

Knights of the Southern Cross Australia celebrates 100 years during its 8th National Triennial Conference - May 24-26, 2019

By Andrew Vaccaro, State Secretary, KSC Victoria

A significant milestone was celebrated over the three days beginning from May 24, with celebrations acknowledging the centenary of the Knights of the Southern Cross Australia's formation, which coincided with its 8th Triennial National Conference in Sydney, where the century-long story of the Knights began. Knights from all across Australia converged on St Mary's Cathedral over the course of those three days to not only celebrate the Order's centenary, but to discuss much business, and to set the course for the future.

The first day's proceedings began in the Crypt of St Mary's Cathedral, on the Feast Day of Our Lady, Help of Christians, the Patroness of Australia. One could think of no better place to be on this Feast Day of national importance- the Cathedral, the 'Mother Church' of Australia, is officially designated the 'Cathedral Church and Minor Basilica of the Immaculate Mother of God, Help of Christians', and as such was dedicated to Australia's Patroness. The Mass was celebrated by Military Ordinary of Australia and KSC National Chaplain Bishop Max Davis, and was assisted by the KSC State Chaplains in attendance. In his homily, Bishop Davis reflected on the Feast Day of Our Lady, Help of Christians, and its relevance in the early days of the Church in Sydney, and how it helped the formation of the KSC in 1919, with the support of then Archbishop Michael Kelly.



KSC National Conference Opening Mass- St Mary's Cathedral Crypt

The Conference began in the Crypt with the Official Entry Procession and Lighting of the International Candle, and declared open by KSC National Supreme Knight Brian Cooper of South Australia, followed by opening prayers, then the first decade of the Rosary. Present during the Conference was a relic of St Mary of the Cross MacKillop, Patroness of the KSC. The Conference thus began, with many issues discussed, including freedom of speech and religion, charitable endeavours, and so on. Conference matters were put on hold with the arrival of the Apostolic

Nuncio to Australia, His Excellency, the Most Reverend Adolfo Yllana, who reflected on the reasons for the historical foundation of the Knights of the Southern Cross, and the mission that was embarked upon since.

The Archbishop spoke positively about the chivalry and fraternity of the KSC, as well as their charitable works. The Archbishop praised the Order for its devotion and action on its Objects, and its defence of Catholic values and ethics in modern Australian society, where such values are attacked, and Catholic voices are suppressed. The Archbishop urged those in attendance to resist those efforts, and to stand up for Catholic values, as those Knights did a century ago when the Order was formed, while continuing to show the acts of love and charity it has always done. The Archbishop concluded his address by congratulating the KSC for its Centenary, and asked for the intercession of Our Lady, Help of Christians, on Her Feast Day, to inspire the Order to renew this mission. The Conference resumed following the Archbishop's address, which also featured the KSC Australia Annual General Meeting. At the conclusion of the AGM, the Conference adjourned to lunch.



L-R: Fr Tony Kerin (KSC Vic State Chaplain), Msgr Brian O'Loughlin (KSC WA State Chaplain), Frank Duff (KSC NSW State Councillor), Archbishop Adolfo Yllana (Apostolic Nuncio to Australia), Brian Cooper (Outgoing KSC National Supreme Knight), Bishop Max Davis (KSC National Chaplain), Fr Anthony Onyirioha (KSC Tas Chaplain), Fr Paul Hilder (KSC NSW State Chaplain).

Following lunch, Members and Wives travelled first to Macquarie Park Cemetary and Crematorium (driving across the Sydney Harbour Bridge) to visit the grave of Order founder and second KSC NSW Grand (Supreme) Knight Joseph Patrick Lynch, where Prayers were said as those in attendance payed their respects. Following that, the bus took everyone to Rockwood Cemetary to visit the grave of Order founder and first KSC NSW Grand (Supreme) Knight Patrick Joseph Minahan, where again Prayers were said as those in attendance payed their respects. The tour then continued up to the adjacent St Michael Chapel, where those on the tour were greeted with some beautiful music from the Organ just installed with the financial support of KSC NSW, played by organist Godelieve Ghavalas.



Cemetery visit to the grave of Patrick Joseph Minahan K.S.S (1866-1933), first KSC NSW Grand Knight

On return to the Cathedral, the Conference resumed, with further discussion of Order Matters. With the close of the first day's official proceedings, the Members and their Wives went up to the Cathedral for Vespers at the Chapel of the Irish Saints, before Mass at the main altar, celebrated by Bishop Davis and concelebrated with the Order State Chaplains, again celebrating the Feast Day of Our Lady Help of Christians. The Homily, delivered by Bishop Davis, reflected on the Feast Day of Our Lady Help of Christians, under whose patronage St Mary's Cathedral was dedicated. As the Patroness of Australia, Our Lady Help of Christians' intercession was sought in the support of Australia's early Catholics, who were originally ministered to by Fr John Therry, one Sydney's pioneer priests.

Following dinner, Members and Wives once again entered the Cathedral Crypt to listen to the inaugural Minahan Oration given by the guest speaker, the Hon. Greg Donnelly, Member of the Legislative Council of New South Wales. In his address, Mr Donnelly discussed the role of faith in politics, and spoke on the role of a politician in defending faith in modern society. He posed the question- is a 'Catholic politician' the same as a 'politician who is Catholic'? To that, he reflected on the life of KSC NSW founder Patrick Minahan (after whom the Oration was named), a Labor Party New South Wales Legislative Assembly Member who was a devout Catholic (much like himself, but in the Legislative Council) who fought for the rights of others, particularly the poor and wrongly accused. Mr Donnelly noted that Patrick Minahan was a politician who stood for his values, and noted that today, many politicians views form not from their core beliefs, but led by what they perceive society wants of them. Following his talk, he took question from those in attendance, before Members and Wives retired for the day, ready to resume again tomorrow.



The Hon. Greg Donnelly- Member of the Legislative Council, NSW

Day two of the Conference began with a brief address from KSC National Chaplain Bishop Max Davis, imploring the KSC not to change its Objects, regardless of whatever external pressures make it considered. The Conference then resumed with more KSC business, including the laying out of a Vision/Mission/Plan for all levels of the KSC (Branch, District, State, and National) going into the future, to make Knights think about how they are to remain relevant in today's and tomorrow's Church. In spite of declining numbers throughout all institutions within our modern society, and closing groups, the KSC in Victoria has seen two new Branches formed in the past 12 months, encouraged and supported by the clergy who seek their assistance. This was followed with the presentation of cheques on behalf of the Southern Cross Charitable Trust, one which went to KSC Queensland to donate to the Veterans Care Association Inc. for over \$5,000, and the other to KSC Tasmania for CatholicCare Tasmania's work with assisting youth and young adults to attend the Australian Catholic Youth Festival in Perth in December 2019, with a contribution of over \$4,000. Future charitable donations were also proposed, including once again in support of the work that Mary MacKillop International are doing in East Timor with education, a cause that the KSC has sponsored nationally for the past few years.

The Conference was also addressed by the President of International Alliance of Catholic Knights, KSC Victoria's Colin Walsh, who assumed the role of President at the IACK Conference in Washington in 2017. President Walsh reflected on his time as IACK President (which draws to a close in October 2019), where he has travelled to many countries, and noted some of the different initiatives in those countries. He noted that the IACK Orders in Africa are growing in numbers, in spite of the persecution Catholics face in many of those countries. He noted that at a National Conference in Ghana, over 7,000 Ghanaian Knights were in attendance, and his address was broadcast live into several other neighbouring countries. He also noted that he has had to settle differences between the member Orders, who have sometimes tried to recruit in other's existing territories, such as North America's Knights of Columbus. President Walsh concluded his address by acknowledging the IACK Chaplain for his term, whom he nominated, Bishop of the Diocese of Sandhurst, Victoria-

Bishop Leslie Tomlinson.



International Alliance of Catholic Knights President Colin Walsh

With his three year term about to expire, outgoing National Supreme Knight Brian Cooper announced the newly elected KSC National Executive, who would be installed and blessed after the Vigil Mass later that evening. Further Agenda items were discussed before the official conclusion of the Conference, where an Action Statement would be further developed to guide the Order in the years to come. The Conference was concluded with the Vigil Mass celebrated by Bishop Davis in the Cathedral, again assisted by the other State Chaplains. Bishop Davis' Homily was a reflection on the struggles of first Christians, who relied on their faith in the Lord and Jesus Christ. At the conclusion of the Mass, the newly elected KSC National Executive were installed and blessed. The ceremony included the blessing and lighting of this National Conference's Candle (which was lit from the 2017 IACK Conference Candle provided by IACK President Walsh), which in turn is used to light the State Candles, which are taken by each State Chairman back to their own States, to be used in their State Conferences, to provide a connection with all levels of Knights.

The newly installed KSC National Executive would be:

Supreme Knight- Dr. George Sekulla (Western Australia)
Deputy Supreme Knight- Vince Granahan (Queensland)
National Secretary- Ian Fleetwood (South Australia)
National Executive Officer- Bob Perkins (ACT)
National Chaplain- Bishop Max Davis (ACT)
National Order Development Officer- John Hennessy (Victoria)

The rest of the National Executive, made up of the current KSC State Chairmen, and the Chairman of Southern Cross Care Australia, are:

State Chairman (NSW)- Greg Briscoe-Hough
 State Chairman (Victoria)- Carmine Miranda
 State Chairman (Queensland)- Eddie Radke
 State Chairman (South Australia)- Don Campbell
 State Chairman (WA)- Nigel Hayward
 State Chairman (Tasmania)- John Prichard
 Chairman Southern Cross Care Australia- Don Neander (Queensland)



Back Row, L-R: Fr Tony Kerin (KSC Vic State Chaplain), Fr Anthony Onyirioha (KSC Tas Chaplain), Msgr Brian O'Loughlin (KSC WA State Chaplain), Bishop Max Davis (KSC National Chaplain)

Front Row, L-R: Greg Briscoe-Hough (KSC NSW State Chairman), John Prichard (KSC Tas State Chairman), Carmine Miranda (KSC Vic State Chairman), Vince Granahan (KSC Nat Dep Supreme Knight), Mike Williams (KSC New Zealand National Supreme Knight), Dr. George Sekulla (KSC National Supreme Knight), Ian Fleetwood (KSC National Secretary), Nigel Hayward (KSC WA State Chairman), Eddie Radke (KSC Qld State Chairman), Don Campbell (KSC SA State Chairman), Brian Cooper (Outgoing KSC National Supreme Knight)

With the Installation Ceremony complete, all proceeded to the Cathedral House Hall for the Conference Dinner. The Dinner gave Knights and their Wives a chance to relax from all the formalities of the previous two days, and allowed for socialising and fraternity between Knights from different States, where they learned about the different activities each State is working on, such as the Knights Catholic Leadership Academy for youth in Western Australia, the Townsville Flood Appeal in Queensland, and the KSC Archbishop's Dinner in Victoria. The guest speaker for the Dinner, giving the inaugural 'Lynch Lecture' (named after the second KSC National Grand (Supreme) Knight and co-founder Patrick Joseph Lynch), was Dr Kevin Donnelly, Senior Research Fellow at the Australian Catholic University and author of *The Culture of Freedom*. His talk focused on 'Catholic Education in the next Century'. Following the talk, the official Conference Awards presentation was held, with the following Knights receiving the following awards:

KSC NSW State Councillor Frank Duff with the Supreme Knight's award for his services to the Order; Past Supreme Knight Brian Cooper with the past Supreme Knight's medal, and past National Secretary Eddie Radke with his past National Secretary award; KSC South Australia State Chairman Don Campbell presented Brian Cooper with the Knight of Honour award, presented to those few Knights that have given exceptional service to the Order over many years.

Following the awards, Supreme Knight Sekulla addressed the Knights and Wives in attendance, and acknowledged all those who assisted him along the way- his family, the Knights from Western Australia, to past Supreme Knights. This was followed with the Supreme Knight of KSC New Zealand Mike Williams presenting Supreme Knight Sekulla with a traditional Hei Toki stone as a gift in appreciation for being invited to the Conference. Its wearer is said to be the shaper of their own pathway, symbolic as the Knights move forward into the future. After the Dinner's formalities, all retired for the night, to prepare for the conclusion of the Conference the following day.



Newly installed KSC National Supreme Knight Dr. George Sekulla addresses the Conference Dinner attendees.



KSC Western Australia National Conference Delegation



KSC Queensland National Conference Delegation



KSC South Australia National Conference Delegation



KSC Victoria National Conference Delegation

The final day began early, with Supreme Knight Sekulla chairing the first KSC National Executive Meeting with the newly installed National Executive. The new Executive hit the ground running, discussing Order business such as tabling of reports, conduct of Meetings, and so on. Also discussed

was producing a National History of the KSC, to celebrate 100 years, by co-ordinating the historical research of all the States. At the conclusion of the Meeting, Knights and their wives proceeded to the Cathedral once again, for 10:30AM Solemn Mass, celebrated again by Bishop Davis. The Knights were blessed to hear the amazing voices of the full St Mary's Choir, the oldest musical institution in Australia. The Mass was once again presided over by Bishop Davis and the attending State Chaplains, Bishop Davis' Homily was a repeat of the previous night's Homily. At the conclusion of Mass, many took a tour of the Cathedral, before heading to the final lunch before departure, where everyone could socialise for the last time, exchange details and say their farewells before their long trips back home.



St Mary's Cathedral Solemn Mass, May 26, 2019

While this National Conference was in the shadow of celebrating the Order's past 100 years, this meeting of Members, young and old, reaffirmed the purpose of the KSC, and provided renewed life, which will be needed in the face of diminishing numbers throughout all organisations within the Church and society in general, and the continued attacks on the Catholic Church.