

CATHOLIC KNIGHTHOOD AND SECRET SOCIETIES: INVESTIGATING THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE ORDER OF THE KNIGHTS OF ST. MULUMBA

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Abstract

The paper delves into the unique character of Catholic knighthood, explicitly focusing on the Order of the Knights of St. Mulumba and contrasting it with secret societies. It discusses the knights' core values, spirituality and operations by critically examining primary and secondary literature on the subject matter. An important discovery is that the Order of the Knights of St. Mulumba was established as a counterforce to the activities of secret societies, particularly among the Nigerian elites. Their operations are deeply rooted in the Catholic tradition, with a spirituality that centres on trust in God, justice, and service to others. As an ecclesial organisation, the Order operates with transparency and complete obedience to Church authority, a sharp departure from the clandestine nature of secret societies and their anti-Christian beliefs and practices. By examining the Order's mission and activities, the paper underscores its role as a beacon of the Catholic faith, inspiring respect and admiration for its steadfast commitment to challenging the influence of secret societies in today's Nigerian society.

Keywords: Knights, Mulumba, Catholic, Secret Societies

Introduction

Knighthood, a noble Catholic organisation, has a rich history that dates back to its secular origin from the feudal society of the Middle Ages when it was established as a title of honour for services in society (Okafor, 2001). The Catholic Church adopted knighthood during the Crusades in the Middle Ages when Christians organised themselves into religious-military orders to wage battles against enemies of Christianity. This historical context provides a deep understanding of the roots of Catholic knighthood. The rules governing the monastic orders were applied to the order of the knights who fought on the side of the Church against invaders in the Holy Land and ensured the safety of pilgrims. Some prominent orders of the knights during the time were the Knights of Malta or Knights of Hospitallers, founded in 1113; the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem; the Knights Templars, founded in 1118 but later disbanded by Pope Clement V in 1312, the Teutonic Knights, established in 1198, and the Order of St John of Jerusalem.

In modern times, knighthood has evolved significantly. In today's Catholic Church, knights are no longer called upon to participate in physical battles or wars to defend the faith. Instead, they are tasked to deepen their spirituality for a more profound spiritual warfare aimed at defending the Catholic faith against secular and ungodly forces that assail its doctrine and practice. As Odinkemelu (1993, p. 132) suitably notes, the shared

goal of modern knighthood in the Catholic Church is to unite Catholics “to engage in the lay apostolate Catholic action in the new era of evangelisation. It aims to promote its members' moral, intellectual, spiritual, and material welfare and the Catholic Community.” Indeed, knighthood in the Church is much deeper than a mere title or reward for loyalty to the Church. It goes much deeper to embrace total commitment to God, the Church, and the world, and it is laden with responsibilities and challenges.

In the Catholic Church today, there are different Orders of Knighthood. Papal Knighthood is conferred on Catholic lay faithful by the Pope. He may do so out of his discretion or in response to a request from a person's local ordinary (Chiegboka and Ezenweke, 2010). They include the Order of Christ, the Order of the Golden Spur, the Order of Piano, the Order of Saint Gregory the Great, the Order of Pope Saint Sylvester and the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem (Baccani, p. 4-5). Some non-papal knights are the Order of the Knights of St. John International and the Order of the Knights of St. Mulumba, the Order of the Knights of St. Columbus, among others.

When Rev. Fr. Abraham Anselm Isidahome Ojefua, a Catholic priest and monk, founded the indigenous Order of the Knights of St. Mulumba in Nigeria on 14 June 1953, at the instance of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria (CBCN), he had two primary objectives. The first was “To counteract the harm done by many secret societies to the church and to arrest the efflux of the Christian enlightened members into those harmful secret groups.” Second, “To bring Catholics together in a fraternal association for the good and progress of the church, the welfare of its clergy, wellbeing of members of the Order in particular and Nigeria in general” (KSM Nigeria, Our History, para. 3-4). Given these initial objectives, the members make considerable effort to live their lives according to the demands of the Gospel and the mind of the Catholic Church. In addition to these original objectives, today, the Order aims at “fostering perfect Christian life among members, making the Order Africa-wide and encouraging inter-religious dialogue” (para.4).

It is unfortunate that in Nigeria, some people misconceive the operations, activities and mission of the Catholic knighthood as close to those of secret societies. Some even accuse the Catholic organisation of being a secret society. This paper investigates the core values and spirituality of the Knights of St. Mulumba to show that Catholic Knighthood, as an organ for grassroots evangelisation in the Church, is utterly different from secret societies.

The Catholic Church and Secret Societies

Barker (2006) defines a secret society as an association known by the concealment of its activities, events, inner operations, or membership. Their members are often drawn from the crème of the society. According to Introvigne (2000), their secrecy can range from essential elements like passwords to elaborate rituals, private languages, costumes, symbols, and loyalty oaths to maintain strong bonds among members. Axelrod (1998) identified three primary characteristics of secret societies: their exclusivity, claim to possess secret knowledge, and favouritism among members. He further notes that most often, they do not have clear goals and missions, even though some are known to have political goals. Some of the world's known secret societies are Freemasonry, which Ridley (2011) dubbed the most powerful, Rosicrucians, the Order of Assassins, the

Illuminati, and Skull and Bone. Browne (2007) mentions some prominent past American politicians who were members of some of these secret societies, like Skull and Bones, which has existed at Yale University in the USA for over 150 years.

Rosen (1903) affirms a marked shift in the identity and operations of secret societies from what they were before the twentieth century and what they became afterwards. In their earlier days, he asserts, people knew just about their existence while details about their membership and meeting places remained largely shrouded in secrecy. The twentieth century saw a change that brought some of their hitherto hidden activities and membership to light. According to him, from thence, a secret society came to mean:

[A] society with secrets, having a ritual demanding an oath of allegiance and secrecy, prescribing ceremonies of a religious character, such as the use of the Bible, either by extracts therefrom or by its being placed on an altar within a lodge room, by the use of prayers, of hymns, of religious signs and symbols, special funeral services, etc. p.2.

From Rosens' submission, it is clear there are some forms of borrowing of religious rituals, symbols, and practices by secret societies, which they adapt to suit their activities and beliefs. Indeed, the Bible does not have the same meaning within the Christian religious context as it would among these groups. It could best be a parody. From the point of view of the Catholic Church, Katzer (1895, cited in Rosen 1904) sketches four significant characteristics of a secret society: They

(1) unite their members for the purpose of conspiring against the State or Church; (2) demand the observance of secrecy to such an extent that it must be maintained even before the rightful ecclesiastical authority; (3) exact an oath from their members or a promise of blind and absolute obedience; (4) make use of a ritual and ceremonies that constitute them sects. p.3.

Apart from their secrecy, anti-Catholic doctrines, and political intrigues, their demand for absolute loyalty from their members is a threat to the loyalty demanded by the Church from her members. The Catholic Church has always condemned their beliefs and activities and debarred Catholics from joining them, most notably Freemasonry, under the pain of ex-communication. The Catholic Church first prohibited Catholics from membership in Freemasonry and other secret societies in the bull, *In Eminenti*, issued by Pope Clement XII (1738). Even though the document directly refers to Freemasonry, it also applies to similar associations that had harmed the peace of the state and the well-being of souls. Pope Clement XII notes that these societies are bound by an oath of secrecy using the Sacred Scriptures and are determined to maintain an inviolable silence about their joint activities. According to him, were they not doing evil, they would not have hated the light so much. Therefore, joining them is tantamount to being smeared with the evil and dishonour they are known for. Several subsequent popes reaffirmed this condemnation, judging them as unfit for the salvation of souls.

The Code of Canon Law (1917, para. 2335) automatically excommunicated Catholics who enrolled in Freemasonry and similar associations. Even though the current Code of Canon Law (1983, par. 1374) does not specifically single out Freemasonry as the preceding code did, it, however, states that "A person who joins an association which

plots against the Church is to be punished with a just penalty; one who promotes or takes office in such an association is to be punished with an interdict.” An interdict in the Catholic Church means prohibiting someone from participating in certain liturgical rites of the Church. What is clear is that the penalty is not explicitly spelt out in the canon. It only requires that it be just. What makes for a just penalty depends on the circumstances of each case. The uncertainty surrounding the current code led the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (1983) to issue a declaration the same year the code was promulgated, specifically banning Catholics from membership in Freemasonry. To make clear the reason behind the declaration, it began with these words, “It has been asked whether there has been any change in the Church's decision in regard to Masonic associations since the new Code of Canon Law does not mention them expressly, unlike the previous Code” (para. 1). In response to this, the document states categorically: “Therefore the Church's negative judgment in regard to Masonic association remains unchanged since their principles have always been considered irreconcilable with the doctrine of the Church and therefore membership in them remains forbidden” (para 3). For the Catholic faithful who enrol in them, it says they “are in a state of grave sin and may not receive Holy Communion” (para. 3). It also points out that local bishops do not have the power to reconsider this condemnation no matter any specific situation regarding masonic associations within their jurisdiction (para. 4).

Unlike the secret societies, the Orders of the Knights of the Church have documented missions, goals, and structures accessible to the public. Even though they have a selection process for membership, they are open to Catholics who have shown some demonstrable stability in their faith commitment. They also operate within established ecclesiastical and ethical frameworks, which contradict the goals of secret societies. These will be examined below with specific reference to the Order of the Knights of St. Mulumba.

Spirituality of the Order of the Knights of St. Mulumba

It is essential to begin this section with a brief examination of the nature of spirituality in general, then Christian and Catholic spirituality, before delving into the spirituality of the Order of the Knights of St. Mulumba. This helps to situate the spirituality of the Order properly where it belongs. A sound spirituality of the Order must be understood within the context of Catholic spirituality, the fundamental element of which is communion with God. In the words of St. Augustine (Confessions, Bk. 4, Ch. 2), “God is the source of all good, and to be separated from Him is the greatest evil.” This means our relationship with God is the source of our identity, purpose and strength. For a Catholic, it is the starting point of all other aspects of Catholic spirituality, like the sacraments, scripture, morality and devotion to the saints. Otherwise, all these would be empty practices.

What is Spirituality?

In today's usage, the term spirituality has various meanings for different people. Traditionally, spirituality was closely related to religion and religious practices. In the past, once spirituality was mentioned, religion came to the fore. Nevertheless, with the influence of secularism in the West, especially since the end of the Second World War in 1945, there has been an attempt to separate the spiritual from the religious. Sheldrake's (2012) study shows the development of modern spirituality and how the shift from its

traditional association with religion occurred, including the influence of Romanticism, psychology, and Eastern religion. With this shift, spirituality became more linked with individual, subjective experiences. Rather than God, the self assumed the centre of many people's lives. Spirituality came to denote the recovery of one's true self through individual practices, like meditation, esotericism, free expression of self, etc. That is why someone can describe himself or herself as spiritual but not religious.

The rise of the New Age movement in the 1970s and 1980s in the West also significantly contributed to this. The New Age movement believes in personal spiritual growth, esotericism and acquiring mystical knowledge. It is known for its eclectic approach to spirituality. Thus, it appropriates many traditions from the East and the West, including tarot telling, yoga, astrology, meditation, mediumship, etc., to reach perfect fulfilment and refinement of the person (Melton, Clark & Kelly 1990). Even though the New Age movement has waned in the West, the split between spirituality and religion has not been healed.

In Africa, the situation is different. Religion permeates every facet of the life of the people. That is why Mbiti claims that religion for Africans is an ontological phenomenon, meaning that it has to do with the fundamental question of being and existence (Mbiti, 1999, p. 15). Relating this to the relationship between religion and spirituality, one can say that the two are still very much tied together in Africa. It sounds strange for one to be identified as spiritual without being connected to one form of religion or another, be it the African Traditional Religion, Christianity, Judaism or Islam. The African sees spirituality as an attempt to connect or reconnect with the spiritual forces operative within his or her environment to achieve a profound spiritual balance between himself or herself and these forces. It is a spirituality based on the belief that all created realities are connected to the creator-spirit, God, making people struggle to reunite with him (Adofo, 2016).

The African understanding of spirituality is very close to what Waaijman (2022) describes as the traditional meaning of spirituality, which he says involves reconnecting to what could be termed the original form humans had at the point of creation. This process entails the re-formation of the person to recover what Waaijman calls “the image of God,” which is man's original shape. This reformation, Waaijman asserts, is adapted to a specific mould representing this original shape as understood by different religious traditions. For Judaism, this mould is the Torah; for Christians, it is Christ; for Buddhism, Buddha; and Islam, Muhammad. In other words, it means reconnecting to the most sacred reality in these different religions and allowing that reality to shape one's life to recover what this life initially was and what it is intended to become by its creator. Synder and Lopez (2007) generally define spirituality as the pursuit of life's ultimate or sacred meaning. This pursuit often involves exploring one's connection to something greater than oneself, whether it be a higher power, nature, or a set of values, and provides a sense of belonging, peace and fulfilment.

Christian Spirituality

Given the above, Christian spirituality would mean modelling our lives after Jesus Christ, who is not just a figure but the perfect image of the invisible God and the firstborn of all creation (Col 1:15). He offers meaning to the lives of Christians. Therefore,

Christian spirituality without Jesus Christ as its source, force, and end is not a Christian spirituality but something else. Catholic Identity (2020) identifies three essential characteristics of Christian spirituality:

(a) Christian spirituality is **sacramental**. This means that God has a hidden presence in all created reality. This calls for respect for all created reality and channelling them towards attaining the creator's plan for them.

(b) Christian spirituality is **relational**. It is not confined to the self but realised in our relationship with our brothers and sisters, neighbours, and the world around us. It is community-based and finds its fulfilment within a community – the Church.

(c) It is **transformational**. It is a spirituality that surrenders to the workings of the Holy Spirit who changes us, offering hope to the despaired, faith to the doubtful soul, peace to the troubled, joy to the grieving and united humanity. These characteristics are critical in the myriad forms of Christian spirituality spanning epochs and traditions.

Catholic Spirituality

Dwyer (2019) understands Catholic spirituality as the concrete way the Catholic faith and teachings abide in an individual believer, influencing his or her practical and daily life. According to him, for the faith to be genuine, it must be **transformational**. It must be able to alter an individual's sense of his or her identity and mission, thus affecting his or her relationship with the people and the world around him or her. Dwyer sees authentic Catholic spirituality as both **individual** and **corporate**. These are two sides of the same coin because the relationship with Jesus Christ automatically entails a relationship with one's fellow human beings, with the Body of Christ, the Church, part of which we are. Therefore, any privatised spirituality is not genuine. In other words, any Catholic spirituality expressed or lived without authorisation from the Church is not genuine and must be shunned.

Catholic spirituality is **ecclesial** because it is supremely realised within the context of the worshipping community, the Church, nurtured by the same body of Christ with Jesus Christ as the head. It entails obedience to the guidance of the Holy Spirit through the Church under the guidance of the clergy, to whom Jesus handed over the Church before he left the world to His Father. So, any spirituality by the Catholic faithful not sanctioned by the Church raises questions of authenticity. Any form of spirituality adopted by the Catholic faithful must receive the stamp of authenticity from the hierarchy, which received the divine mandate from Jesus to loose and bind (cf. Mtt 18:18-20).

The second point Dwyer brings out is the **incarnational** character of Catholic spirituality. Any genuine Catholic spirituality must not be restricted to the purely spiritual but must also be expressed in the day-to-day lives of Christians, just as Jesus Christ, who is God, found a dwelling among us in the flesh. There must be a correspondence between faith and life, love of God and love of neighbour (Mk 12:30-31), the spiritual and the physical.

Catholic spirituality should, therefore, take seriously Jesus' charge that we **love our neighbour**. Charity is central to any Catholic spirituality. We must be involved in the practical daily lives of others, especially when they are in need, assist them, and offer them hope. Charity is one of the theological virtues; others are faith and hope. They are so called because of three primary reasons, as put forward by St. Thomas Aquinas: "first

because their object is God since they direct us aright to God: secondly, because they are infused in us by God alone: thirdly, because these virtues are not made known to us save by Divine revelation, contained in Holy writ” (Summa Theologica, q. 62, art. 1). St. Paul ranks charity as the highest of all virtues, and declares that Christian piety and spiritual gifts are nothing without it (1 Cor. 13:1-13).

Another characteristic of Catholic spirituality is that it is **biblical**. The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council called for a return to the Sacred Scripture and the Tradition for sound theological reflection. The same is true of Catholic spirituality. Aumann (1985, p. 3) points out, “the closer any spirituality is to the Bible, the more authentic it is.” Amidst the diversity traditionally part of Catholic spirituality, Aumann asserts that “the Sacred Scripture ever remains the unifying factor and the ultimate standard” (p.3).

Furthermore, Catholic spirituality is **Christocentric**. Auman (1985) argues that Christ is the ultimate model of spirituality, and, for a Catholic, living a spiritual life involves participating in his divine nature through the Holy Spirit. This means sharing the same life that Jesus lived as God and man. Aumann notes that any attempt to create a more modern or updated theology is misguided, as Christ's teachings are timeless. To live a Catholic spiritual life is to experience Christ's presence in the present as a pilgrim on a journey and to allow his teachings to guide our actions in all aspects of our lives.

Catholic spirituality is **eschatological**. It is a spirituality that looks forward to the last things and the coming of Jesus on the last day. The last things include death, judgment, heaven (purgatory), and hell (Catholic Church, 1994a, nos. 1001, 1020-1050). The Church believes that on the last day, Christ will return for the final judgment of the living and the dead. This second coming is called the Parousia. At his coming, there will be the resurrection of the dead; the righteous will live forever with him (Rom 8:11). This belief influences Catholic spirituality and liturgical practices. It strengthens the belief in the communion of the saints in Christ and popular devotions, like praying for the dead and devotion to the saints.

Further, genuine Catholic spirituality is **liturgical**. The Eucharist, the centre and heart of Catholic liturgical worship, is the source and summit of Christian life (Vatican Council II, 1964a no. 11). So, any Catholic spirituality not rooted in it loses its meaning. Our spirituality must proceed from and lead back to the liturgy. Any liturgical spirituality is simultaneously a **paschal** spirituality because it draws its strength from the mystery of the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, the mystery of our salvation that is re-enacted and celebrated in the liturgy.

Spirituality of the Order of the Knights of St. Mulumba

When one talks about the spirituality of the Order of the Knights of St. Mulumba, one is not talking about anything other than the spirituality of the Catholic Church, as lived explicitly by the members of the Order. It is a spirituality that originates and derives its sustenance from the spirituality of the Catholic Church. The Constitution of the Order (2020, part. 1, art. 4.1 clearly states that “The Order is one and indivisible and is founded upon the principles of Catholic action as enshrined in Canon 2099 [sic] of the Canon Law” (can. 299 instead). Article 4.2 states, “The order is submissive to the ecclesiastical authority in consonance with Canon 2098 [sic] of the Canon Law” (can. 298 instead).

This already tells anyone that the first element of the Order's spirituality lies in its total obedience and submission to the guidance of the Church's magisterium, whose possession and exercise of the authority derive from her obedience to the mandate given to her by Jesus Christ. This immediately marks it out from secret societies that work at cross purposes with the Church.

The Code of Canon Law (1983, para. 299) states, “The Christian faithful are free, by means of a private agreement made among themselves, to establish an association to attain the aims mentioned in Can. 298 & 1, with due regard to the prescription of the can. 301 § 1.” The aims mentioned in can. 298 § 1, which can. 299 refers to, include the following: the perfection of life, public worship, and apostolic work, which includes evangelisation, piety or charity, and animating the temporal order with the Christian spirit. Can. 301 § 1 talks about the exclusive right of competent ecclesiastical authority “to erect associations of the Christian faithful which set out to teach Christian doctrine in the name of the Church or to promote public worship or which aim at other ends whose purpose by nature is reserved to the same ecclesiastical authority.”

All these show the intention of the founder and the members of the Order to maintain a wholly and entirely ecclesial and ecclesiastical spirituality. It is ecclesial because it is a communal affair realised within the context of the community of the faithful. It is not an isolated form of spirituality that works independently of the Church's rich spiritual treasures and long-established tradition. It is ecclesiastical because it needs the endorsement of competent Church authority to function effectively.

The ecclesial and ecclesiastical nature of the Order of the Knights of St. Mulumba is a strong backbone in the Order's effort to realise its objectives. It is only when the Order is firmly anchored in the Body of Christ, which is the Church, that it can be appropriately directed, guided, and guarded to avoid the allurements of the secret cults and be better positioned to be a light to their counterpart wandering and groping in the darkness of sin and error.

Some elements of the spirituality of the Order could be gleaned and developed from her mission as outlined in the Order's website (KSM Nigeria, Our Mission). It includes the following.

(a) Complete Trust in God: One of KSM Nigeria's missions is trusting God always instead of human beings or material possessions. Even though it appears fifth on the list, I consider it the most basic and significant. Trusting God in all things involves total surrender to God and complete obedience of faith. This full trust in God made Abraham's faith very firm in his irresistible obedience to God's words, even when they appeared strange, like when God called him out of his country and people to a land he knew next to nothing about (Gen 12:1-9), and when he asked him to sacrifice his only son, Isaac (Gen 22:1-19). Even in such circumstances, maintaining one's relationship with God entails continuous communication and communion with God at prayer, through Jesus Christ, in the Holy Spirit.

A knight who does not lead a life of prayer is in danger of losing the faith, especially in moments of temptation. To trust in God entails being vanguards of prayer in their

families, places of work, offices, and political, cultural, or social associations in which they are involved. It involves emulating the wonderful and faithful life of the patron saint of the Order, St. Mulumba, who defied bodily harm and physical pain and opted to stand firm in moments of torture. In the KSM Nigeria Anthem, the knights pledge to emulate his faith and courage, who, even after his four limbs were chopped off, did not succumb to Satan's fury but lingered on from Thursday to Sunday before finally surrendering to death.

(b) Working for a Just Society: Justice is one of the cardinal virtues, along with prudence, fortitude, and temperance. It is sometimes seen as the most important of the cardinal virtues. They are called cardinal virtues because they are the hinge (*cardo*, in Latin) on which other virtues turn (Catholic Church, 1994a, no. 1805). As a moral virtue, justice perfects the will and inclines it to render to each what is due to him or her. To live a spiritual life imbued with justice means respecting the rights of God and neighbour. As the KSM mission puts it, it is a virtue that members should practice at all times and in all places for the good of humanity.

(c) Attending to the Needs of the Less Privileged: This is related to the virtue of justice discussed above. The less privileged, as contained in the KSM mission, includes the poor, the destitute, the disadvantaged, and the oppressed. This touches the heart of the Church's social teaching. Jesus' entire life on earth was spent fighting for the marginalised and outcast, which earned Him the appellation “friend of tax collectors and sinners” (cf. Mt 9:11).

KSM lists the following charitable works as part of the Order's commitment: “visit to hospitals, the needy, prisons, support to religious houses, donations to orphans, disabled and old people's homes... convents, monasteries and development of parishes” (KSM Nigeria, Charity). The Order indicates it is also involved in insurance and investment programmes and offers scholarships and Church loans. It is part of what helps for spiritual growth. St. John exhorts Christians to show their love for God through love for their neighbour. According to him, “If a man says, I love God and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?” (1 John 19-20).

(d) Promoting Order and Discipline in Society: Nigeria is often described as a lawless society. Abubakar (2022) refers to it as “a country where lawlessness seems to be the only 'operating law.'” The knights are, therefore, summoned to swim against this ugly current and help instil order and discipline in society by their way of life.

(e) Being Catholic in Word and Deed: Included in the KSM mission is their desire to live and defend the Catholic faith. What does it mean to live a life that is Catholic? It means living according to the *depositum fidei* (deposit of faith) handed over by Christ to the Apostles and from them to their successors down to our time. KSM spirituality upholds this in their day-to-day life with others, in word and deed. Their commitment to this is reflected in their anthem that ends with the following, “May we evangelise more by deeds than mere words. Amen.” It is a call to become active evangelizers working to spread the kingdom of God on earth and win souls for God. Ekandem (1993) affirms the immense contributions that their services have made to the growth of the Catholic

Church in Nigeria since their foundation. He also expresses his satisfaction with their ability to always search for what they can do for the Church, their brave and courageous defence of the faith, and their generous support of the Church.

(f) Commitment to Ecumenism: KSM Nigeria's spirituality is open to promoting unity among Christians, which the Vatican Council II (1964b, no. 1) states is one of its principal tasks and a sign of the action of the Holy Spirit. Ecumenism helps to bind together the hearts and minds of Christians to realise the prayer of Jesus that we, Christians, become one as He and the Father are (Jn 17:21). Just as the knights make efforts to promote fraternity among members, they also spread out hands of fellowship to other Catholic men and women and non-Catholics, aware that Christians must be bearers and promoters of love among themselves to become faithful witnesses. However, there should be some caution in carrying out this aspect of the Church's action to avoid falling into what Kasper (2004, para. 2) terms “dogmatic relativism, indifferentism and pure pragmatism,” which attack the truth of the faith, which the council says subsists in the Catholic Church, even though its elements could be seen outside her visible boundaries.

Conclusion: The Unyielding Light of Catholic Knighthood

The Order of Knights of St. Mulumba Nigeria stands as a beacon of Catholic faith in a world increasingly shrouded by secrecy and moral ambiguity. Unlike their clandestine counterparts, the secret societies, the knights operate transparently, their goals and activities readily available for public scrutiny. Their foundation rests upon the bedrock of Catholic doctrine, with complete obedience to Church authority ensuring their path remains illuminated by the light of Christ. That is why they enjoy the full support of ecclesiastical authorities. At the same time, the Church continues to reiterate its ban on secret societies because their mission and activities are against the ideals of the Christian faith and the principles of the Church.

The spiritual core of the Order pulsates with a vibrant energy. It compels knights to cultivate a life of unwavering trust in God, a cornerstone for weathering any storm of temptation. It fuels their untiring commitment to justice, a virtue that propels them to champion the rights of the marginalised and fight for a more equitable society. This same dedication to justice extends to the less privileged, for the knights understand that true spirituality necessitates a compassionate heart that reaches out to alleviate the suffering of those in need.

KSM does not shy away from the challenges of the modern world. They strive to be exemplars of order and discipline in our lawless society. They recognise the power of deeds over mere words, and their commitment to living a demonstrably Catholic life is a potent force for attracting others to the faith. Their ecumenical spirit fosters unity amongst Christians, a vital step towards realising Christ's fervent prayer for the oneness of his flock.

In sum, KSM offers a compelling alternative to the shadowy world of secret societies. Their unwavering adherence to Catholic principles, dedication to social justice, and commitment to spreading the Gospel through word and deed make them a force for good in a world desperately in need of Christ's light. By remaining firmly rooted in the fertile soil of Catholic tradition, the Order ensures its continued flourishing, a testament to the

enduring power of faith and the transformative strength of Christian fellowship.

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