

Ancient Order of Hibernians



Chaplain's Handbook





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THE PRAYER OF SAINT PATRICK

I arise today
Through the strength of heaven;
Light of the sun,
Splendor of fire,
Speed of lightning,
Swiftness of the wind,
Depth of the sea,
Stability of the earth,
Firmness of the rock.

I arise today
Through God's strength to pilot me; God's might to uphold me.
God's wisdom to guide me,
God's eye to look before me,
God's ear to hear me,
God's word to speak for me,
God's hand to guard me,
God's way to lie before me,
God's shield to protect me,
God's hosts to save me
Afar and a near,
Alone or in a multitude.

Christ shield me today
Against wounding
Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me,
Christ in me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
Christ on my right, Christ on my left,
Christ when I lie down, Christ when I sit down,
Christ in the heart of everyone who thinks of me,
Christ in the mouth of everyone who thinks of me,
Christ in the eye that sees me,
Christ in the ear that hears me.

I arise today
Through the might strength
of the Lord of Creation.



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The Ancient Order of Hibernians in America

The Ancient Order of Hibernians is a direct descendant of the secret societies of purpose established in Ireland to protect traditional values during periods of great oppression. This protection included defending the interests of the native population and safeguarding the Roman Catholic clergy. Branches of one of those societies were established in New York and Pennsylvania in 1836 and evolved into a uniquely American Irish society defending the new Irish immigrant population against segregation, discrimination, and anti-Catholic activity.

This new coalition began attracting similar societies with a variety of names and their strategy and purpose began to evolve. Nativist gangs and malicious employers replaced landlords as antagonists, membership was expanded beyond native Irish so that the American-born sons of members could join and a loyalty to their adopted land began to grow. Further the freedom in America to rally support against the British domination of their homeland would jeopardize any parent society still under the Crown.

Although the basic purpose of protecting traditional values remained the same, it became obvious that this was a new organization and a new name was needed. As the American Irish became Irish American, the organization retained its traditional values, modified its aims, added a loyalty to its adopted nation and changed its name to the Ancient Order of Hibernians.

A number of the Irish branches of the parent organization also adopted the name providing links to the mother country, but time and distance soon led to contentious issues between the Ancient Order of Hibernians in America and the Ancient Order of Hibernians, Board of Erin and they split. Branches of the two organizations in America were finally reconciled through the intercession of Bishop McFaul at the National Convention of 1898 in Trenton New Jersey.

The organization in Ireland however remained an estranged cousin of the American Order until the 1980s when common interests united them as kindred organizations. Today they are all part of an extended AOH family in the United States, Canada, Ireland, Scotland, England and Wales – each independent, but all related.



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Preamble of the National AOH Constitution

(The Preamble of the national constitution was revised and adopted at the national convention held at Foxwood, CT, July, 2000.)

It is hereby declared and decreed that the purpose of this organization, the Ancient Order of Hibernians in America, Inc. is:

1. To promote Friendship, Unity and Christian Charity;
2. To foster and sustain loyalty to country and community;
3. To aid and advance by all legitimate means, the aspirations and endeavors of the Irish people for complete and absolute independence, promoting peace and unity for all Ireland;
4. To foster the ideals and perpetuate the history and traditions of the Irish people;
5. To promote Irish culture;
6. To encourage civic participation;
7. To encourage an equitable US immigration law for Ireland and to cooperate with all groups for a fair American Immigration Policy;
8. To accept and support without prejudice, the concept of free expression of religious practice for the people of the world; and
9. To protect and defend all life, born and unborn.



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Membership is confined exclusively to practicing Roman Catholics of Irish birth or descent, or those who have been legally adopted by those of Irish ancestry, and who reside in the United States of America.

As further clarification, the motto of this Order is Friendship, Unity and Christian Charity. **Friendship** shall consist of helping one another and in assisting each other to the best of our power; **Unity**, in combining together for mutual support in sickness and distress; and **Christian Charity**, in loving one another and doing to all men as we would wish that they should do unto us.

1. This Order is to be formed exclusively of practicing Catholics. Therefore, each member is expected to comply with all his Christian duties.
2. Should any of the members fail in the above, and instead of giving edification and encouragement, become a stumbling block and a disgrace to the Organization, such a one, after proper charitable admonition, unless there be an amendment in his conduct shall be expelled from the Order.
3. In order, however, that all may be done with justice, Christian charity and edification, there shall be in each county a Chaplain, appointed by the presiding officer and approved by the Ordinary of the Diocese, to be consulted by the Division before determining anything relating to morality or religion.
4. The Chaplain in each area shall see that nothing is done or countenanced within his jurisdiction which is contrary to the laws of the Catholic Church, the decrees of the Plenary Councils of Baltimore, and the Synodal Constitutions of the Diocese. In any difficulty or doubt which he may not be able to solve, he shall consult the Ordinary of the Diocese.
5. All Divisions of this Order shall adopt the foregoing preamble, and their special Constitution and By-Laws shall be in harmony with the Constitution and By-Laws of this Order.



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Membership Qualifications

According to the AOH National Constitution, Article IV, Section 1: Applicants for membership in the Ancient Order of Hibernians must:

1. Be a male residing in the United States.
2. Prove his Irish ancestry by birth or adoption.
3. C. Must be a practicing Catholic (the term Catholic would include any man who belongs to anyone of the Western or Eastern Rites of the Catholic Church who are united to the Holy Father, the Pope, the Bishop of Rome).
4. Be of good character
5. Be not less than sixteen (16) years of age

The Chaplain's Appointment

According to the AOH National Constitution, any Chaplain whether it be on the National, State, County, or Division is an Appointee of the President of each jurisdiction. All Chaplain appointments are subject to the approval of the Bishop, the Ordinary of the Diocese. (A Priest or Deacon who is a member of a religious order shall have the permission of his local Religious Superior). (Chaplains are not required to be of Irish ancestry.) All religious qualify as non-paying members; therefore, a Chaplain at any level does not have the obligation of paying dues.

The AOH National Constitution states that the National Chaplain shall be a Bishop or Priest of the Catholic Church, appointed by the National President, subject to the approval of the appointee's Bishop.

The National President shall also appoint two (2) Deputy National Chaplains.

The duties of the National Chaplain and Deputy National Chaplains, in addition to the duties stated in Section 8 for State, County, and Division Chaplains, shall be to attend the Biennial Convention and all National Board Meetings. The National chaplain shall, between Biennial National Conventions, call a meeting of the State Chaplains and maintain correspondence with Chaplains in providing the work of the Order.



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Section 8 of the National Constitution states: State, County, or Division Chaplains shall be a Priest, Deacon. (At the 2010 National Convention in Cincinnati, an addition was made that a "Professed Religious Brother" may also serve as an AOH Chaplain). The Chaplains are appointees of the Presidents of the various jurisdictions and are subject to the approval of their Bishop. All Chaplains shall:

- A. Provide spiritual guidance for their respective jurisdictions.
- B. Advise on all matters pertaining to the welfare of the Order.
- C. Attend meetings and participate in discussions within their jurisdiction.
- D. Be a member of the Catholic Action Committee of their respective jurisdictions.

The AOH National Constitution also states that: All Divisions of the Order shall set aside a memorial day for an annual Mass to commemorate the memory of the departed members of the Order, and for such other services as each division may deem appropriate after consultation with the Division Chaplain.

There are also special feast days of significance to all Irish which should be celebrated in an appropriate manner:

1. August 21st -- Our Lady of Knock, Queen of Ireland;
2. March 17th -- St. Patrick's Day;
3. Easter Monday;
4. July 4th -- American Independence Day; and
5. September 13th -- Commodore John Barry Day.

The Chaplain may also be called upon to celebrate the Eucharist on such occasions as a Mass for the Hunger Strikers and Peace and Reconciliation in Ireland. (If the Chaplain is a Deacon or Brother, it would be necessary for him to enlist the services of one of the priests in a local parish).



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AOH Chaplains are also encouraged to take part in the annual Right to Life March in Washington, D.C. If the Chaplain's city or county has a St. Patrick's Day Parade, the Chaplain should participate, if possible. All AOH Chaplains are encouraged to attend the Major Degree of the order. Chaplains will not be assessed a fee to receive Degrees.

The Role of the Chaplain

An AOH Chaplain must recognize that the Order is a Catholic lay organization whose members must be practicing Catholics of Irish descent. In our day, especially with the Second Vatican Council and the Revised Code of Canon Law in 1983 specifying clearly and unequivocally the rights and duties of the Catholic laity, the AOH itself, as a fraternal society, has its own special role to play in the Church.

The AOH Chaplain is called to exercise his apostolic ministry for the members of the Ancient Order of Hibernians and their families, even as he is called to do so for all those to whom he has been assigned. For the Order and in collaboration with his Bishop, the Chaplain is a teacher, a shepherd, and a sanctifier of souls.

As a priest he is present as much as possible to encourage special attention to adolescents and youth, to be available to the poor and elderly, to the disabled and underprivileged. For in all these areas of charitable and social service activities are to be found members of the Ancient Order of Hibernians and their families. The Chaplain's presence by word and example has an impact and influence that only the Lord can measure. Hibernians love their priests and like to have them around as good shepherds.

A Chaplain should note the importance of the Eucharistic celebration in the lives of Hibernians and their families, for the Eucharistic sacrifice "is the center and culmination of the whole life of the Christian community" and certainly of the Hibernians on every level. As Chaplain, he would plan with officers and members the ways and means to promote attendance at Mass, even daily Mass, the frequent and fervent reception of the Sacraments, especially of penance and reconciliation and, of course the recitation of Our Lady's Rosary. The Chaplain should make provisions to celebrate the Sacrifice of the Mass for the members during various Hibernian feasts during the year.



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How can we summarize the role of the AOH Chaplain? Perhaps we could paraphrase the definition of the priest: To live in the midst of the community and Order without wishing to dominate by direction.

Organized Activity

A priest has many obligations in his parish which require his time and his effort. Therefore, as early as possible after the election of officers - there should be a meeting of the division, county or state officers, including the AOH Chaplain, for the purpose of discussing the particular programs in which the Chaplain would be asked to participate.

Nature of the Order

It is well that the nature and objectives of the Order be understood. Hibernians look to their Chaplains for encouragement and guidance so that their motivation may be duly spiritual and their thinking in harmony with the teaching of the Church and the policies of the local bishop and pastors.

The membership strength of the Order, its chain of organization and its record of accomplishment make possible the undertaking and effective implementation of major projects in support of the Church.

Working with the Members

Due to the nature of his office, the Chaplain can render service to the Order and its members and, through the divisions, to the community in which the divisions operate.



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Attendance at Meetings and Activities

It is desirable that the Chaplain attend all the meetings of the division, county, or state including executive meetings of the officers. Normally each division and county meets once a month while the state boards meet quarterly.

The Chaplain's advice is frequently needed by the officers and members, and his absence may result in the delay of important decisions that are to be made and voted upon. It is recognized, however, that the parish duties of a Chaplain may make it difficult for him to attend all meetings of the Order. At times there is discussion of controversial issues in which strong personal opinions and feelings may play a part. The presence of the Chaplain may well, and frequently does, keep strong feelings under control. In his presence, harsh and rash words will remain unsaid and hasty thoughts will remain unexpressed. However, in his participation in such discussions, it should be made clear that there must be at all times free and honest expression of thoughtful opinion. The examples of the Chaplain's own moderation will contribute greatly to the orderly conduct of such discussions. The virtues of Friendship, Unity and Christian Charity should always be remembered in any discussions.

The presence of the Chaplain at meetings adds greatly to the dignity and importance of the meetings. The prayers he says and the opinions he expresses will constitute a basic spiritual good to the Order and to the members. The Chaplain will begin every meeting with the opening prayer. (The Opening and Closing prayers are included at the end of this handbook.) He may be called upon to give a monthly spiritual message. In this high tech society, the Chaplain may wish to post his monthly spiritual message online. The Chaplain is also called upon to close the meeting with the closing prayer.

The Order recognizes that regular attendance may at times involve considerable sacrifice, but the influence of the Chaplain's presence means so much that it is hoped that each Chaplain will make the utmost effort to attend every meeting possible.



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State and National Conventions

The biennial State and National Conventions affords an opportunity to see the Ancient Order of Hibernians at work at the state and national level. The Chaplain's attendance at the state and national meetings, to learn in detail of the business of the Order at the state and national level and to obtain additional information from fellow Chaplains would be made by his jurisdiction and it would provide for the small expense which his attendance would involve.

Spiritual Presence

The presence of the Chaplain to lead the prayers at the wakes of members of the Order is vitally important. His presence offers spiritual solace to the bereaved family and good example to the members of the Order (A Wake Service for a deceased AOH Brother is included at the end of this handbook).

Committee Work

Through the operations of the different committees, in cooperation with the Chaplain, the influence of the Order may become widespread in the community.

Controversial Questions

Occasionally there arise in a community, in a jurisdiction or in a nation controversial questions in which the position of the Church or of Catholics is involved. Before any public action is taken with regard to such a matter, the AOH officers and the committee chairmen involved should sit down with the Chaplain and discuss the matter thoroughly, so that if the Order does take a position, or if it should ask its members to take a position, the question will be thoroughly understood and handled properly.



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Good Example

One of the most important contributions the Order may make to the life of its community is the example given by its members in their religious, social and business lives. For this purpose the presence of the Chaplain at as many meetings and activities as possible is highly desirable, enabling him to emphasize in his talks and in his conversations the importance of members of the Order giving outstanding example in their communities.

Charitable Works of the Order

It is of utmost importance that all the Chaplains are aware of, and encourage the members to support, the various charitable works of the Ancient Order of Hibernians.

Hibernian Charity: Hibernian Charity is a National Program of the Ancient Order of Hibernians in America Inc. It is the charitable fund of the AOH and is incorporated as a tax deductible 501 c (3) public charities. The Charity's three core projects are: Project St. Patrick, the Hibernian Hunger Project and Irish Heritage Education

Each of these projects, described in further detail below represents the very icons of the AOH whose labor of love is ground in the Christian Charity portion of our Motto, but incorporates the Loyalty and Friendship of its meaning.

In addition to these core projects, the Charity has raised tens of thousands of dollars members devastated by catastrophic events, and is offered to our membership as an umbrella program to raise tax deductible funds for specific charitable causes in your area. Membership support of Hibernian Charity projects is encouraged through individual, division and board donations; fundraisers; memorial donations and employee/employer matching contributions.



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Important Hibernian Charities

Project St. Patrick

The greatest danger to our Church today is the dwindling pool of dedicated men and women who are following religious vocations. The Church can ill-afford to lose worthy candidates due to financial considerations.

Project St. Patrick is the oldest and largest program under the Hibernian Charity umbrella. Together with matching donations from the Ladies AOH, Project St. Patrick provides yearly grants of financial support to men and women seeking a vocation in the Catholic Church.

In addition to donations from boards and divisions, individual support can be made through Memorial Donations in the name of loved ones. Donations to Project St. Patrick are contributions to our heritage, our faith and our legacy and enable the vision of St. Patrick to continue: to bring the Gospel and Eucharist to all people.

Hibernian Hunger Project

This is the Charity project that feeds thousands of People. The Irish understand hunger and homelessness in a way few other people ever will. No other people suffered from the terrors of hunger and poverty more than the Irish in the 1800's during "An Gorta Mor" (The Great Hunger) in Ireland which caused millions of Ireland's people to emigrate to America and other countries. Certainly a project commemorating The Great Hunger, working to encourage the alleviation of poverty and hunger in America, and throughout the world is a natural cause for the AOH to undertake.

The Hibernian Hunger Project is a nation-wide community service program designed to help those less fortunate than us through a variety of projects throughout the year.

Hibernian Charity also provides grants to AOH Hunger Projects in lower jurisdictions to commemorate "An Gorta Mor" with specific projects designed to aid the hungry and homeless in local communities.



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Irish Heritage Education

Education has been the main vehicle to steer the Irish from rag-tattered refugees to captains of business and industry. It has always been a priority for the Irish in America and educational funding is in dire need at all levels. Education has been and will continue to be the touchstone that elevates the Irish people. Hibernian Charity will support the financial needs of our member's children and grandchildren seeking a cultural education through projects such as **The Irish Way** and **The Study Abroad Programs**.

In addition to this and equally important are our awards and participation at such national education programs as: **National History Day** and the **National Conference of Social Studies**. These programs continue to encourage students of all ethnic backgrounds and influence educators to research and study Irish History.



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Prayers for Opening and Closing an AOH Meeting

OPENING PRAYER

(If the Chaplain is not present, the President or his designee may say the opening prayer.)

Chaplain: "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and in the name of St. Patrick, the Glorious Apostle of Ireland, I open this meeting and beseech our Heavenly father to watch over us and protect us. May He grant that peace and harmony will always remain among us, and that Friendship, Unity and Christian Charity will inspire all our deliberations, through Christ, Our Lord. Amen."

Conclude with the "**Our Father**", "**Hail Mary**" and "**Glory be**"

CLOSING PRAYER

Chaplain: "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and in the name of St. Patrick, the Glorious Apostle of Ireland, I declare this meeting closed. Grant O Lord, who makes the minds of the faithful to be of one will, that we, Your people, may love what You have commanded, and desire what You have promised, and that amid the changes of the world our hearts may ever love and obey You, through Christ, Our Lord, Amen."

Chaplain: "Let us pray for our deceased brethren and also for vocations."

All say the "**Our Father**", "**Hail Mary**" and "**Glory be**"

Chaplain: "Eternal rest grant to them, O Lord"

Members: "And let perpetual light shine upon them"

Chaplain: "May their souls and the souls of all the faithful departed rest in peace Amen".



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AOH Wake Service for a Deceased Brother

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In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen

Dear Friends and Brothers, we gather today to pray for our brother, _____, who has gone before us in faith. He has passed from death to life in company with the Lord Jesus who died and rose to new life. Purified now of his faults, we pray that God may welcome him among all the Saints of Heaven.

Repeat after me:

Lord have mercy (r) *Lord have mercy.*

Christ have mercy (*Christ have mercy*).

Lord have mercy (*Lord have mercy*).

Our response will be: Pray for him.

Holy Mary, Mother of God (r) *Pray for him.*

Saint Patrick, Patron Saint of Ireland (r) *Pray for him.*

Saint Brigid (r) *Pray for him.*

Saint Columcille (r) *Pray for him.*

Saint Oliver Plunkett (r) *Pray for him.*

Saint (name of deceased's Patron Saint) (r) *Pray for him.*

All the Saints and Martyrs of Heaven (r) *Pray for him.*

Our response will be: Lord hear us.

Christ pardon all his faults (r) *Lord hear us.*

Christ remember the good he has done (r) *Lord hear us.*

Christ receive him into eternal life (r) *Lord hear us.*

Christ comfort all who mourn (r) *Lord hear us.*

With Christ there is mercy and fullness of redemption, let us pray to our heavenly Father in the words that Jesus taught us. **Our Father**, etc.

As he hung upon the cross, Jesus gave us Mary as His Mother, let us join all generations to call her Blessed. **Hail Mary**, etc.



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AOH Wake Service for a Deceased Brother

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The Good Shepherd leads us to lasting life; let us praise the love that has saved us.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

Let us pray. Almighty God and Father, by the mystery of the Cross, You have made us strong; by your resurrection, you have sealed us as Your own, look kindly upon your servant, _____ who during life joined us in the bonds of Friendship, Unity and Christian Charity.

We, the members of the Ancient Order of Hibernians, offer our prayers for the happy repose of his soul. Now that he has passed to his eternal reward happy in the consolation of his faith and trusting in Your infinite mercy, count him among Your Saints in Heaven.

We believe your promise to prepare a place for us. Join us all together again beyond this vale of tears in **Tir na n'Og**, the place of the blessed, and make us companions of the Holy Angels and Saints in Your Heavenly Kingdom.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Eternal rest grant to him, O Lord. And let perpetual light shine upon him. May his soul and all the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.



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Prayer for Vocations

Loving and Gracious God, You are the giver of all good gifts. We ask You to look upon us in Your kindness and mercy and grant more laborers to Your vineyard. We especially ask You to send more worthy Priests, Brothers, and Sisters into Your Holy Church.

You are attentive to those who ask, seek and knock. Behold Your faithful servants who ask, seek and knock for the building up of Faith, which cannot be done without the aid of good Shepherds. Through the intercession of St. Patrick, St. Columba, St. Brigid and that of the Blessed and Ever-Virgin Mother of Your Son, we beseech You and ask You to hear us O Lord. Amen.

Prayer to Saint Bridget

With hearts full of confidence, we turn to you, O Blessed Bridget, in these times of darkness and unbelief, to invoke your powerful intercession on behalf of those who are separated from the true Church of Jesus Christ. Conscious of your deep knowledge of the cruel sufferings of our crucified Savior, we beseech you to obtain the gift of Faith for all those who are outside the one fold, so that all the scattered sheep may return to the one true Shepherd, our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen

Saint Bridget, fearless in the service of God, pray for us.

Saint Bridget, patient in suffering and humiliation, pray for us.

Saint Bridget, marvelous in thy love toward Jesus and Mary, pray for us.

Irish Blessing

May the road rise to meet you.

May the wind always be at your back.

May the sun shine warm upon your face,

And rains fall soft upon your fields.

And until we meet again,

May God hold you in the palm of His hand.

Ancient Order of Hibernians in America

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