Continued from previous page

he moved to Brunswick and began attending St. Ambrose, he noticed a listing in a church bulletin and decided to check it out. He enjoys volunteering, charity work and meeting with "good, Catholic men."

"They're very dedicated," he said. "They're always willing to help and chip in when volunteers are needed."

As Grand Knight, Koly presides over meetings, reports to the state and Supreme Council, and manages the council's budget.

"Being an officer is a lot of hard work," he said. "It keeps me on my toes."

Bator is the local group's advocate, serving as its legal officer. He is enjoying a less busy schedule from his years serving in state offices. At 77 and a member since 1966, he has been a Knight for more than half of his life.

"It's been a great life," he said. "I've met so many good people around the community, around the state and even around the country just by being involved in the Knights of Columbus."

A coworker got Bator involved in the Knights of Columbus in Pennsylvania and he's stuck with the group for 48 years while raising five children, moving to Brunswick and commuting to Dayton when he was the manager of the Dayton International Airport. He is now retired, although he doesn't subscribe to the traditional connotation of the word.

"Retirement is another word for work without pay," he said. "You'll be busier than ever."

Hard work doesn't bother Bator, after spending some of his youth on a farm ("Everybody should grow up on a farm," he says), working 16-hour days managing a service station and operating heavy equipment, and serving in the Air Force before embarking on a career in electronics. He brought that work ethic into the Knights of Columbus, serving in several local offices in Brunswick before moving to the state level in 1981.

He held several Ohio offices, including warden, advocate, treasurer and secretary, before achieving the highest rank of State Deputy from 2003 to 2005. He was responsible for managing a budget between $1 million and $2 million, "and you don't make a penny doing it," he said. However, Bator believes he has gotten as much out of the organization as he's put in.

"I can't speak highly enough about [the Knights of Columbus]," he said. "The fraternity and religious aspects – serving mankind and the Lord – and the personal rewards far exceed the level of work, but it's good work."

Brunswick's Fourth-degree Knights

49

The Knights of Columbus Brunswick Council 4847 has almost 50 Knights of the highest fourth degree.

Members of the Knights of Columbus Brunswick Council participate in the dedication of the city's Veterans Memorial.
Photo courtesy of Steve Koly

Meeting Mother Teresa

Bator's involvement with the Knights of Columbus has allowed him to travel to conferences across the country and meet leaders of the Catholic church. The highlight of those experiences was getting to see Mother Teresa, he said.

Bator went to a conference in New York City in the early 1990s with Cardinal James Hickey, former bishop of the Cleveland Catholic Diocese. They went to opening Mass at St. Patrick Cathedral where the traffic and blocked streets suggested somebody important was there, according to Bator. Mother Teresa attended the Mass and went to the Knights of Columbus banquet afterwards.

About 3,000 people were at the banquet, with most of the Knights dressed up in white jackets, Bator said. Mother Teresa entered from the kitchen instead of the main entrance. A spotlight shined on her as she was introduced.

"I never saw a brighter white light than when that lady walked into that room," Bator said.

According to Bator, Mother Teresa, at less than five-feet tall and hunched over, checked out the spread and said, "Do you know how many people I could feed in Calcutta with how much you're spending here tonight?"

The Knights of Columbus countered by offering her a donation equal to what the organization spent, which Bator estimated was $150,000. The group also presented her with a gold medallion, which Bator said might have been worth about $100,000. She asked, "What will I get if I melt this down?" according to Bator. She then left the room, through the kitchen, and did not eat with the Knights.

"I never felt a stronger presence of Christ than when that lady walked into that room," Bator said. "That was the highlight of my religious life as a Christian."

Following the example of Mother Teresa, the Knights of Columbus Brunswick Council aims to bring the charitable presence of Christ to the community, Bator said.

"The Knights of Columbus are an amazing group of men dedicated to serving the Lord and making our world a better place for all," said the Rev. Bob Stec of St. Ambrose. "They are invaluable at Saint Ambrose – part of the backbone of our parish. They help set the tone and tenor of our parish service. They serve the Lord, they serve our parish and they are dedicated to serving our community. Along the way they form great friendships, have amazing opportunities, and do much good. I am forever grateful for the K of C. I cannot thank them enough for the good they do."

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Becoming a Knight

The Knights of Columbus Brunswick Council 4847 is always looking for the next generation of members.

Qualifications

The Knights of Columbus is a Catholic fraternal organization. Brunswick Council 4847 has general meetings on the first Tuesdays of every month at 7:30 p.m. at St. Ambrose Catholic Church, 929 Pearl Road in Brunswick. Members do not have to be members of the church but they do have to be Catholic.

"We're looking for men who are 18 and older, Catholic, believe in the teachings of the church and the guiding principles of the Knights of Columbus — charity, unity, paternity and patriotism — to dedicate their talents and treasures to help the organization grow and to better the church and the community," said Steve Koly, Grand Knight of the Brunswick Council.

New members start as first-degree Knights, but by studying the four principals can quickly move up to second and third degree. To achieve the fourth-degree status, Knights must be members for at least six months and have obtained the other three degrees. The achievement is celebrated at a black tie gala in the spring. The next fourth-degree event is scheduled for April 4 and 5 at the DoubleTree Inn by Hilton in in Beachwood.

Those interested in joining can email kofc4847@gmail.com or mail the Knights at:

Knights of Columbus
PO Box 634
Brunswick, OH 44212.

Brunswick Council 4847 Officers

- Steve Koly, Grand Knight
- Father Bob Stec, Chaplain
- Frank Pacek, Deputy Grand Knight
- John Taylor, Chancellor
- Vince Berardinelli, Warden
- Pete Troha, Financial Secretary
- Dave Placko, Treasurer
- Ty Tyjewski, Recorder
- Roland Bator, Advocate
- Bob Tittel, Trustee
- John Brown, Trustee
- John Maslach, Trustee
- Mike Levasseur, Guard
- Greg Zdolchek, Guard
- Rich Wenmoth, Lecturer

—Bill Hammerstrom