

Knights Lecture: Week 1(8/31/2014)

Welcome back! I know we are all excited to be back, and anxious to find what this new academic year will have in store for us. Whether we're Seniors preparing for comps, in the initial stages of writing a Thesis, or diving head first into our year-long design project; Juniors diving deeper into our academic pursuits and taking what they will remember as some of the most challenging and rewarding classes of our undergraduate career; or Sophomores adjusting to a life without tri-weekly learning communities. But what about the Freshmen?

I'm sure the first thing we noticed upon arriving at tonight's meeting is the absence of last year's seniors. The juniors are now seniors, sophomores are juniors, and the freshmen are sophomores. To fill this gap that has been left by the natural progression we have made through our collegiate career I would like to challenge all of you to bring in at least one new member to the council.

On Thursday, at the annual Mass of the Holy Spirit, which marks the beginning of our academic year, Cardinal Wuerl spoke about the violence against non-Muslims in Iraq and Syria. In his remarks he said, *Today our solidarity with our brothers and sisters of our faith and other faiths in a part of the world where there is clearly an effort to eliminate them is something that we simply cannot, in conscience, ignore. Often we're asked 'How is it possible that in human history atrocities occur? They occur for two reasons: because there are those prepared to commit them and there are those who remain silent. And the actions in Iraq and Syria today, what's happening to women, children, men, their displacement-as the least of the things happening-is something we really are not free to ignore and sometimes all we have to do is raise our voice.*

As members of the Knights of Columbus we pledge solidarity with our priests and religious, but what is there really anything that is preventing us from being in solidarity with our brothers and sisters in other parts of the world that are facing such extreme persecution in Iraq and Syria. The Knights of Columbus was founded by Father McGivney because he both saw that Catholics were facing persecution and believed that he could do something to help them.

Cardinal Wuerl said atrocities occur for two reasons: because there are those prepared to commit them and there are those who remain silent. In the Gospel of Matthew Jesus says that we are called to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us. So, as we conclude our first meeting of the new year, I ask you to do two things; the first pray for the Christians in Iraq and Syria and for their persecutors, the second is to not remain silent when atrocities against human beings occur.