

Saturday, October 8, 2022, 10:00 am: Please join us for the Memorial Service for Five Babies at Skyway Memorial Park, 13686 Old Skyway, Magalia, CA



Read story below from May 2018 to see why this memorial has transformed the lives of many who have attended a service.

What is the Garden of Innocence? Garden of Innocence provides dignified burials for abandoned and unidentified children, so no child leaves this earth without someone who cared. The organization travels to different states and counties and helps the people in that community set up a Garden of Innocence. They teach communities how to care for the abandoned and unidentified children in their county or state. They bring a community together to care for a child that had no one yesterday.

What was the service like in 2018? Many Knights of Columbus Councils and Assemblies came in support and participated in this event that took place on Saturday, April 7, 2018 at the Skyway Memorial Park. With the leadership of three District Marshals, the 10 Color Corp detail performed a procession with Funeral Escort and Graveside Honors. In attendance were Senior Marshals Tim Fukuda, Don Snow, and Elbert Holmes. From Assembly 67: CCC Tom Cunningham Jr. and Sir Knights Kieran O’Leary, Javier Vaquera, John Pereira, Greg Wright, Greg DeCristofaro and Tom Cunningham Sr.

Also in attendance were several Third Degree Knights from Paradise and Chico. Headstones for the departed infants were purchased by local Councils and Assemblies. A deceased and discarded baby boy and two deceased and discarded baby girls in Butte County, CA—these innocent, forgotten children were a terrible local tragedy. Sadly, this tragedy is repeated in many counties across this Nation. Abandoned and unnamed, these babies may have been cremated and forgotten forever. But not in this County. The Coroner had agreed to let those who cared an opportunity to give these babies a proper burial. April rain was threatening like withheld tears at the Garden of Innocence in the Pines in Magalia, California. Those gathering to attend the memorial service viewed the graves of other almost forgotten children as they marveled at the magnificent view of the surrounding mountains from the Skyway Memorial Park plateau. The Fourth Degree Color Guard Escorts from the Knights of Columbus prepared a grand entrance for the remains of the children while speakers and musicians made final preparations by the microphone.

The chatter of the crowd subsided during the welcoming speech. When the remains of the children in the wooden urns arrived and passed under the swords of the Color Guard only a whisper of wind was heard. Then the crowd formed a chain of love, a spontaneous circle, for the opening prayer. Triumph over tragedy grew by the moment. The babies' urns were displayed with blankets and stuffed animals. Then each child was given a name. The baby boy: William. One baby girl: Marjorie. The other baby girl: Isabella. Eulogies for the babies were presented by three local children in the form of three special poems, each written by Ridgeview High School students in special memory of William, Marjorie, and Isabella. After each poem Michael McCollester serenaded each baby with a personal song.

As the memorial continued, those in the chain of love passed the urns of William, Marjorie, and Isabella from one end of the circle to the other. Everyone took time to hold a baby's urn, pause for a moment, and then pass the baby on until all had touched every baby's urn. Now William, Marjorie, and Isabella were placed in their final resting places, three shallow graves. The Chain of Love formed into a line. Everyone took a turn scooping up handfuls of rose petals and letting them flutter onto the urns of the babies. As if their souls, now unforgotten, were off to Heaven, a colorful bundle of balloons was released to drift across the mountains and into the sky. I know there was a closing memorial affirmation and some announcements. I can't recall. Balloons for William, Marjorie, and Isabella—that was enough. They were not forgotten.

Note: Gardens of Innocence are multiplying around California. Motto: "If No One Grieves, No One Will Remember!" For more information, see the website: <https://www.gardenofinnocence.org/> It was an honor and privilege to serve as a member of the Knights of Columbus Honor Guard for the burial of three innocent children abandoned after death. The Knights Color Corp were joined by brother Knights, students and members of our Christian community. We gathered in a chain of love as we passed their baby urns, one to another. We gathered to remember and celebrate the lives of William, Marjory and Isabella. We gathered to tell them that they were no forgotten. We gathered to tell them that they were loved and that their lives mattered. We gathered to celebrate their going home to be with Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. It saddens us to know that infant abandonment and death are part of our society. We need to pray for the future of our children. If the situation arises again, know that the Knights of Columbus will be there to honor their life even in death.

The entire ceremony can be viewed at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FHjH8KbRznA>

