



Dear Knights and Dames, and Provisional Members:

Recently we have seen a surge in rumors about the Order in Rome. The Order is a beacon of hope and Christian discipleship in a confused world, and so it comes under attack. Often the attacks contain arguments seem to be persuasive, but remember that dissension and division come from Satan. In contrast, the fruit of the Holy Spirit contains “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. . . .” Gal. 5:23, 26.

An article from the online magazine *One Peter Five* recently has been circulating among our members. Many of the facts cited in this article are true — the devil is not so stupid as to trick us with easy-to-discover lies. But between the lines there is a spirit of dissension and division that is opposed to the Holy Spirit. This article has led some to propose that members should resign or withhold charitable gifts for the poor and sick. These reactions would delight Satan, who would like nothing better than to take down an ancient order that has served as the backbone of the Body of Christ over centuries. As the baptized faithful, we must reject Satan and all his empty promises.

So what are we to do?

First, recall your vocation to serve the poor and sick and to be living witnesses of the Faith of the Church. Our strength and our unity spring from the charisms of the Order. Serve the sick as you would Christ! That is our special joy as members of the Order.

Secondly, recall that two years ago the Holy Father asked us to consider a reform of the First Class, not to destroy it, but to make it a better and more faithful example of Jesus Christ alive in our world. This effort must be led by the Frats but include all of us in the discussion — because they are the Heart of the Order, and the Heart of the Order matters to every member of the Order. The Holy Father also asked the Order to eliminate nobiliary qualifications for holding office. Centuries ago such rules had their place, but that is no longer the case. The vast majority of the men and women joining the Order are not recognized as nobles by blood, but they are recognized as noble by virtue of their rich personal gifts, educational attainments, material success, and bottomless generosity in treasure and in service to the poor and sick. These two reforms would do much to unify and strengthen the Order. Please pray for successful constitutional reform on Pope Francis's key points: The reform (not eradication) of our beloved Frats, and the elimination of nobiliary qualifications for holding office in the Order.

When will these reforms take place, and will they come about as the Holy Father has requested? Rumors abound. Should we be worried about whether the Order can survive this reform? Our Founder, a non-noble monk of many talents, offers the following answer: “Our fraternity will last forever, because the soil in which it is rooted is the misery of the world, and — if it should please God — there will always be those who will labor to reduce suffering and make the misery of the world more endurable.” Blessed Gerard, pray for us!

With confraternal best wishes for a Happy Fourth of July,

Michael K. Grace, KM
President