the men belonged to one or other of the fraternal organizations, which they would not, or could not, leave. They simply joined them for social and beneficial purposes. Time and again they have told the missionaries that they would gladly leave them if there were anything else to take their place. The missionaries tried in vain to have the ban to these secret societies removed, so that the Catholics could practice their duties. Finally, it was determined to form a new society for colored men which would be Catholic, and, at the same time, include all the fraternal and beneficial qualities of the secret organizations. This has been done, and the Josephite Fathers on the "Coast" (Alabama) are the leading spirits in this movement, with Father

Conrad Rebesher, pastor of the Church of the Most Pure Heart of Mary, Mobile, Ala., as the prime mover. More than a year ago Father Rebesher spoke of the projected movement to his superior, and was promised all the assistance possible to carry out the plan.

On the morning of the initiation, forty colored men (forty men in a small mission parish) went to Holy Communion in a body in the presence of Right Rev. E. P. Allen, D.o. Bishop of Mobile, and Fathers Kelly, Rebesher and Dorsey.

The Bishop was evidently pleased, as he is deeply interested in the work for colored Catholics. The congregation was very much impressed (for never before had any of them seen such a sight), and the work of making converts and of bringing back "the stray sheep to the fold" got a mighty impetus.

Father Dorsey, the colored priest attached to St. Joseph's College, Montgomery, Ala., preached the sermon, in which the reverend preacher endeavored to impress on his hearers the necessity of good Christian operation among the members, with an unflinching obedience to the laws and by-laws of the order.

The "initiation" of the new members of the Knights of Peter Claver, "K.O.P.C.," took place at 5 o'clock in the evening. The ceremony was preceded by the Benediction of the Most Blessed Sacrament. The Josephite Fathers, Kelly, Van Baast, Dorsey and Rebesher, the pastor, were present.

Two new councils more have already been organized, one of Mon Louis, Ala., 22 members, and one at Chastang, Ala., 20 members. The Josephite Fathers will do all in their power to organize and increase the membership in the Knights of Peter Claver. It shall be their endeavor to open councils along the "Coast" to New Orleans, La., through Louisiana, Texas, Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, Maryland and Delaware.

The home of the national council is in Mobile, Ala. There are already two subordinate councils, one at Mon Louis, Ala., and one at Chastang, Ala.

Subordinate councils may be formed in any city or state, subject to the National council, where fifteen men wish to form a council, by applying to the national secretary and complying with the constitution.

The National Council and the two sub-councils are in excellent financial condition, having already a substantial bank account. The initiators are an intelligent body of men, many of them already well acquainted with organization business.

The Knights of Peter Claver have a safe and practical constitution of laws and by-laws. The writer has personally met many of the members of the national and sub-councils, and he entertains high hopes of their ability to manage their business affairs.

The address of the national secretary is Mr. Frank Trenier, 606 Dearborn Street, Mobile, Ala., He will gladly furnish any information desired.

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