

The Early Years



Building a Better World



Everybody Welcome,
Everything Free



World War II & Diplomacy



The Work Continues

Exhibit at Musei Capitolini to Chronicle 90 Years of Charitable Work in Rome by American Group

From playgrounds, to Vatican restorations, to diplomacy, Knights of Columbus have left an indelible mark

Invited by Pope Benedict XV to stay in Rome in 1920, the work and friendship of Knights of Columbus have remained a strong and important force for 90 years.

The American organization - also the largest Catholic Fraternal group in the world - is best known to most Romans for the sports fields it operates around the city. But there is much more to the history than that, and the amazing tale of the Knights of Columbus' facilitation of a friendship that transcended the Atlantic Ocean will be the subject of *Everybody Welcome, Everything Free: The Knights of Columbus and Rome, Celebrating 90 Years of Friendship*. The exhibit will run from June 9 - October 31, 2010 at the Musei Capitolini at the Campidoglio.

"The story of the Knights of Columbus in Rome is a story of the power of faith and friendship that can overcome any adversity and bring two worlds together for the good of both," said Supreme Knight Carl Anderson. "Invited by Pope Benedict XV to establish an enduring presence in the city in 1920, we are pleased that for 90 years, despite a turbulent 20th century, the Knights have become an established fixture in the eternal city, and continue to be at the service of the people Rome and of the Holy See during the pontificate of Pope Benedict XVI."

The exhibit will feature the Knights' role in constructing and operating playgrounds for the city's children, as well as the role the Knights have played in Vatican restoration and communication projects, and the role the Knights assumed as a quiet diplomatic channel between the United States and the Vatican - prior to the formal diplomatic recognition of the Vatican by United States in the 1980s.

The Knights run five playgrounds in the city, and has assisted with some of the Vatican's most important restorations including restoration of the façade of St. Peter's Basilica, its Maderno Atrium, the dome of its Blessed Sacrament chapel, its grottos, its statues of Sts. Peter and Paul, as well as many other projects.

In addition, since the mid-1970s, the Knights have funded the satellite costs for various papal ceremonies - including the annual Christmas liturgy with the pope.

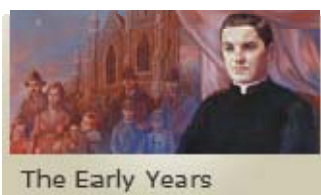
Though not widely known, the Knights served as an unofficial diplomatic channel between the United States and the Holy See during the time when those two states did not have diplomatic relations. It was Count Enrico Galeazzi, the Knights' director in Rome, who was sent by Pope Pius XII to the United States to seek from President Roosevelt a cessation of bombing in Rome in 1943 after Allied planes bombed the city. And the foundation for Vatican diplomatic relations with the United States was laid almost 60 years later, in 1982, at the organization's international convention. There, Cardinal Agostino Casaroli met with President Ronald Reagan and the two laid the groundwork for full diplomatic ties.

But perhaps most incredible of all, the Knights continued to operate their Roman playgrounds even after the outbreak of World War II in which the United States and Italy were belligerents, and at a time when the fascist government had abolished Catholic youth activities.

After the war, the Knights played an important role in relief efforts for Italy and the Italian people, and remain in Rome to this day, a symbol of a bond faith and friendship that could not be broken by distance, language, or even World War.

The Knights first came to Rome in 1918 establishing a service center for American troops stationed there in World War I. They established a long-term presence in 1920 at the behest of Pope Benedict XV, and have remained active in the city ever since.

From: www.kofc.org



The Early Years



Building a Better World



Everybody Welcome,
Everything Free



World War II & Diplomacy



The Work Continues