

## How Knights Added "Under God" to the Pledge

Patriotism and faith compelled Knights to petition U.S. government to make addition in the early 1950s

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7/2/2020



College Knights says the Pledge of Allegiance after the opening benedictions at the College Council Conference, Sep. 22, 2006

The Pledge of Allegiance has undergone several revisions since it was initially written back in 1892 by Baptist minister Francis Bellamy. The last significant change came in 1954 during the midst of the Cold War, when President Dwight Eisenhower signed a congressional resolution adding the words "under God."

This revision would have never happened without advocacy by the Knights of Columbus.

In a letter thanking the Order, President Eisenhower stated that these words "remind Americans that despite our great physical strength we must remain humble. They will help us to keep constantly in our minds and hearts the spiritual and moral principles which alone give dignity to man, and upon which our way of life is founded."

The original Pledge had no references to God. However, the Knights personally inserted "under God" into their recitations at the opening of Fourth Degree assembly meetings in 1951. Momentum grew within the Knights to petition the United States Congress to revise the Pledge.

At the time, Supreme Knight Luke Hart was president of the National Fraternal Congress of America, which adopted "under God" into its own Pledge recitations in 1952. From that year until 1954, the Supreme Council repeatedly sent copies of their resolutions to members of Congress, U.S. senators, Vice President Richard Nixon and President Eisenhower.

The appeals received generally positive feedback, with Rep. Louis C. Rabaut of Michigan introducing one of 17 eventual congressional resolutions to officially add "under God." Significant support for the movement grew when Presbyterian minister George Docherty preached about the words, saying, "To omit the words 'under God' in the Pledge of Allegiance is to omit the definitive character of the American way of life." President Eisenhower was in attendance and heard the sermon.

The congressional resolution was adopted by the House and Senate, and President Eisenhower signed it on June 14, 1954. Several years later, St. John Paul XXIII "[expressed his gratification](#)" to the Knights of Columbus for their advocacy because "some 30 million children, at the beginning of each school day, acknowledged the existence of God and their dependence upon Divine Providence."

*Share your story of how your council is helping strengthen people's faith and offering support during this time. Email [knightline@kofc.org](mailto:knightline@kofc.org).*

*Originally published in a special bi-weekly edition of Knightline, a resource for K of C leaders and members. To access Knightline's monthly archives, [click here](#).*

## Eight ways the K of C defended religious freedom



*A look at some of the ways Knights of Columbus have defended religious freedom around the world*

The Knights of Columbus was founded at a time in U.S. history when Catholics faced harsh discrimination and were frequently looked down upon as morally and socially inferior. Throughout its history, the Knights has stood up for religious liberty as guaranteed by the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

The Knight's fight for religious liberty has taken many forms – from 19th-century efforts to dispel suspicions that Catholics could not be faithful citizens due to their loyalty to the pope, to current support for Christians and other religious minorities in the Middle East. [READ MORE](#)