Almighty and Eternal God, we worship Thee today with profound faith and confidence as the Sovereign Lord and Ruler of the universe.

We invoke Thy blessing upon this our City as it enters upon a new epoch of its historic administration under a new Charter devised to keep pace with growth and progress for the welfare and happiness of all who come to find here comfort and security in their homes, the advantages of economic opportunity, the blessings of religious and cultural inspiration and the joys of a wholesome social atmosphere. May Thy blessing, O Lord, bring about the full realization of these laudable aims of this new interpretation of responsibility in government.

With complete faith in Thy supreme goodness and providence, we invoke Thy blessing upon His Honor, the Mayor, and the worthy members of his Council as they enter upon a new period of executive responsibility. Endow them with wisdom, knowledge and understanding for the solution of the complicated problems that will confront them. Give them the fortitude that will enable them to promote objectively and courageously the welfare of our City in the spirit of righteousness and justice. Under Thy divine guidance may they create and foster in our City an abiding atmosphere of moral and social rectitude that will be reflected in the dignity of our homes.
and the purity of our lives. Under Thy blessing may our City's administration reflect ever more abundantly the peace and the joy that are the fruits of the Christian way of life and the sanctions of our American ideals.

These blessings we ask of Thee, O Sovereign Ruler of men, through the merits of Christ Jesus, Divine Savior and Redeemer of all men. Amen.
"RELIGION PURE AND UNDEFILED BEFORE GOD THE FATHER IS THIS: TO CARE FOR ORPHANS AND WIDOWS IN THEIR TRIBULATION, AND TO KEEP ONESELF UNSPOTTED FROM THIS WORLD."

(JAMES 1, 27)

The annual convention of your organization is an event, the importance of which cannot be overestimated. In your deliberations you will undoubtedly appraise the value of your achievements during the year that is past, the extent to which you have carried out with fidelity and merit your commitments and lived up to your ideals. Equally important will it be to examine the reasons that might have been responsible for any failures or shortcomings that may be revealed in the record. These considerations will form the basis for new planning, new deliberations, new efforts to invigorate the life of your worthy organization and make it an ever more effective and edifying instrument of Catholic life and action.

The Church looks upon the Knights of Columbus as a foremost organization of staunch and loyal Catholic men, who pledge themselves to exemplify the highest principles and ideals of the Catholic layman. Against a background of
an intelligent knowledge of his Catholic faith, the Knight of Columbus should stand out prominently for the integrity of his character and for an edifying devotion to his responsibilities towards God, towards the Church, towards his family and society and towards his country. At all times and under all circumstances should he give evidence of that loyalty which is the characteristic of true knighthood, combined with a spirit of sacrifice that knows no bounds and reckons no cost. Such was the spirit that characterized the knights of the Middle Ages, who graced the courts of kings, distinguished themselves by valor on the battlefield and staked their lives for the reconquest of the Holy Land. No less devoted was their solicitude for the dignity and integrity of the home, the honor of womanhood and the protection of widows and orphans.

Notable is the fact that knighthood derived its inspiration from the Catholic faith, the faith that teaches the superiority of spiritual over material values, the faith that teaches the excellence of virtue and holiness, the faith that reechoes the challenging question of the Divine Master: "What will a man give in exchange for his soul?" - the faith that calls for action prompted by love: "By this will all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another;" (John 13, 35) the faith that directs its vision to Calvary, where the dying Savior exemplified the supreme ideal of true knighthood in the sacrifice of His life for all men: "Greater love than this no one has, that one lay down his life for his friends." (John 15, 13)
St. James in the Epistle read in today's Mass sets a twofold pattern for religious observance that may well serve as an inspiration not only for the ordinary Christian but also to the aspirant to genuine knighthood. "Religion pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: To care for orphans and widows in their tribulation, and to keep oneself unspotted from this world."

"To keep oneself unspotted from this world" - how perfectly appropriate is the admonition in this our age, when worldliness has become so great a menace to the spirit of Christ and Godliness! Never have pleasures, riches and honors, which are the symbols of worldliness, been cast about with greater profusion to make a mockery of Christ's Beatitudes: "Blessed are the poor in spirit - Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for justice - Blessed are the pure of heart" - Thus is the soil prepared for the seeds of unbelief, irreligion and immorality. Thus are faith in God, reverence for divine law, love of piety and the hope of immortality choked in the minds and hearts of men. Thus are undermined the integrity of human character and that sturdiness of virtue which are the fruits and armaments of the Christian way of life.

The reactions of this spirit of worldliness are evident in the demoralization of home and family life, where today we have so much reason to deplore marital infidelity and
inconstancy, the shirk' of parental responsibility and the breakdown of parental authority to the disedification and demoralization of children and adolescent youth. No wonder that divorce courts are glutted with cases, that twenty-five percent of marriages in our country end in disaster and dissolution and that every community is dotted with broken homes!

Insidious are the means that the promoters of worldliness use to spread their evil spirit, but none are more damaging than the books and magazines that glorify crime and sensuality for the so-called entertainment of children and youth. We are told that weekly ninety million copies of such booklets for the young are placed in circulation openly and clandestinely throughout the country, booklets that describe and depict crime and sex experiences in lurid words and shocking realism. Thus are decency and morality corrupted at the very roots of our modern social structure, in the minds and hearts of the rising generation. What wonder then that teen age problems and juvenile crime are rampant on every side and are constituting a menace to almost every home!

This is why it is opportune to heed the warning of St. James: "To keep oneself unspotted from this world". Yes, and to labor zealously to keep others unspotted - our homes, our families, our children, society at large - by vigilance and energetic action against the spirit of worldliness.
Only a week ago, in addressing a Catholic congress in Switzerland, our valiant Holy Father, Pope Pius XII, faithful watchman on the ramparts of the Church, exhorted us to revive the sturdiness of faith, and the courage of the martyrs of old in defense of Christian principles and the Catholic way of life against modern atheism, paganism and secularism. Let that serve as an exhortation to you, my dear Knights of Columbus, as during your convention you formulate your program of Catholic action for the coming year. Your fellow Catholics look to you for inspiration and guidance, your fellow citizens, Catholic and non-Catholic, expect you to demonstrate in your personal characters and conduct the traditional ideals of Christian knighthood. As an organization you enjoy great prestige and influence, which in conscience you are bound to capitalize for the benefit of religion, the extension of the kingdom of Christ, the good of society and the stability of our country. Let your convention resolutions set new proofs of your sincerity "to be doers of the Word and not hearers only".

On the foundation of a truly Christian way of life the works of charity, symbolized by caring for orphans and widows in their tribulation, will blossom forth and flourish almost spontaneously. Works of charity in every form have always been almost the natural outgrowth and fruit of genuine Christian faith. Your organization has exemplified this in many ways,
but even here we must be on guard lest worldliness and purely materialistic motives taint and depress the value and merit of our charity. In all and through all and over all must be evident the spirit of Christ expressed in His dramatic picture of the last judgment: "As long as you did it for one of these, the least of my brethren, you did it for me."

May God then bless your deliberations in these days. May His spirit animate you to envision your Christian knighthood in the spirit of loyalty to your Divine King and in imitation of His beautiful character and life and may you ever become more worthy expressions of personal integrity and honor and may your deeds of charity performed individually and as a noble organization shine forth as beacon lights to your fellowmen.