

Springfield Diocesan Council of Catholic Women Convention

**Christ the King Parish
Springfield, Illinois**

September 16, 2017

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Bishop of Springfield in Illinois**

Reverend Fathers, (Deacons, consecrated religious,) my dear brothers and sisters in Christ, it is good for us to be here for the annual Convention for the Springfield Diocesan Council of Catholic Women.

Earlier this month, more than 600 Catholic women from across the country converged on Dallas, Texas, for the annual convention for the National Council of Catholic Women. Much like at this gathering, those in attendance spent their time together focusing on how they could deepen their relationship with the Lord and so more perfectly proclaim the joy that comes from living a life that is rooted in the Gospel.

I imagine that in preparing for the national convention, the organizers spent a substantive amount of time reflecting on what it means to live a life rooted in the Gospel. And I would venture to guess that they came up with a myriad of different ideas of what this means, but one

theme that would have been hard to overlook is one that is present in our Gospel reading today.

Just a few moments ago we heard a passage from the Gospel of Saint John in which Jesus is praying that His disciples might be given the grace necessary live in the world and yet not belong to the world. This Gospel reading is the passage chosen for today's feast day of the martyrs, Saints Cornelius and Cyprian. Saint Cornelius was Pope, and died in exile during one of the theological controversies of the third century. Saint Cyprian was the Bishop of Carthage in North Africa. He was the first African Bishop to be martyred. Saint Cyprian and Saint Cornelius were allies who died for the faith. Jesus reminded His disciples in today's Gospel passage that the world would hate them because they do not belong to the world just as Jesus did not belong to the world. But He prayed to His Father in Heaven to keep them from the evil one and consecrate them in the truth.

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, Jesus understood the great challenges that those who were committed to living as His disciples faced in their daily lives. But he didn't give them a free pass not to be faithful; rather, because of His love for them He called them to a life that was radically different than the one the world offered. He called them to share

to the truth of God's word and so build up the kingdom of God on earth so that they might be worthy of inheriting eternal life in heaven.

So too, does our Lord call us today, to live in the world but not to belong to the world. In response to this call, the question that we must ask ourselves is "What does it mean to live in the world as Christ's disciple today?" During one of his visits to the United States, the late great Pope Saint John Paul II spoke to a group that represented the lay people of the Church in America about this very topic and told them:

You are called to live in the world, to engage in secular professions and occupations, to live in those ordinary circumstances of family life and life in society from which is woven the very web of your existence. You are called by God himself to exercise your proper functions according to the spirit of the Gospel and to work for the sanctification of the world from within, in the manner of leaven. In this way, you can make Christ known to others, especially by the witness of your lives.¹

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, in these words from our late Holy Father we see the call of Jesus for to proclaim the truth of the Gospel by living the stewardship and discipleship way of life. I know that this does not sound like an easy task, but let us never lose sight of the fact that just as in our Gospel reading, Jesus is ready to give us the grace we need to

sustain us on our earthly pilgrimage so that one day we might enter into the kingdom to which we do belong, the kingdom of heaven.

May God give us this grace. Amen.

¹ Pope John Paul II, Address for the Meeting with Representatives of the Catholic Lay People of America, 18 September 1987.