



Chantal Chatter

THE NEWSLETTER OF ST. FRANCES DE CHANTAL

COUNCIL #6526

"VIVAT JESUS, LIVE JESUS"



After a yearlong hiatus, welcome to the fourth issue of the St. Frances de Chantal Knights of Columbus "Chantal Chatter" Newsletter. If you are a visitor or if you only come to Mass on weekends, you may not realize how much activity takes place in our parish. This newsletter highlights many of the events and activities that have taken place over the last year.

The majestic oak tree that stands in front of the Parish Center was planted 70 years ago in front of what was then the Convent of the Sisters of St. Joseph. The oak may be seen as a symbol of the Knights of Columbus Council. Deeply rooted in prayer and our Catholic faith, the Knights are the strong right hand of the parish, and like the mighty oak, stands protectively over the Holy Family.

The motto of our patron St. Jane Frances de Chantal, "Vive Jesu," that is, to "Live as Jesus", reminds us to see Jesus in each one of us. This is our hope in all that we do here in our parish and community.

— The Editor

Message From the Grand Knight

As the 2026 Columbian Year comes to an end, so does my third and final term as Grand Knight of Council #6526. It has been an incredible journey and honor leading this Council. We have so much to be proud of and I am grateful for all of the support I have received from my officers, brother Knights, Fr. Seth, parish clergy and staff, and parishioners.

As I look back, I never imagined all that we would accomplish in such a short time. Each year was different, but had its own identity, beginning with celebration followed by transformation and concluding with succession.



Celebration: As the new Grand Knight, I had the privilege of leading the celebration of 50 years as a council, a true honor to recognize all brother Knights past and present. It was a wonderful celebration enhanced by sharing it with the Columbiettes who celebrated their 10th anniversary. We have worked hard to help those in need with the annual Food Drives, Coat Drives, and Blood Drives, and introduced two new fundraising events: Radio Bingo and the Summer Saturday Food Truck Festival. These were more than fundraisers as they helped foster a greater sense of parish community. We finished the year by earning national recognition with the Columbian Award and Star Council. Despite the strong finish, we had strong winds to face as we began the process of selling our council hall.

Transformation: Now in my second term and feeling more comfortable in the role of Grand Knight, the pending sale of our building brought new challenges, such as finding a buyer and a new home, keeping up morale, and attracting new members. Fortunately, no doubt with some divine intervention, we successfully met each challenge: the sale went through smoothly, we moved back to the parish campus, morale improved through our monthly Business/Socials, we met our membership goals, and once again we earned the Columbian Award and Star Council.

Succession: This last year was focused on ensuring a smooth transition for the next Grand Knight, Doug Celiberti. Now comfortably settled into our new home in the parish school, we demonstrated why we are considered the strong right arm of the church by running a number of church events and providing manpower for repairs and maintenance when called upon. We have also increased our presence in the parish by welcoming a record 22 new members this year, twice our quota and earning the Columbian Award and Star Council for the third year in a row.

There have been so many good memories and great accomplishments, especially those that involved helping those in need and who are less fortunate. We are also proud to say that we welcomed 48 new members into the Council over the last three years.

What I will cherish most is the friendship and brotherhood I have with my brothers; as a Knight of Columbus, one is never alone. Each one of us stands side by side, in our parish, which strengthens marriages, encourages our members to embrace our vocation, and leads to heroic generosity and self-sacrifice. We offer meaning and mission to Catholic men who are looking for nothing less. We are Knights!

Best of luck to our next incoming Grand Knight and his slate of officers.

Vivat Jesus!

John Tomeo

Grand Knight



Chaplain's Message: In Gratitude

There is something known as a "**Call within a Call**." An illustration of it can be found in John's gospel, Chapter 1:29-34, which we read recently (2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A). It is about John the Baptist, who realized that he was not only called to preach a **baptism of repentance** but also to **identify the Messiah**. That is an example of a "**call within a call**."

I came to the Church of Saint Frances de Chantal by the appointment of Bishop Barres, who also followed up by personally installing me as the pastor. That made me the shepherd of the flock of God in the parish jurisdiction. Little did I know that, in addition to the general pastorship, I would one day be called to provide spiritual leadership to a particular group within the church family. It is a **call within a call** for me, thanks to the Knights of Columbus.

I am grateful to you, **Knights of Columbus Council # 6526, St. Frances de Chantal, Wantagh**, for asking me to be your chaplain. I appreciate the confidence you have in me, and I will do my best to journey with you as fellow disciples of Christ. I had been a **Knight of Marshall** in Ghana since 1993. It was also at the invitation of the Marshallan fraternity, who needed a chaplain. Then, when I came to Long Island officially as an Associate Pastor of the Church of Saint Joseph, Babylon (2006), I joined the Knights of Columbus – Saint Joseph the Worker Council # 14771. When I assumed the pastorship here in 2019, I transferred to Council # 6526, through the instrumentality of the then Grand Knight, Worthy Brother George Jaeger, PGK.

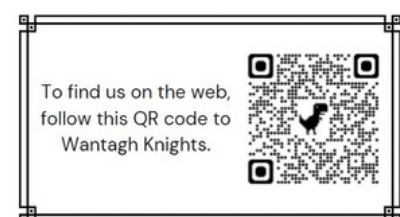
Having been a Knight for many years, I know what they are capable of – **militancy in the Church through works of charity and general support**. Here in Wantagh, most of the Knights, together with their women counterparts, the Columbiettes, support the functioning of the parish in the various ministries – as ushers, lectors, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, choristers, ministers of consolation and sacristans. In the department of Faith Formation, the biggest in the parish, many Knights and Columbiettes serve as catechists and hall monitors. The Knights and Columbiettes have always been at the forefront during the Advent-Christmas seasons with the assembling and dismantling of the manger scenes, both indoors and outdoors. Some of the members join the decoration team to put up all the decorations. The knights also patched potholes in the school parking lot to prevent accidents and their costly consequences. Last year, when we decided to return to giving communion under both kinds (Body and Blood of Christ), the Council provided the wine that was needed, with a pledge to replenish the supply. Additionally, the Council has also given cash donations to support the maintenance of our aging facilities and plants. **This is a Council of Knights that actively lives its call to Christian Discipleship.**

With all that I have experienced so far, I am confident that I have a powerful and dedicated group of Catholic men and women ever ready to support not only my ministry as pastor but also our collective parish pastoral endeavors as a community of faith and charity.

I pray God's blessings upon my brother knights and our sisters, the Columbiettes.

Let us all continue to walk in the Light of Christ.

Fr. Seth
Pastor and Chaplain



NYS Service Programs for Faith

Knights Spreading Hope through "Jesus ♥ You" Figures
by Fred Elbelein



On September 11, 2025, my wife and I went for a walk on the Sunken Meadow boardwalk. I sat on a bench overlooking the water. It was an extremely peaceful day. I took two of the "Jesus Loves You" figurines and placed them on the rail in front of me (photo below). My wife came back, and we continued our walk.

A few minutes later we decided to turn back and head home. As we were walking, I notice an elderly couple sitting on the bench that I had been sitting on a short time before (right photo). Each of them was holding one of the little figures and I felt the need to speak to them. I told them I was with the Knights of Columbus of Wantagh and that I had left the figures on the railing. Immediately they offered them back to me but I explained that the Knights were placing the figures in public places for people to find in the hope that someone might need a pick me up.

The woman started to cry and told me that I had no idea how much they needed this. She told me they come to the boardwalk every day and never sit down. Today they felt the urge to sit and rest for a minute and immediately noticed the figures. They were sure that was why they had felt the need to rest. She thanked me for making their day as gave me a hug. **REMEMBER, JESUS LOVES YOU!**



The following photos are a sampling of Council activities over the past year.



For six weeks last June and July, **Food Trucks** came to the School Parking lot. Tables and chairs along the side provided a fun summer dining experience for parishioners to each Saturday evening after 5 pm Mass.



St. Frances Council can be counted on to be marching down Wantagh Avenue for the Fourth of July Parade as well as the annual St. Patrick's Day Parade..

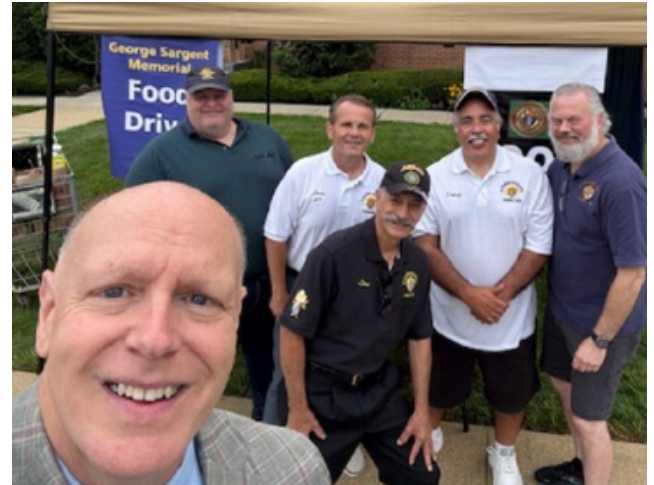
Left-Right-Center Night!

Over one hundred Knights, their spouses, and parishioners attended the most recent "Left-Right-Center Night" in the Smulski Room in September. The photos by Tom McClosky below tell the rest of the story.



Another Successful Food Drive for Parish Outreach

In August, the knights held a weekend **Food Drive** for Parish Outreach, collecting 14 shopping carts of food and \$3600 in gift cards for Ele Melendez's Parish Social Ministry Office to distribute to local families in need. Pictured at right are the usual suspects, John Casella, Rich, John Tomeo, Lou Rubino, Doug Celiberti and Russell Merendino on the church lawn collecting food after Masses.



The knights helped make the October **Parish Blood Drive** a success, with 72 pints collected. Once again, Russell Merendino spearheaded this important community effort.

Welcome New Members!

In August we held the Exemplification for new members in the St. Frances de Chantal School Smulski Room. The ceremony was led by Nassau Conference Chairman Danny Ramos, PGK and assisted by District Deputy Kevin Hoffman, PGK, PFN, Advocate Mike Alliksen, PGK, and GK John Tomeo.

St. Frances de Chantal Council is proud to welcome the following new members to Council #6526. We look forward to seeing you at our events and sharing in the mission to serve our Church and Community:

- | | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| • Paul Allegra | • Peter Garske | • Angelo Migliaro |
| • Alfred Allongo | • Michael Gentile | • Peter Morabito |
| • Christopher Allongo | • Al Huemmer | • Gary Parascondola, Jr. |
| • John Butler | • Alan Leavy | • Andy Parton |
| • Michael Colaiani, Jr. | • Robert Manel | • Michael Pastore |
| • Gary Dana | • Sean McGrath | • Gerard Roche |
| • Dan Dean | • Shane McQuillan | • Paul Silvestri, Sr. |
| | | • William Ward |



300 Club Update 27th Round – Report No. 1

Dear 300 Club Members,

We hope everyone had a great summer making memories with family and friends. Hard to believe we are into September already and only a matter of time before things get busy heading into the holiday season. Please read below for an update on our guiding principles: **Charity, Community and Chance**.

Charity– We recently donated \$300 to a Go Fund Me page for Stephanie Dietz, a beloved Wantagh school district volunteer who lost her battle with cancer at age 50, leaving behind a husband and two children. We will be making donations to the following charities this round: \$500 each to Life Center of Long Island, Mommas House, AMT Children of Hope Foundation, The Inn, John Thiessen's Children Foundation and United Veterans Beacon House. \$250 each will be donated to Tomorrow's Hope Foundation, The Catholic Faith Network, and Positive Community Connections.

Community– We want the 300 Club membership to know that collecting dues has been a struggle this round with over 70 members unpaid as of August 31 despite 2 reminder e-mails. Thankfully, we have reduced that number to less than 50 but that is still way too many at this late juncture in a round. The 300 Club Committee therefore has decided that going forward, anyone who is unpaid one month after the due date will lose their membership unless they notify us of an unforeseen issue delaying payment. We hope this doesn't offend anyone, but the current way is counterproductive and unfair to the members who pay on time.

NOTE: We have 5 numbers currently available: 73, 203, 216, 291, 345 at \$15 per as Round is 50% completed.

Chance– The raffle drawings for the first 3 months of the 27th Round are displayed below. Please feel free to reach out with any questions or know of someone in need. Thank you for your support.

John Tomeo

300 Club Chair

Prize	June Winners	July Winners	August Winners
\$100	#17 – Susan Hoffman	#235 – Peggy Schlesinger	#100 – Brenda Vogel
\$75	#302 – Rich Gander	#41 – Mike Alliksen	#185 – Maria Devlin
\$75	#211 – M Dunphy	#280 – Mary Devlin	#106 – Cookie Reisert
\$75	#50 – Galati Family	#22 – John Casella	#225– Christine Giardina
\$50	#93 – Roberta Roeber	#121 – Jess Natelson	#155– Richard Dawson
\$50	#117 – Tim Jaccard	#177 – Anne Kramercy	#233 – Ginny Lamonica
\$50	#285 – Kathy Treacy	#253 – Jeanne Burke	#328 – Maureen Fowler
\$50	#36 – Diane Coleman	#182 – Mike Rumel	#13 – Kathy Sargent
\$50	#186 – Carol Colvell	#297–Stephanie Filippazzo	#110 – Rosemary Raffaele

300 Club Update 28th Round – Report No. 2

We hope everyone had a blessed Easter and have been enjoying the Easter Season which concludes on May 24, Pentecost Sunday. It is truly a joyful season for the Parish, especially for those families who have children making their First Holy Communion. When we include Mother's Day, the Birthright Carnation Sales, the 300 Club Thank You Dinner/Fundraiser and Memorial Day, we have a special month to look forward to. Speaking of "special" please read below for an update on our guiding principles: **Charity, Community and Chance**.

Charity – We have one month to go in Round 28 and will be donating to our favorite charities once again. With membership down, however, we are going to start off slow and donate \$3,000, \$500 each to: The Inn, John Thiessen Children's Foundation, Mommas House, Life Center of LI, AMT Children of Hope Foundation, and United Veteran Beacon House. We will have more to do at the beginning of the next round as we assess the status of the membership which is explained below.

Community – We currently have ~30 open numbers so we will have to begin a fundraising campaign for Round 29 to get the membership count back up. This initiative will commence at the 300 Club Thank You Dinner/Fundraiser on May 16 in the St. Frances School Auditorium. If you are going to attend, please send me an email to 300clubchairman@gmail.com to reserve your place so we can plan accordingly.

Chance – Raffle winners for March and April are listed below: Please feel free to reach out with any questions or know of someone in need. Thank you for your support.

John Tomeo
300 Club Chair
300clubchairman@gmail.com
Mobile (516) 695-7230



300 Club Executive Committee

John Tomeo–Chairman, Bob Cabrera, PGK Tom Casey, Doug Celiberti, Lennie Labita–FS, PGK Russell Merendino, Joe Parmese, Peggy Schlesinger, Brenda Vogel

Knights and Columbiettes Memorial Mass for Deceased Members

In October, Fr. Seth celebrated the annual Memorial Mass for the deceased members of the Council, along with their spouses and family members. Although fewer than two dozen Knights, Columbiettes, and family members were present, it felt as though the church was full. Several Knights took turns reading the names of the hundreds of members who have passed away over the past fifty years.

As each name was spoken, one could imagine their faces, their vivid personalities, and the deep faith that animated those who came before us. One could picture the pews filled with the good and faithful Brother Knights and Sister Columbiettes who, over the years, volunteered thousands of hours in service to the Church—strengthening the parish and helping the Council raise funds for its many charitable works.

We ask God to help us follow their example and to walk faithfully in their footsteps.

The Heart Behind the Wantagh Inn

Michael Dunphy, the heart behind the Wantagh Inn, passed away in March at 84, leaving a lasting mark on the community he helped shape. Born in County Cork, Ireland, he came to New York in 1969 and, alongside his wife Geraldine, built something special in 1981 when they turned a simple butcher shop across from the Wantagh LIRR station into a place where friends gathered, stories were shared, and neighbors became family. Mike opened the Inn each month for his brother knights to meet and generously supported all of the Council's and the parish's fundraising efforts. His presence and warmth will not be forgotten. We pray for his family and remember his legacy.



Taken in part from State Senator Steve Rhoads Instagram account

In Memorium

Please remember those in our Columbian family who have died this past year.

- Elizabeth "Betty" Cappellino (Bob Gayer's sister)
- Charles J. Dean (Dan Dean's father)
- Michael Dunphy
- Luisa Filippazzo (Stephano Filippazzo's mother)
- Rosemary Giardina



- Alice Healy (Doug Bartolotta's mother-in-law)
- Aiden Hope
- Donna Portanova (John Portanova's wife)
- Ralph Sansone (Rob Treiland's father-in-law)
- Julia Sottnik (John Sottnik's mother)

Knights Build Storage Shed behind Parish Center

Many thanks to Russell Merendino, Pat Shanley, Charlie Buonocore, Tom Casey, Lennie Labita and Alex Switalski for constructing the 8x12 foot shed behind the Parish Center to store council supplies.



More Memories from Chantal Chatter



Knights greet enthusiastic crowds at Wantagh 2026 St. Patrick's Parade.



Knights and their families enjoy St. Patrick's Day Party.



Fr. Seth & Marisol cooking plantains in the school kitchen for "Pasta and the Pastor" dinner in June.



Joe Parmese and Bob Cabrera—Council "OGs"—hold court at the St. Patrick's Day Party.



NYS Senator Steve Rhodes, Gabby Guzman, Fr. Seth, GK Doug Celiberti, and Brendan Von Runnen. Gabby and Brendan lead the Parish Youth Group.



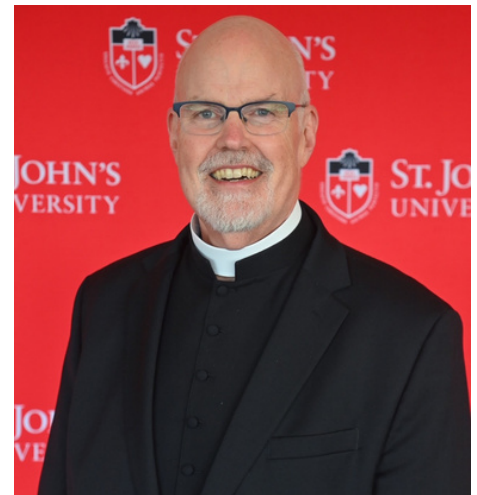
The Parish Youth Group performed the Passion Play on Good Friday in Church.



The Parish Youth Group organized the annual children's Easter Egg Hunt on the Church grounds on Palm Sunday.

A Look Back in Time

In 1979, Trinity High School Senior Pat Flanagan was installed as the Chief Squire for the St. Frances Council. Today Rev. Patrick S.L. Flanagan, C.M., Ph.D., serves as Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of Theology and Religious Studies at St. John's University in Queens, New York. A Vincentian priest and scholar originally from Wantagh, Long Island, he has dedicated his career to exploring the intersection of theology, ethics, and technology, seeking to apply the principles of Catholic Social Teaching to address contemporary moral challenges.



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