

- Upon being elected pope in October 1978, Pope St. John Paul II gave a moving homily for the inauguration of his papacy in which he said to the world, “Be not afraid,” a phrase that would become the signature phrase of his entire pontificate.
- In the face of all that threatens us and our beautiful faith in our world today, John Paul II called Christians to be courageous, trusting always that Christ is with us, that He knows what we need, and that He desires to lead us all to eternal life.
- John Paul reminded us that Christ alone has the solution to the problems facing our world today, and so Christians must be willing to open the door to Christ so that all might turn to Him!
- Sadly, it seems that the world has not heeded John Paul II’s advice. To the contrary, it seems that rather than opening the door to Christ, the world has slammed it shut and turned away from our Lord.
- And as our world turns away from Christ, it seems that our Catholic faith is constantly under attack and being pushed to the very margins of society by the enemies of the Christ.
- On one hand we have radical Muslims committing genocide against Christians in the Holy Land, while murdering hundreds of others in terrorist attacks around the world, most recently in Brussels, and most appallingly in Yemen with the murder of the Missionaries of Charity.
- On the other hand, here at home we face the growing threat of an aggressive secularism that seemingly seeks to eradicate every hint of a Judeo-Christian morality from the laws of this land, and replace them with laws that not only legalize morally offensive behaviors, but force Christian business owners to accept and support such behaviors just to stay in business.
- At the heart of this culture war are those issues that concern marriage and the marital act: abortion, contraception, same-sex marriage, and now gender identity.
- The problem is that when sinful behaviors are legalized, many people unwittingly begin to believe these behaviors are morally acceptable and even good *because* they are legal.
- But as we all know, certain things like abortion are wrong regardless of their legality. Killing an unborn child is never morally acceptable. Never.
- With the recent passing of House Bill 2, which amongst other things has overturned a contentious public restroom ordinance passed by the Charlotte City Council, our state has become the latest battleground of the culture war afflicting Western society.
- With the passing of this bill, we’ve seen not only scorching criticism from the LGBT community and their supporters, but outright bullying as companies are threatening to stop doing business in North Carolina if our state doesn’t repeal this bill.
- Again, as pressure mounts to accept LGBT proclivities as “normal” and “good”, and as those who choose to give in to and exercise these inclinations are lauded for doing so, acceptance for such behavior grows in society.
- But as we know, LGBT inclinations are intrinsically disordered and homosexual behavior is always wrong. Always.
- Yet in our politically correct world, what we know to be evil is now being called good. And it’s getting to a point now in America when those who stand up for traditional Christian values must be ready to face a barrage of threats and insults for doing so. It’s getting to a point where practicing our Catholic faith fully and with integrity is difficult and can even be dangerous.
- And yet, as John Paul the Great told us so beautifully and so often throughout his glorious pontificate, we must not be afraid! We must not be afraid to speak up in the name of Jesus Christ and defend the teachings of His Church!

- Much as it was in the early days of the Church when Christians faced terrible persecutions for practicing our Catholic Faith, we mustn't fear the enemies of the Church. Like St. Peter and the other apostles in our first reading today, "We must obey God rather than men."
- And we must be willing to suffer dishonor for the sake of His name.
- So what are we to do? Well, first of all we must pray for our enemies and do penance for their sins against the Body of Christ. Of course, Jesus is our model for this. After being crucified Jesus begged the Father for forgiveness for His persecutors. We must do the same.
- While many others in this world look upon Christians as enemies, we must look upon all people as brothers and sisters – even those who want to kill us and eradicate our religion.
- But we must also be willing to stand up and speak the truth, most especially when it comes to contentious issues such as abortion, LGBT issues, and contraception.
- The truth is this: that every person, born or unborn and regardless of sexual orientation, must be treated with respect and consideration, and recognized as being made in God's likeness.
- God made us all. Male and female He created us, and because we are made in God's image and likeness, all people have an inherent dignity, as does the marital act, through which new life is generated.
- But it is also true that there are some actions and behaviors that are an affront to man's inherent dignity, and these actions must always be opposed and denounced as evil.
- For example, killing an unborn child is an affront to the inherent dignity of the child and of those who participate in the abortion. Under no circumstance can abortion ever be justified.
- Homosexual acts, because they are intrinsically disordered, are also an affront to man's dignity, and therefore, as the Pope stated this week, "there are absolutely no grounds for considering homosexual unions to be in any way similar or remotely analogous to God's plan for marriage and family." (cf. *Amoris Laetitia*)
- Furthermore, misusing the marital act by intentionally sterilizing it through contraception is also an affront to man's dignity and the dignity of the act by which man is created and brought forth into this world. And thus the use of contraception can never be condoned.
- We must proclaim these truths and defend them, for souls are at stake! So many people today do not realize the gravity of these sins, protected and promoted as they are in our society, and so we must speak – even if we are attacked or ridiculed for doing so.
- People go to hell for these sins!
- But as we speak, we must always do so with an abundance of charity, just as our Lord did: not condoning the sins of others or condemning others for their sins, but rather with a loving heart that seeks only to help a fellow sinner along the path to redemption!
- Speaking the truth on these issues with compassion and respect is not an act of intolerance or bigotry, my brothers and sisters, it's an act of charity. Not only must we proclaim these truths and defend them, lovingly correcting those who fall prey to the celebrated sins of our day, we must also live the truths of our Faith joyfully, for joy in the face of persecution is always an effective form of evangelization.
- My brothers and sisters, our world and our culture are sick and confused today, especially when it comes to matters of marriage and sexuality. There are many lost souls who do not know Christ and cannot see Him because they are blinded by sins that society calls good.
- While they may see our Church and us as enemies, we must see them as brothers and sisters in need of help.
- May we never be corrupted by the false and secular values of our politically correct society, but hold fast to the eternal truths of our Faith.

- May we speak this truth and dispel the confusion and errors of our day with both charity and compassion, and open the door to Christ to those who are lost in sin. May we never be afraid.
- St. John Paul the Great, pray for us.