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## “The Courage Catholics Need Today”

- Introduction
  - Tonight’s brief talk is entitled, “The Courage Catholics Need Today”
  - Last Friday, we celebrated the liturgical memorial of St. John Paul II. The Gospel for the Day was Jesus’ words about reading the signs of the times.
  - John Paul II was someone who lived that Gospel and was constantly reading the signs of the times.
    - Anthropological Crisis at the point of Vatican II
    - Crisis of unforgiven guilt.
  - But he addressed one crisis in his inaugural homily, which is in the Office of Readings for the Church every October 22: *Non abbiate paura!*
    - “Brothers and Sisters, do not be afraid to welcome Christ and accept his power. ... Do not be afraid. Open wide the doors for Christ. ... Do not be afraid. Christ knows ‘what is in man.’ He alone knows it. So often today man does not know what is within him, in the depths of his mind and heart. So often he is uncertain about the meaning of his life on this earth. He is assailed by doubt, a doubt that turns into despair. We ask you therefore, we beg you with humility and trust, let Christ speak to man. He alone has words of life, yes, of eternal life.”
    - He saw that fear was eating man alive. He saw that so many demagogues were exploiting that fear. He saw that the Church was weak because of fear.
  - Pope Benedict returned to it in his own inaugural homily, because the problem has not disappeared.
    - “My mind goes back to 22 October 1978, when Pope John Paul II began his ministry here in Saint Peter’s Square. His words on that occasion constantly echo in my ears: ‘Do not be afraid! Open wide the doors for Christ!’ The Pope was addressing the mighty, the powerful of this world, who feared that Christ might take away something of their power if they were to let him in, if they were to allow the faith to be free. ... [But] the Pope was also speaking to everyone, especially the young. Are we not perhaps all afraid in some way? If we let Christ enter fully into our lives, if we open ourselves totally to him, are we not afraid that He might take something away from us? Are we not perhaps afraid to give up something significant, something unique, something that makes life so beautiful? Do we not then risk ending up diminished and deprived of our freedom? And once again the Pope said: No! If we let Christ into our lives, we lose nothing, nothing, absolutely nothing of what makes life free, beautiful and great. No! Only in this friendship are the doors of life opened wide. Only in this friendship is the great potential of human existence truly revealed. Only in this friendship do we experience beauty and liberation. And so, today, with great strength and great conviction, on the basis of long personal experience of life, I say to you, dear young people: Do not be afraid of Christ! He takes nothing away, and he gives you everything. When we give ourselves to him, we receive a hundredfold in return. Yes, open, open wide the doors to Christ – and you will find true life. Amen.
  - Pope Francis similarly has been speaking like a broken record about “parrhesia,” the boldness that comes from the Holy Spirit, with which we’re called to speak up, to persevere, to love and, as he likes to say, to get “dirty” in caring for others.
  - All of these points are reading the same signs of the times and recognize that the crucial need for courage continues unabated.
- The importance of courage
  - One of the most common phrases in Sacred Scripture is “Be not afraid!”
    - It appears 104 times in the Old Testament, 44 times in the New.

- Against our fears, God insistently tells us to take courage.
  - Jesus tells us not to be afraid of his call (Lk 5:10), not to be afraid of drowning at sea (Mt 8:26), not to be afraid of wars and insurrections (Lk 21:9), not to be afraid of the death of loved ones (Lk 8:50), not to be afraid of those who can only kill the body but can't harm the soul (Mt 10:28), and not to be afraid of what will happen to him in his Passion (Jn 14:1). To believe in him, to trust in his accompaniment, to have faith in his victory over suffering and death, he suggests, is to be filled with courage.
- But we live at a time of so many fears.
  - Our fears ultimately go straight back to the Fall, to original sin, and impact so many areas of our life.
  - As toddlers, many of us fear monsters and the dark, thunder and lightning, strangers, doctors, dentists, and dogs.
  - As we grow, other fears take their place. We fear snakes, roaches, rats and bats. We worry about failing ourselves and others. We're phobic about public speaking. We dread loneliness, not being liked or having friends, having relationships break down or never form in the first place.
  - We fear betrayal, humiliation, rejection, or irrelevance. We're scared of getting fired, of financial collapse, poverty and misery. We fear being judged or falsely accused. We fear something terrible happening to someone we love.
  - We fear losing control, becoming debilitated, or losing our mind. We fear missing out, not seeing the world and at the end of our life, looking back with regret that we had placed the ladder of success against the wrong wall.
  - We ultimately fear suffering, death, the possibility that hell is real and that, in our weakness, we might indirectly choose it.
  - These fears and others devour our souls and psyches.
- We see these fears enfeebling the Church
  - We also see fear eating away so many in the Church like a metastasizing cancer.
  - I often get asked what I think is the biggest challenge — or need or crisis — facing the Church in the United States.
  - “Faith” is always an appropriate answer to that query: since God is always faithful, what we need is to trust in him, bank on his promises, receive well the help he gives, and respond wholeheartedly. After Jesus gave a parable about persevering prayer or faith-in-action, he asked, “When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?” (Lk 18:8). It's an open question. The Church in every age, like the first apostles, must beg, “Lord, increase our faith!” (Lk 17:5), since every problem the Church faces requires faith to unleash divine remedy.
  - Over the last several years, however, when prompted about what the Church in our country needs most, I have been responding, “Courage!” While there is no doubt a widespread crisis of faith, I think a more urgent issue is that, among those with faith, there's a softness and timidity before the challenges and crosses we face.
  - One area is with regard to defending Religious Freedom
    - We're living in an age in which popular culture routinely mocks Christian teaching and attacks Christians.
    - We're treated as bigots for upholding Christ's teaching on marriage, as misogynists for defending the sanctity of every life, as traitors for treating immigrants the way we would treat Christ.
    - We're being sued for not baking cakes or renting halls or compromising our consciences in favor of the culturally-correct *zeitgeist*.
    - When Jews, for example, face anti-Semitism and Muslims confront Islamophobia, they respond vigorously and marshal the public to get involved. We Catholics, however, despite our greater numbers, largely let bigots get away with it. Anti-

Catholicism is the last acceptable prejudice because we tolerate it, because we don't have the resolve to stand united against the cultural bullies.

- Before the legion of elites forcing their values revolution on everyone else, many Catholics, instead of witnessing to Jesus and the faith, have entered, as Cardinal Sean O'Malley has famously quipped, a witness protection program.
- Another concerns Church Leadership
  - We're living at a time when one of the big issues in priestly (and episcopal) leadership is conflict aversion. Pastoral problems are often ducked rather than addressed. Neuralgic and unpopular teachings are neglected rather than named. For many, not hurting another's feelings or offending another's sensibilities, rather than charity in truth, is the operative moral praxis and leadership style.
  - This faint-heartedness also exists with regard to facing conspicuous problems plaguing the Church: clergy who violate their sacred promises, Catholic politicians who betray God and their faith to win elections, faithful who require fraternal correction with regard to practices that everyone knows are immoral.
- A third concerns defending and sharing our faith
  - We need courage because speaking about our faith in the face of others touches on many of the deepest and most common fears people have.
    - The fear of public speaking.
    - The fear of losing friends and being alone.
    - The fear of not being liked.
    - The fear of losing the argument, because we don't know our faith well enough, or we're not quick on our feet, or the other person is smarter or a better debater.
    - The fear of saying something the wrong way and living to regret it.
    - The fear of failing, letting the Lord himself down.
    - The fear of disappointing and unintentionally hurting others' feelings.
    - The fear of rejection.
    - The fear of being ridiculed.
    - The fear of conflict and lack of harmony.
    - The fear of being judged unfairly, falsely accused.
    - The fear, in some places, of various types of suffering we might undergo as a result of giving witness to the truth, including, in some places, imprisonment, torture and death.
  - Because of this, many Christians, including those who are most outgoing and talkative, begin to say that entering the silence of the desert with Jesus isn't such a bad idea after all.
  - But we're not the first: Moses, Jeremiah, Gideon, Jonah, Isaiah all had it. Peter, Andrew, James and John were afraid. Paul had to be consoled by Jesus. But the same Lord who helped them overcome their fears can help us.
- The need for courage has been on full display with regard to the way many have faced the situation of COVID.
  - From the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, some Church leaders and many Catholics have been criticized for buckling so easy, especially before civil government leaders, and not being bold enough in maintaining access to the sacraments of eternal life.
  - At the beginning of the lockdowns, seeing the way that Church leaders were responding, I wrote an article for the Register about the 1576 plague that menaced Milan and eventually took 25,000 lives, which I think provides a context for the type of courage that should mark the Church in every age and in particular every crisis.
  - In 1576 Milan, the civil government fled the city out of fear. The Archbishop of Milan, Saint Charles Borromeo, took over, assured the people he would not abandon

them and, together with priests from the parishes and religious orders, began to care for their material and spiritual needs. He organized hospitals, cared for orphans, and brought the sacraments to those who were quarantined in their homes. He got priests to offer Masses in public squares and the middle of streets so that people could participate from their houses. He sold his personal goods and much of the diocesan treasury to feed the hungry and had the tapestries of his residence converted into blankets to warm the poor.

- As a Good Shepherd, he was courageously willing to risk his life to care for both the souls and the bodies of those entrusted to him and was able to persuade so many of his brother priests to join him. Recalling how Christ died for them first, he declared that Christ “does not even request this pathetic life of ours, but only that we put it at risk.” He challenged them to pay attention not only to what can kill the body, like the pestilence, but also to what can harm the soul, commenting, “the devout souls of our brethren languish with desire for divine things.”
- He once scaled a mountain of corpses to give absolution and viaticum to a man at the top of the heap who had been placed there prematurely.
- His example of courage tied to faith and charity will always remain a mirror for the Church and her leaders.
- Courage and the fight against sin
  - It’s easy to point out the specks in others’ eyes.
  - At a personal level, many of us are also wimpish in the fight against sin and the effort to love and grow in holiness.
  - This is something we should all be pondering more as we approach All Saints Day on Monday and as we prepare for a month in which we ponder the last things of death and judgment, heaven and hell.
- I hope by this point that everyone is sufficiently persuaded that Catholics need courage today. What I’d like to do in the rest of my talk, before I take your questions, is to discuss twelve habits that are connected to growth in courage. It’s not meant to be an exhaustive list but it is representative one. To grow in courage, we need to grow in these virtues and practices.
- Virtues and practices we need to grow in courage
  - Faith
    - The first habit needed is faith, to recognize that Christ, who promised to be with us always until the end of time (Mt 28:20), is good to his word.
    - Faith has made so many strong. We can think about Eleazar and the mother of the Seven Sons in the Second Book of Maccabees. We can think about the faith of the Syro-Phoenician woman and of the Centurion whose son was at the point of death.
    - Faith likewise helps us trust in God’s providential care. There’s a temptation, especially in times of crisis, to try to take control even over things that human beings cannot control. This can come from a practical atheism, from living as if God doesn’t exist or doesn’t care. Faith inspires us to do all we can, but in tandem, rather than apart, from God, knowing that our life is in God’s hands.
    - The first practice is faith.
  - Prayer
    - The second is prayer. Prayer is faith in action.
    - The more we turn to God, the more we recognize in every circumstance that he who triumphed over both sin and death is with us, strengthening us.
      - As St. Paul wrote in his Letter to the Romans — it would have been tomorrow morning’s first reading at Daily Mass if we didn’t have the feast of the apostles Simon and Jude — “If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but handed him over for us all, how will he not also give us everything else along with him? ... What will separate us from the love of Christ? Will anguish, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or the sword? ... No, in

all these things we conquer overwhelmingly through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor present things, nor future things, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

- Prayer helps us to have this confidence.
  - Prayer also nourishes us in our divine filiation. This morning at daily Mass St. Paul told us that we don’t know how to pray as we ought but the Spirit intercedes with us with inexpressible groaning, helping us to cry out “Abba!” He changes us to pray as beloved sons and daughters, and that sense of filiation cultivated in prayer allows us to live boldly, because we know that we have in our corner the one who has triumphed over Satan, sin and death and will never abandon us. Jesus spoke about this in St. Matthew’s Gospel when he said:
    - Matt. 10:26-33. “Therefore do not be afraid of them. Nothing is concealed that will not be revealed, nor secret that will not be known. What I say to you in the darkness, speak in the light; what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops. And do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather, be afraid of the one who can destroy both soul and body in Gehenna. Are not two sparrows sold for a small coin? Yet not one of them falls to the ground without your Father’s knowledge. Even all the hairs of your head are counted. So do not be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.
  - Correlatively, we also need courage to win the “battle of prayer,” to overcome the typical struggles to prioritize prayer, to fight against discouragement, dryness, distractions, acedia, fatigue and other obstacles.
- Prudence
    - The third practice is prudence.
    - Prudence helps us to discern the good in each circumstance among many competing goods — and to choose the right means to achieving it. It helps us set a proper rule or measure, something desperately needed in times of crisis when certain goods can be emphasized out of measure and others can be forgotten. Aristotle, and St. Thomas Aquinas after him, taught that moral virtue is a middle point between two extremes, deficiency and excess. Compassion, for example, is the mean between apathy and sentimental indulgence. Courage is found within the extremes of cowardice and recklessness.
    - In the context of the pandemic, for example, prudence should have helped us to see that an “overabundance of caution” is not a virtue but a vice. Prudence focuses on the right measure of caution, balancing, for example, the duty we need to protect those most vulnerable to infection by “flattening the curve” through social distancing, hand-washing, and various other practices, with other needs, like providing for one’s family, nourishing one’s soul and others’, providing goods and services, etc.
    - Prudence assists courage in helping people know how to take the right risks.
  - Acts of Courage
    - The fourth is practicing acts of courage. Like any virtue, we form the habit by repeated acts.
    - When we pray for courage, God always responds by giving us his grace, but he also gives us opportunities to exercise our moral muscles, so that we might learn how to do what we ought despite human fears. And God gives us plenty of opportunity to exercise courage
    - Courage is, strictly speaking, not the absence of fear, but doing what we ought to do despite our fear because of the strength that we receive from Christ.
    - Speaking up, speaking in public, going outside other comfort zones, etc., helps it to become easier the next time.
  - Charity
    - The fifth practice is charity.
    - Charity helps us to sacrifice ourselves for the good of others.

- “No one has greater love,” Jesus said during the Last Supper, “to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” (Jn 15:13), and charity motivates us to take risks, even dangerous ones, to protect and provide for those we love.
  - Moms and Dads, even the most temperamentally timid and conflict adverse, instinctively protect their children in the face of gunmen, bombs, and tornados.
  - The greater the love, the greater the audacity.
  - Courage, as just mentioned, does not mean fearlessness, but doing what we ought despite our fear, and love gives us the strength to overcome fear and do what love demands.
- Pondering the Martyrs
- The sixth practice I’ll mention is pondering the martyrs.
  - In the early Church, the faithful would regularly visit the tombs of the martyrs. During the age of persecution, they did it to beg their intercession, so that they would remain faithful under trial. After the persecutions ceased, they did so, so that they might have live the Christian life with heroic faith, hope and love.
  - It’s possible for us to follow in their footsteps and go to the tombs of Peter, Paul, Agnes, Cecilia, Lawrence and others in Rome, of Lucy in Syracuse, Agatha in Catania, and so many others. But we have an extraordinary shrine close to home that we should all take more seriously.
  - There’s no better place in the United States to be formed in courage than the Shrine of Our Lady of Martyrs in Auriesville, New York, a short distance from Albany. It is the site of the martyrdom of three of the eight North American Martyrs, Saints Isaac Jogues, Rene Goupil and Jean de Lalande and the birthplace of Saint Kateri Tekakwitha.
  - If one can’t help becoming more Marian visiting Guadalupe, Lourdes and Fatima or more Eucharistic at Lanciano or Orvieto, one also can’t help growing in holy audacity in Auriesville.
  - I have recently been spending a lot of time there, praying, traversing the sacred spots fertilized by their blood, leading pilgrimages of young adults from New York City to ponder the faith and love that made them dauntless until the end, and celebrating Masses in the unique 8,000 seat Church on the grounds — called the “Colosseum” after the Flavian Amphitheater in Rome where so many early Christian martyrs proved that they had more valor than the greatest gladiators.
  - The Shrine is truly one of the great treasures in U.S. Catholicism, but also one of our country’s most underutilized spiritual resource. If we’re going to have a rebirth of Catholic courage in the U.S., I think the school of the North American Martyrs and the Lily of the Mohawks is going to play a major role. It’s impossible to get to know Saints Isaac, Rene, Jean and Kateri and not be fortified by their fortitude.
  - Saint Isaac Jogues’ life is one of the greatest examples of courage and apostolic ardor in the Church’s annals. During his first Missionary journey (1636-1644) to Quebec and Ontario as a Jesuit missionary, he, along with lay missionary (and eventually Jesuit brother) Rene Goupil, was captured by the Mohawks, dragged hundreds of miles to Auriesville, and brutally tortured. Goupil was soon tomahawked to death for blessing a Mohawk boy. Jogues, however, survived and after a couple of years was rescued through the help of the Dutch. He returned to France, where, because his missionary letters had made him famous, he was treated as a hero. His thumbs and index fingers had been bitten off by captors to prevent him from using guns, but it also meant, by the rubrics of the time, he couldn’t hold the Host in the celebration of the Mass, leading to his going 17 months without receiving the Eucharist and 20 months without celebrating Mass. Pope Urban VIII, however, gave him an exemption, saying that it would be inappropriate for a loving martyr for Christ not to drink Christ’s blood. Despite his mangled hands and other injuries, he courageously returned to the Missions, and even more courageously returned to Auriesville in 1646, with Jesuit lay brother Jean Lalande, aware that it might eventually mean their death. Out of love for God

and those who had tortured him, they took the risk — and were tomahawked to death in October 1646. But their death was not in vain.

- The blood of the martyrs is the seed of Christians. Ten years after their martyrdom, St. Kateri Tekakwitha was born in the village. When she was 20, she asked the new wave of Jesuits who had come to her village for instruction in prayer and baptism. Normally candidates for baptism needed to wait two years, to test their faith to ensure they would keep it despite the many hardships it might bring, including martyrdom. After one month, however, her faith was recognized as strong and mature enough to endure. Her sufferings on account of her baptism— from her uncle, from her fellow residents, even from the children — would become so acute that the Jesuits, to save her life, arranged for her escape to their mission south of Montreal, where she would spend the next and last three years of her life dedicated to prayer and to charity even in the most brutal wintry conditions. She is a simple, approachable, contagious example of the courage that loves God with all one's mind, heart, soul and strength, without counting the costs.
- A pilgrimage to Auriesville — to the place of St. Kateri's humble birth and SS. Isaac's, Rene's and Jean's glorious birth into eternity — will help you breath the air of audacity and bolster you with the courage needed to remain faithful on the pilgrimage of life.
- Cooperation with the Holy Spirit
  - The seventh practice is docility to, and cooperation with, the Holy Spirit.
  - On Holy Thursday, the apostles left the Upper Room and cowardly betrayed the Lord. 53 days later, filled with the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, they left and boldly announced the Gospel, even when the same Sanhedrin that had Jesus crucified was trying to intimidate them. With the Spirit's help, they recognizing that if savage execution couldn't keep Jesus in the tomb, they had nothing to fear. They show us what parrhesia looks like.
  - This Gift of Fortitude that made them and the martyrs strong will make us strong.
- Asceticism
  - The eight practice is asceticism.
  - In an age of affirmation and of the consumerist, quasi-religious pursuit of the maximization of pleasure, self-denial and picking up our Cross each day to follow Christ seem almost insane. A healthy but vigorous asceticism is one of the things very much needed today in the clergy and Catholic people in general.
  - Many do not moderate their appetites for food and sweets at all and their waistlines, sugar and cholesterol numbers show it. Others drink too much, smoke, and can't discipline their addictions to television, the internet or social media. Others can't conquer their anger.
  - Courage is needed to train ourselves through mortification to say yes to God and no to the concupiscence of the eyes, flesh and pride of life.
- Chastity
  - Perhaps the biggest addiction of our age, the biggest weakness, is to lust. We see that in the extraordinary profits that flow from pornography, which dwarfs in annual revenue everything earned by all of the major sports leagues. We see it in how we can't eliminate the demand for prostitution, even for human trafficking victims.
  - But we need more here than the courage to be continent, which is to abstain from sexual sin. We need the courage to love God with all our mind, heart, soul and strength, and to love our neighbor not just a little, or even a lot, but in the self-sacrificial way to the extreme with which Jesus loved us. The virtue that helps us to love this way is chastity, which is the ninth practice.
  - Speaking about the virgin martyrs, St. Ambrose in the fourth century said, "Virginity is praiseworthy not because it is found in martyrs, but because it makes martyrs."
  - The strength required to say a yes of love to Christ and a no to the desire for marriage and family is something that fortifies a person to stay faithful out of love to Christ at the supreme hour. This is what we see in Saints Agnes, Barbara, Agatha, Cecilia, Maria Goretti and so many others.

- This is the chastity that also strengthened Jamie Schmidt of House Springs, Missouri, the 53 year-old mother of three who was gunned down at a Catholic Supply store in November 2019 for refusing to strip naked and perform a sex act on a gunman who had pressured two other women in the store to do so.
    - Just as St. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians that God’s will is our holiness and “therefore avoid all porneia” or unchastity, because unchastity shortcircuits the pursuit of holiness, so it also enervates courage.
  - Regular Confession
    - The tenth practice is regular confession.
    - When our souls are right with God, we’re able to live every aspect of human life, even death, without the anxieties that flow from sin.
    - We need guts to recognize we’re sinners in need of a Savior and come to receive his mercy through his priestly instruments, confessing our sins with candor and contrition, and intending to cut off the metaphorical hands and feet and pluck out the eyes that lead us to sin. It also requires daring to share mercy at the Lord’s standard with those who have wronged us.
    - We need courage to confront our sins straight on, to recognize, humbly, that God can and desires to forgive, to come to receive it in the way he himself set up.
    - Many are not courageous enough to confront the fact that their sins led to Jesus’ murder on Golgotha. They are too proud to admit it and to search. They’ll come and simply say that they commit ordinary sins like everyone else without much compunction. Others out of wounded pride will wallow in self-pity, not believing that they were capable of doing what they did, and shutting themselves off from God. They too embarrassed or ashamed to admit what they’ve done. Others are mortified to come to take advantage of the way Jesus set up the Sacrament of Confession on Easter Sunday night through ministers to whom he gave the Holy Spirit to forgive and retain sins in his name, whom he sent out to forgive sins just as the Father sent him as the Lamb of God to take away the sins of the world. They’ll use many excuses, but most are simply afraid to admit to another, even one who would die before revealing someone else’s least venial sin, what they’ve done, as if he would say “You did *what?*” rather than admire them for their humility and sincerity. We need courage.
    - We can all draw courage from the Parable of the Prodigal Son. We can examine it under many angles, but one is about the courage it took to return home. He came to his senses about the goodness of his father and he started the journey. Covered. He never expected what the Father would do. The other son didn’t have that courage. Didn’t recognize. He was representing the scribes and the Pharisees, those who separated themselves from sinners, those who thought they were righteous, that they didn’t need a doctor. What will it be for us?
  - Patience and perseverance
    - The eleventh practice is perseverance and patience.
    - We live in an age in which many people give up: on prayer, fighting sin, suffering, Mass, Confession, marriage, religious vows, priestly vocations, jobs, hope, even life itself. We need courage never to give up, never to stop running the race, fighting the good fight, keeping the faith and growing in it. The virtue of perseverance, correlatively, helps us to grow in courage that, in turn, helps us persevere more, in a virtuous spiral upward.
    - Perseverance and patience go together. Perseverance means principally not an ability to wait but a capacity to suffer. The word patience comes from the Latin *patior*, to “suffer,” which is why we call the sick in hospitals “patients.” Courage requires that we do not have an excessive fear of pain and of where our fear of pain ultimately derives, the fear of death. And courage makes us capable of suffering.
  - Not being afraid to die through regular meditation on death
    - The last practice I’ll mention is not being afraid to die through regular meditation on death.

- The *Imitation of Christ*, Thomas à Kempis' 15th-century spiritual classic, advised us that the easiest way to overcome the fear of death is to ponder it each day. "In every deed and every thought, act as though you were to die this very day."
  - Once we start doing that, we start taking every day more seriously: we do not procrastinate on telling family members and friends that we love them, we ask forgiveness from God and those we've wronged while we still have time, we let pass so many things that in the final analysis don't matter much, and we start to get our real priorities straight.
  - What we saw on United 93.
  - Message of the Capuchins: "Where you are, we once were. Where we are, one day you'll be. Remember death. Learn truly how to live."
  - When we pray each day Jesus' last words from the Cross, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit" (Lk 23:46), we become emboldened, like Jesus, not to have our life taken from us but rather freely to lay it down (Jn 10:18).
  - When we're not afraid to die because we've rehearsed it daily in prayer, we will be ready to offer our life without fear should that prove necessary.
- Conclusion
    - Because lack of courage is one of the biggest crises facing the Church today, God, in response, will give the Church, and each of us, the help we need. Let's seize it.
    - And our witness to God in the midst of a world eaten alive by anxiety can encourage others.
    - It's a time for Catholics to show that we truly believe Jesus' words, "Take courage. It is I. Do not be afraid!" (Mk 6:50), and, like waves of apostles, saints and martyrs throughout the centuries, boldly lead others to take courage, too, and come to its source, to whom be "blessing and glory, wisdom and thanksgiving, honor, power and might forever and ever. Amen." (Rev 7:12)