

Knights of Pythias

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The **Knights of Pythias** is a fraternal organization and secret society^[2] founded at Washington, DC on 19 February, 1864.

The Knights of Pythias was the first fraternal organization to receive a charter under an act of the United States Congress^[3]. It was founded by Justus H. Rathbone, who had been inspired by a play by the Irish poet John Banim about the legend of Damon and Pythias. This legend illustrates the ideals of loyalty, honor and friendship that are central to the order.

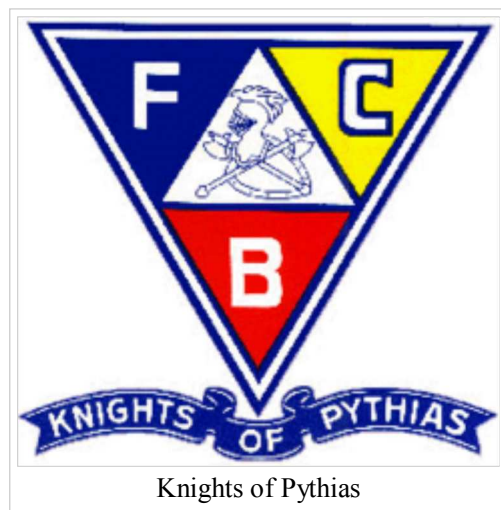
The order has over two thousand lodges in the United States and around the world, with a total membership of over 50,000 in 2003. Some lodges meet in structures referred to as Pythian Castles.

The order's auxiliaries are the **Pythian Sisters**, the less serious **Dramatic Order Knights of Khorassan**, **The Nomads of Avrudaka**, and two youth organizations: the **Pythian Sunshine Girls** and the **Junior Order, Knights of Pythias** for boys.

Membership requires "Belief in a Supreme Being".

Degrees of Pythian Knighthood in the subordinate lodge (or Castle) are

1. Page
2. Esquire
3. Knight



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Knights of Pythias membership certificate, 1890.^[1]


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Notable Pythian Knights

- Hugo Black, U.S. Supreme Court Justice
- William Jennings Bryan - U.S. Senator from Nebraska ^[4]
- Benjamin Cardozo U.S. Supreme Court Justice^[5]
- Warren G. Harding - U.S. President ^[6]

- Official Knight of Pythias page (<http://www.pythias.org/>)
- History of the Knights of Pythias and the KofP's Affiliated Orders (http://mill-valley.freemasonry.biz/marin_knights_pythias.htm)

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