

*The Knights of Columbus*  
*Twenty-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time*  
*Respect Life Sunday Mass*  
*and*  
*2011 Installation of Officers*

*Homily*  
*October 2, 2011*

*Rev. Andrew A. Czajkowski*

Every lifetime has a few moments that become larger and more important as the years pass. We see them more clearly in perspective.

No husband ever forgets when he first met his wife. No mother ever forgets the birth of her first child. No priest ever forgets celebrating his first Mass. I will never forget my first meeting with you at last year's provincial meeting.

Looking back, everything in life flows from these pivotal moments, these turning points. How we live out their consequences defines who we become.

For good or ill, the same is true for nations. We remember July 4<sup>th</sup> because it established a new order of human dignity and freedom. We remember 9-11 not only because there were so many victims but also because there were and still are so many stories of courage and hope. And as we gather this Respect Life Sunday, we remember that infamous cold day in January 1973 when our country legalized abortion on demand.

Today we're living with the consequences. Today we can thank Roe v. Wade for the killing of 50 million unborn children, tens of thousands of broken marriages, and hundreds of thousands of emotionally damaged women and men.

But those are just the obvious results. There's much more ahead because we're becoming a nation that no longer remembers the words to explain why things like cloning, infanticide, and physician-assisted suicide violate the sanctity

of life. We've forgotten the language of right and wrong on exactly those issues that define what it means to be human.

Nations are living organisms. If we poison the roots of the tree, we get bad fruit. In 1973, Roe v. Wade seemed to be about abortion. Thirty-eight years later, we really know it was about the nature of the human person and the inhumanity that has worked itself into every aspect of our public life. Just as a drop of ink changes every molecule in a glass of water, we're no longer the nation we once were. We are now a different nation.

The question we face today is: What are we going to do about it? None of us, as Christians, has a license to give up on it. Our brother, Paul, writing from prison to his fellow Christians says,

*Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think of these things. Keep on doing what you have learned and received and heard and seen in me.*

Today throughout our country, we celebrate Respect Life Sunday. October is Respect Life Month, but every day that ends in **Y** is **Respect Life Day**.

There is nothing closer to the mission of the Knights of Columbus than Respect Life. This year's theme is from Jesus' mission—

*I have come so all might have life and have it to the full.*

Everywhere we look, little by little, we're engaged in a battle for life. When I think of how our very lives are being bombarded from all sides, I think of a man by the name of Martin Niemöller. Mr. Niemöller lived through the Nazi nightmare in the last century. He says in Germany,

First they came for the Communists,  
and I did not speak up because I wasn't a  
Communist.

Then they came for the trade unionists,  
and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a trade  
unionist.  
Then they came for the Jews,  
and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Jew.  
Then they came for the Catholics,  
and I didn't speak up because I was a Protestant.  
Then they came for me,  
and there was no one left to speak up for me.

The task before us is to speak up. Our task is to change hearts and minds, including our own. Will you join me in building a culture of life? Will you join me in saying *NO* to attacks on human life? Will you affirm a great *YES* to the full range of human life around and within us?

