



# THE PATRIOT

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER



ASSEMBLY 3089  
OUR LADY OF CHARITY



Hello Brother Knights,

As our Councils continue to grow, I am frequently asked about the 4th Degree and how to become a member.

Attached is a history of Our Lady of Charity Assembly #3089, which serves the St. Patrick's, Incarnation, and St. Thomas More Councils. I hope this information inspires you to join our Assembly as a 4th Degree member.

Our Assembly proudly supports several key organizations, including Operation Warrior Resolution, Tunnel to Towers, Bay Pines VA Healthcare System, and Wreaths Across America, in addition to supporting a Seminarian.

We typically meet on the second Monday of each month. If you are interested in joining, please contact me via email or at 941-330-3168.

God Bless,

Dr. Steven Wyer FDD PGK PFN

Faithful Navigator, Color Corps Commander

[steven.m.wyer@gmail.com](mailto:steven.m.wyer@gmail.com)

# OUR LADY OF CHARITY ASSEMBLY #3089

## FOURTH DEGREE

### KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS



### Assembly Historical Facts

*A few mostly unknown items about our Assembly*

**BACKGROUND:** Through the mid-2000 period, a single Assembly existed in the cities of Sarasota, Venice and Bradenton. In Sarasota, Msgr. Charles Elslander Assembly #0167 was on Fruitville Rd., in Venice, Bishop Charles McLaughlin Assembly #1818 and Bradenton had Padre Luis de Soto Assembly #1860. Initially in this period, both St. Joseph Council #5604 and Padre Luis de Soto shared a K of C building in the Bradenton area that was later closed and sold. Both the Council and Assembly then held their meetings at the St. Joseph's Parish Center on 26th Street in Bradenton.

In the 2007 period, due to the continual growth of 4<sup>th</sup> Degree members to the Order, movements were underway to begin a new Assembly in the general area. The first new Assembly was in the combined Sarasota-Bradenton Counties and members from Sts. Cosmos and Damian Council #13341, St. Patrick's Council #13307 and Blessed Carlos Manual Council #14391 of St. Jude's Parish were assigned to form that new Assembly.

As representatives gathered from the Councils who were to be a part of the newly formed Assembly, the name **“Our Lady of Charity”** was chosen and it was assigned the number 3089. The Election of Officers next took place.

**First Officers elected for this new Assembly**

<b>Navigator: Dr. Donald Christo, Ph.D.</b>	<b>Sts. Cosmas &amp; Damian Council</b>
<b>Admiral: Neil Welch</b>	<b>St. Patricks’</b>
<b>Captain: Dr. Michael Novello, Ph.D.</b>	<b>Sts. Cosmas &amp; Damian</b>
<b>Pilot: Robert Marrah</b>	<b>St. Patrick’s</b>
<b>Comptroller: Ronald Fortin</b>	<b>Blessed Carlos Manuel</b>
<b>Purser: Christoper Treston</b>	<b>Sts. Cosmas &amp; Damian</b>
<b>Scribe: Peter Pezzati</b>	<b>St. Patricks’</b>
<b>Inner Sentinel: Thomas Werner</b>	<b>Sts. Cosmas &amp; Damian</b>
<b>Outer Sentinel: Andrew Velichko</b>	<b>Sts. Cosmas &amp; Damian</b>
<b>3-year Trustee: Gary Eichorn</b>	<b>Blessed Carlos Manuel</b>
<b>2-year Trustee Theodore Cover</b>	<b>St. Patricks’</b>
<b>1-year Trustee Peter Tortolano</b>	<b>Blessed Carlos Manuel</b>

Based upon relative Council sizes, the make-up of the new Assembly was about 50% of the members from Sts. Cosmas & Damian, about 35% of the members from St. Patricks’ and the remaining 15% from Blessed Carlos Manuel. The Assembly held all their monthly meetings at the Our Lady of Angels Parish in Lakewood Ranch. Since the Charter from Supreme was dated January 1, 2008, it was determined that the Officers chosen would serve for a period of 18 months, rather than the typical 12 months, so when a new Election was to be held, scheduled June 2009 for Installation on July 1, 2009, the Assembly would be in line with the standard election dates for the Fourth Degree as outlined by Supreme.

The Assembly immediately became active. Many visits were made to the Bay Pines Veterans Hospital in St. Petersburg many as well as to the James A. Haley VA facility in Hillsborough County. In addition, some of the Assembly members marched in the Sarasota Labor Day Parade as well.



**SK's Andy Velechco, Bob Marrah, Ron Fortin, FN Dr. Don Christo and Peter Tortolano line up for a picture just prior to their marching in downtown Sarasota on Labor Day, 2008.**

While the Assembly became active, most of its many activities were outside the local county area, and that became an item of concern to many of the Assembly members who did not have the time to travel.

Our First Admiral had not previously served as an Officer in any Assembly. Since the Admiral in most Assemblies is the immediate Past Navigator, this Assembly had no previous one to draw from, so this Sir Knight was chosen. He had “quite” a background!

SK Neil had served almost 30 years with the Federal Bureau of Investigation! He was a native of St. Paul, Minnesota and had a degree from Omaha University (now the Univ of Nebraska) and a Law Degree from Creighton University Law School. He rose quickly in the FBI ranks and served more than half of this time as a SAIC: Special Agent in Charge of Buffalo, NY office, then the Detroit Office and finished his career in the Philadelphia Office. He was known and “well recognized” for his abilities and capabilities.

When long-serving FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover passed away, a Judge, Clarence Kelley replaced him. He served for a few years and chose retirement. Then President Jimmy Carter formed a Blue-Ribbon Panel to select a new Director. They poured over candidates for months and had 235 resumes which were then whittled down to 5. The unanimous choice for Director was Neil Welch! However, despite the Panels efforts, President Carter opted to select someone from “outside the Bureau” and he chose William Webster as the new Director. Should anyone “Google” Neil Welch on the Internet, they will find an article titled: **Remembering Neil Welch: The Best FBI Director who never was.**



**Pictures of Neil Welch while at the FBI and in regalia outside St. Patrick's Church**

June of 2009 was upon us and time for Election of Officers. But a new “wrinkle” was thrown in the election! In the Fourth Degree’s quest to continue to grow, a new Assembly was formed, in Lakewood Ranch! The name chosen was San Damiano Assembly #3192! While Bob Marrah was elected the new Navigator, many of the Officers and just about all the Sir Knights from St. Cosmas & Damian Council resigned and joined the new Assembly. The roster was literally “halved” and new Officer candidates chosen. The new line-up:

<b>Navigator:</b>	<b>Bob Marrah</b>	<b>#13307</b>
<b>Admiral:</b>	<b>Ron Kosey</b>	<b>#13307</b>
<b>Captain:</b>	<b>Ron Fortin</b>	<b>#14391</b>
<b>Pilot:</b>	<b>Peter Tortolano</b>	<b>#14391</b>
<b>Comptroller:</b>	<b>Tom Latronica</b>	<b>#13307</b>
<b>Purser:</b>	<b>Joe Reardon</b>	<b>#13307</b>
<b>Scribe:</b>	<b>Gary Eichorn</b>	<b>#14391</b>
<b>Inner Sentinel:</b>	<b>Pedro Sandelis</b>	<b>#14391</b>
<b>Outer Sentinel:</b>	<b>Tom Werner</b>	<b>#13341</b>
<b>3 Year Trustee:</b>	<b>Frank Deame</b>	<b>#14391</b>
<b>2 Year Trustee:</b>	<b>Gene Dolecki</b>	<b>#13307</b>
<b>1 Year Trustee:</b>	<b>Ted Cover</b>	<b>#13307</b>

One of the first proposals from new FN Bob Marrah was for the Assembly to try to do more “locally” rather than driving out of county to visit and work with VA units and hospitals. He served as an affiliate member of the Sarasota County Veterans Commission and that Commission was asked by local US Rep Vern Buchanan if any unit in the Commission would take on a task. A new Veteran’s Cemetery had just opened, Sarasota National, and they had a problem. Several funerals were being held where no family was present. A Cemetery worker had to stop to take the flag. Would any Veteran supporting organization volunteer to do accept the flag? That is how our Assembly initially became involved at the Cemetery in early 2010!



**First year Officers: Scribe Peter Pezzati, Pilot Bob Marrah, Admiral Neil Welch**



**Second year: Peter Pezzati, unassigned, Admiral Ron Kosey, Navigator Bob Marrah**

As this new year got underway, that request was brought to the membership, and they wholeheartedly endorsed the idea. Our first funeral was May 10, 2010. The funerals were originally called "Indigent" Funerals and one, two or three Veterans were to be honored at one time. Originally, we attended the funerals wearing regalia, but the Sarasota summers were too warm and, as such, Assembly shirts soon became the dress of the day.



Florida law prohibits Unclaimed bodies from being cremated. When a body is unclaimed, Counties go to great extremes to determine "if" it is a Veteran. If so, the county embalms but the VA has the burial responsibility. Casket quality varies greatly by County.





100th Funeral PFN Bob Marrah received the flag 9/30/2012



200th Funeral PFN Bill Cook received the flag 5/19/2015



300th Funeral PFN Charles Culkin received the flag 11/02/2016



400th Funeral PFN Joe DeStefano received the flag 1/17/2018



500th Funeral Two flags present to PFN Wayne Brewer and PFN Gene Dolecki on 3//13/2019



On Nov. 27,2012, Congressman Buchanan's Office assigned a Retired Army Lt. Colonel to receive the flag. One of the SK's attending was SK Arthur Del Prete. SK Del Prete was the Colonel's High School teacher in Framingham, Mass. Neither one was aware of the others local presence!

In the first few years, funerals would be held for a low number of Veterans, and they would be held 4 to 8 times per month. The word "Indigent" was then modified and the word "Unclaimed" was now used. After about 4 years, the Cemetery Director approached the Assembly Funeral liaison Bob Marrah and told him of a problem. It seems the Cemetery had been petitioned by several Funeral Directors. They reminded the Cemetery that Florida State Law says that a licensed Funeral Director MUST be present whenever a body is present and that was NOT happening with Unclaimed Funerals. So, the Director asked "if" the Assembly members would still attend "if" a body was not present. The answer was a quick "yes" and the Assembly members continued to honor Veterans.

Toward the end of the first year, the Assembly filed the application for a **To Be A Patriot Award** issued by Supreme for out of the ordinary Patriotic acts. At the Supreme Convention in 2010, our Assembly was one of three in the Order awarded an **International To Be A Patriot Award**.

This Award is displayed in one of the three Award Cabinets that are along the right wall in St. Patrick's Parish Hall.





# Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 111<sup>th</sup> CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

## House of Representatives

CONGRATULATING THE KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS, OUR LADY OF CHARITY  
ASSEMBLY 3089 OF SARASOTA, FLORIDA -- (Extensions of Remarks - November 17,  
2010)

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SPEECH OF  
**HON. VERN BUCHANAN**  
OF FLORIDA  
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 2010

- Mr. BUCHANAN. Madam Speaker, today, I want to congratulate the Knights of Columbus, Our Lady of Charity Assembly 3089 of Sarasota, Florida, for receiving the Knights of Columbus "To Be a Patriot" Award for its service to our Nation's veterans.
- The "To Be a Patriot" Award recognizes the three best international patriotic programs conducted by Fourth Degree assemblies. Assembly 3089 received the 2009-2010 award for its assistance at indigent funerals within the Sarasota National Cemetery.
- The assembly was recognized for its efforts to ensure that every indigent buried at Sarasota National Cemetery has someone available at their funeral to accept the U.S. Flag. During the ceremony, an assembly member dressed in tuxedo with the social baldric voluntarily accepts the veteran's flag as a show of honor to those who selflessly served in our military.
- On behalf of the people of Florida's 13th District, I thank Our Lady of Charity Assembly 3089 for helping to ensure that our veterans are laid to rest with the honor and dignity these heroes deserve.
- It is with great pleasure that I acknowledge it has rightfully received this prestigious award.

Local Congressman Vern Buchan spoke before the U.S. House of Representatives on November 17, 2010, honoring our Assembly for their Veteran's recognition.

During the second term as an Assembly, many other activities began to take place. A new Council, #14845, St. Michael the Archangel was formed, and members were assigned Assembly #3089 for those who had chosen the Fourth Degree. In November 2010, the Diocese of Venice held its first Annual Veteran's Day Mass at Sarasota National Cemetery and Knights of Columbus, Diocese wide, played a big part. The Assembly was growing!



FN Bob Marrah talking with 'new' Florida District Master James Schoenfeld at the National Cemetery Nov. 11, 2010. (R) The Master leading the Fourth-Degree march.



Receiving the To Be A Patriot Award in Orlando from Florida District Master Gary MacLaine with him showing the application for the Award submitted in book form

Being active in the general Sarasota area, the Assembly quickly grew as new Councils were starting up in many of the local parishes. Toward the second half of 2009, Council #14845 at St. Michael the Archangel Parish on Longboat key began followed by the establishment of a Council at Christ the King Parish, a Latin Rite Chapel, and their Council was to be as Pius V. Their members who chose to become Fourth Degree members were assigned to join our Assembly. In October of 2013, Council #7826 at St. Thomas More Parish was reactivated after being dormant for many years. Members wishing to become Fourth Degree also were assigned to Join our Assembly. Lastly, in 2014, a Council at Incarnation Parish was founded, and our Assembly was also assigned for Fourth Degree.

It is sad to note that during the next few years, St. Michael's Council became inactive, as well as St. Jude's Council and lastly Pius V Council.

### **SARASOTA NATIONAL CEMETERY VETERAN'S DAY MASS**

Following the very first, and successful Veteran's Day Mass November 11, 2010, the Diocese decided to host this Mass annually. The Knights of Columbus would play a very big role every year. While the Mass has been held in Patriot Plaza at the Cemetery for the past few years, initially, while the Plaza was being built, a huge tent was erected and chairs rented to seat the attendees. A mobile "restroom" was also rented, and a separate, smaller tent was also needed for the Priests to robe. The K of C was asked to raise funds to defray about half the costs incurred for these Masses. One of the early Knights to become fully involved was Eugene Dolecki, who would serve as our Navigator in the 2013—2014-time frame. For the Mass, each year, he was the Non-Liturgical Master of Ceremonies and would attend and host numerous meetings throughout the year to ensure all was prepared, ready and scheduled for the next Veteran's Day Mass.



**Sir Knight Gene Dolecki at the Podium on Patriot Plaza on Veteran's Day**

SK Gene continued to serve in this same role for many years. It was a dedicated task: having to host multiple meetings throughout the year, Council and Assembly appeals for funds to defray the cost of hosting the Mass each Veteran's Day. In the year following his term as Faithful Navigator and working with the then Navigator, Bill Cook, another application was made for the **International to Be A Patriot Award!**

It should be noted, within the Order, there are almost 4,000 Assemblies. At each annual Supreme Convention, only three of the Assemblies that apply are awarded this most distinguished Award. Far and away, many of the Order's Assemblies do not fulfill the requirements to even apply for that Award. Of those that do, only three are recognized!

In 2010, when our Assembly won that Award, Assemblies #3111 from Colbert, Washington, Assembly #3176 from Burlington, Ontario, Canada and Assembly #3089, Sarasota, Florida were those three. Five years later, Assembly #1438 from Cavite City, Luzon, the Philippines, Assembly #2048, Germantown, Tennessee and Assembly #3089, Sarasota, Florida were those three!

Many, if not most of the Assemblies in the Order have NEVER been recognized for achieving the International To Be A Patriot Award! Yet, in a period of five years, Our Lady of Charity Assembly #3089, has been recognized for winning it twice!! That is quite an accomplishment, one that all our members should well be proud of!

### **NO VETERAN FORGOTTEN FUNERALS**

The Funerals for First Indigent and then Unclaimed continued until early March 2020. That is when the pandemic hit, and these were no longer held or scheduled. During the period of March 2020 through September 2021, Veterans were still being buried but Funeral attendance was limited to 10 people or less. During this time, the Director of Sarasota National Cemetery retired, and a new Director assigned. The new Director did not care for funerals that were labeled either "Indigent" nor "Unclaimed" and decided to change the process used by the Cemetery to honor those Veterans.

When Funerals resumed, October 2021, a new outlook for the program was developed. Since the beginning, Sarasota National held numerous "Direct Burial" funerals. Simply said, these typically are Veterans who retire to Florida, but their family structure is "up North". When these Vets pass, the casket/cremains are transported North for viewing, services, etc. etc. and then returned for burial. Often, no family members are present. A single service had been held, once per month to honor those Vets. The new Director then decided to combine the two and named the new service **NO VETERAN FORGOTTEN!**



The Crowd seen “under the tent” early on



The Fourth Degree in regalia for the Mass



PFN Bob Marrah who serves as a Lector



PFN Ron Kosey simulating “TAPS” at the end

### **NO VETERAN FORGOTTEN FUNERALS-POST PANDEMIC**

A whole new approach to honoring Veterans with no family present for their burials was begging to take place. Funeral Ceremonies are now conducted only once per month and held for a much larger group of Veterans, at one time, than had been previously honored.

The Cemetery has asked two local American Legion Posts to conduct these monthly ceremonies on a rotating basis. Kirby Stewart Post #24 in Bradenton and No-Vel Post #159 from Venice are the two. Several members of the Posts actively are part of the ceremony.

A reading of each Veteran’s name, rank and service by Knights of Columbus start the service while a bell is pealed as each name is read. A Post Chaplain then delivers an invocation followed by a rifle salute, usually delivered by 5 Post Members. Then, another Post member plays TAPS, sometimes “live” and sometimes recorded. The one flag is then unfolded, and refolded and presented to the one chosen to receive it. A poem **IT IS THE VETERAN** is read and then the flag is revered by the Patriot Guard who then forms an Honor Guard for the flag receiver to exit the Plaza. **NO VETERAN FORGOTTEN!**

As the combined Funerals resumed in October of 2021, many Vets of both categories, Direct Burials and Unclaimed, remained to be honored. So, at the October Ceremony, 76 Veterans were honored; in November, 70 Veterans were honored and in December, a total of 86 Veterans were honored. Since that time, all the scheduled Veteran Funerals that are attended follow this format. However, the Assembly is often asked to attend a “special” funeral for any number of reasons and always do.

**At the dedication of the new National Cemetery, then a farmer’s field, on June 1, 2008, members of the new Our Lady of Charity Assembly: (R-L) FN Dr. Donald Christo, FC Ron Fortin, SK Donald Plourde, FS Peter Pezzati, FP Bob Marrah, 1 YR Trust. Peter Tortolano, Unknown, 3 YR Trust. Gary Eichorn, SK Andrew Velichko.**

