

Knights of Columbus

Membership Qualifications

The qualifications for membership in the Knights of Columbus are set down in Section 101 of the Laws of the Order. They are as follows: *“Only practical Catholics in union with the Holy See shall be eligible to and entitled to continue membership in the Order. An applicant for membership shall not be less than 18 years of age on his last birthday.”*

There are no other requirements. Nothing is said about the candidate’s profession, education, national background, the color of his skin, his nationality, his cultural level or his financial status.

PRACTICAL CATHOLIC - Guidelines have been established to assist in judging the practical Catholicity of an applicant or member. Those guidelines also appear in our *Grand Knight’s Handbook* (#915) so that the grand knight can perform his duties as an informed and responsible Catholic gentleman when conducting sessions of his council’s Admission Committee. The main components of this requirement may be described as follows:

- The practical Catholic in union with the Holy See is one who, in general, regulates his life according to the teachings of Christ and the Church, and endeavors to observe the commandments of God and of the Church.
- A practical Catholic strives to have a greater knowledge of the teachings of Christ and his Church, and to accept, respect and defend the Church’s authority (vested in the Supreme Pontiff, the hierarchy and clergy united with him) to teach, govern and sanctify the faithful.
- A practical Catholic gives material and moral support to the Church and her works on all levels, promoting the programs of the parish and diocese and comes to the aid of the missions, the needy, the underprivileged; espousing and advancing the just causes of minority groups; endeavoring to eliminate unjust discrimination, prejudice, etc.; supporting the Church in her defense of marriage and family life and in her crusades against divorce, abortion, pornography and all the evils of today.
- If a Catholic marries outside the Church, that is, contrary to the laws of the Church, he ceases to be a practical Catholic and hence may not be a member of the Knights of Columbus. A man who, living in a valid marriage, obtains a civil divorce and remarries outside the Church ceases to be a practical Catholic and hence loses his right to join or continue in the Order of the Knights of Columbus. If his former marriage is declared null by the Church and he remarries validly according to the Church’s laws, he may be reinstated into the Order.
- A Catholic who is a member of a forbidden, secret society is not a practical Catholic and hence may not become or continue to be a member of the Knights of Columbus.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS - If a member of the Order is married, he should be a faithful and devoted husband and father. Married or unmarried, the Knight should always be an exemplary Catholic gentleman and a dutiful patriotic citizen.

DETERMINING QUALIFICATION – Before a candidate is presented for membership, his sponsor should be sure that the candidate possesses and manifests the necessary qualifications for membership. These are then appraised by the Admission Committee and a subsequent ballot by the membership determines acceptance or rejection. This is in keeping with the lodge system under which the Order of the Knights Columbus operates. If questions arise at any time during the admission process as to the candidate’s practical Catholicity, the proposer or the Admissions Committee should consult the council chaplain and/or the candidate’s pastor.