



# Knights of Columbus Council 9542

## THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA

Washington, DC 20064

*In Service to One, In Service to All*

“Prepare to die.” We aren’t usually accosted by these odd words characteristic of a James Bond villain. Usually one does not dwell on the ever-nearing end of his or her life. Usually one does not overlook the uncertainties of daily life for the finality of death. Usually discussing one’s mortality is considered taboo, never to be discussed aloud. Usually one does not spend his or her life planning his or her (state) funeral— that is, the hymns, the processions, the clothes to be buried in, the epitaph, the number of days to be spent in mourning, etc.— but our present Worthy Recorder is no usual individual.

So too is each of the Christian faithful. And so too is each of us as Knights of Columbus. For us, our earthly lives have been divinely ordained to last for an exact amount of time, just enough to carry out our own part of the mission that is the magnificent enterprise of the evangelization of the world. Our lives, then, are not truly ours to squander as we please, but gifts, personal and intimate from God, the Author of Life, not to be taken for granted. We cannot sit listless, especially with all of the injustices and the suffering happening around and being experienced by each of us.

The saints of the Church certainly did not waste their lives closed off from the world they lived in. Upon answering God’s call for each of them, they would devote their lives to spreading the Good News whether people listened or not. The challenges in doing so, however daunting they may have seemed, would not deter them, but strengthen their resolve. Not even the threat of a cruel and agonizing death would shake the resolve of the countless martyrs of our Faith. As we honor all of them today, on the Solemnity of All Saints, we recall that they are not merely figures for children’s stories, but heroes to model our lives after and to call upon for help in the same struggles they faced during their earthly lives.

“We are all called to be great saints, don’t miss the opportunity,”<sup>1</sup> Mother Angelica would remind her EWTN audience. The saints have always been called from every walk of life; the circumstances and the details of one’s life are insignificant in the glory that comes from obeying the will of God Almighty. The only thing keeping one from becoming a saint is the self; one places for him or herself the limit of how far he or she will give witness to the Faith. Being a saint certainly isn’t easy— as Flannery O’Connor wrote, “She could never be a saint, but she thought she could be a martyr if they killed her quick.”<sup>2</sup>— but God is always ready to help those who turn to Him through the difficulties characteristic of living apart from the world.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church states plainly, “‘All Christians in any state or walk of life are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of charity.’ All are called to holiness: ‘Be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.’”<sup>3</sup> Holiness is not something to grasp at after one is settled in life, feels secure, or when seems convenient. The call is constant, the call is real, and the call is now. Our deeds

<sup>1</sup> *Mother Angelica Live* (EWTN, 1984-2002).

<sup>2</sup> Flannery O’Connor, “A Temple of the Holy Ghost,” in *A Good Man is Hard to Find: And Other Stories*, ed. Flannery O’Connor (San Diego: Harcourt, Inc., 1977), 95.

<sup>3</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd. ed., 2013, accessed October 30, 2015, [http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc\\_css/archive/catechism/p3s1c3a2.htm](http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/p3s1c3a2.htm).

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don't need to be great in the eyes of history. Recall these words attributed to Blessed Mother Teresa, "Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things with great love." And recognition for doing so cannot distract one from living the Christian life! Our Holy Father knows this all too well. Rather than becoming comfortable in our daily routines, every Christian must be prepared for martyrdom, "We must be willing to die for our faith," he says, "even if the Lord does not give us this honor."<sup>4</sup> To give one's life doesn't only consist of being killed, he said, but "to give one's life, to have the spirit of a martyrdom, is to surrender it in duty, in silence, in prayer, in the fulfillment of duty; in this silence of everyday life; to give one's life little by little."<sup>5</sup>

We, then, cannot afford to waste any time dwelling on the rewards of eternal life if we are blind to the realities and situations around us. They're not just unfortunate coincidences that make for the news— God specially allows these situations to occur in each of our lifetimes, to test us and give us a cause to take up. As Saint Augustine observed, "Bad times, hard times, this is what people keep saying; but let us live well, and times shall be good. We are the times: Such as we are, such are the times."<sup>6</sup>

To close, I invite you to reflect on the life of Venerable Fr. McGivney. Though he is remembered most frequently as being the founder of our Order, his vocation in life was that of a simple parish priest in New Haven, CT. He lived in a time when families were all too frequently at risk of being broken up upon the untimely death of the breadwinner. Though Catholics were ostracized as untrustworthy outsiders, Father McGivney, all too conscious of his religious duties, set his mind to aiding these poor and at risk. Through his fidelity to his calling in life, the Knights of Columbus arose to provide for others when no one else would lift a finger to do so. He was engaged in his assignments, ministered to the faithful, and never lost sight of those in need. He acted faithfully and well, like countless saints and others before him. He was ready to die doing so like the Jesuits, the religious order with the most martyrs, whom he studied with during his time in seminary. Yet God chose him for a different mission, one to accomplish well. We too must answer God's call for each of us and set our whole being into doing His will. We may not know to what end we are called, but that is beyond us and our need to know. We have been called, now it's up to us to answer.

May God bless you, and God love you!

Faternally,

SK Thomas Wong

<sup>4</sup> Elise Harris, "Pope Francis: Every Christian Must Be Prepared for Martyrdom," *National Catholic Register*, October 30, 2015, Saturday; <http://www.ncregister.com/daily-news/pope-francis-every-christian-must-be-prepared-for-martyrdom/#ixzz3qlbcUZHa> (accessed October 30, 2015).

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> R.A. Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of Saint Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 40.

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