**Lent**

**‘WARRIORS’, READY TO RISK**

Jim Caviezel

CHICAGO, Illinois, January 4, 2018 (LifeSite News)– Catholics must be ready to risk their lives and reputations to defeat evil in the world, *Passion of the Christ* star Jim Caviezel told a gathering of Catholic college students this week.

Only through the faith and Christ’s wisdom can we be saved, Caviezel said, but it will also take people who are prepared to fight, sacrifice and suffer.

Citing St. Maximilian Kolbe, Caviezel said that indifference was the greatest sin of the 20th century, and still is in the 21st century.

“We must shake off this indifference, this destructive tolerance of evil. But only our faith and the wisdom of Christ can save us,” he said. “But it requires warriors, ready to risk their reputations, their names, even our very lives, to stand for the truth.”

“Set yourselves apart from this corrupt generation,” the actor challenged those in attendance. “Be saints. You weren’t made to fit in. You were born to stand out.”

The *Passion of the Christ* star and veteran of numerous other film and television productions made a surprise appearance at the SLS18 (Student Leadership Summit 2018) conference sponsored by The Fellowship of Catholic University Students (FOCUS).

The event ran from January 2 to 6 in Chicago, and was geared to form Catholic college students to be missionaries in their lives, in particular on campus.

Caviezel’s message, captured on video and posted to Facebook by Father Brian Buettner, Vocations Director in the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City, was enthusiastically received.

He prefaced his talk with his forthcoming movie *Paul, Apostle of Christ,* sharing how the filmmaking experience showed him that, to be great in the eyes of God, we must first be small and accept Him entirely, allowing Him to guide us.

Caviezel also spoke of the significance of suffering, and decried the prevalent misunderstanding that Christianity is merely about “happy talk.”

It was not by chance that he was called to acting, he said, sharing how earlier roles led to his being tapped to play Christ in Mel Gibson’s epic film of Christ’s Passion and Resurrection.

Caviezel told those at the FOCUS conference that, likewise, their lives were not just comprised of coincidence.

“Some of you may be miserable right now, confused, uncertain of the future, hurting,” he said. “This is not the time to back off or to give in.”

He recounted how completing the role of Christ entailed great trial and suffering for him, including physical aspects of scourging, being crucified, struck by lightning, and open-heart surgery after five-plus months of hypothermia.

Caviezel’s shoulder was also separated while carrying the cross during filming, which he continued to withstand to finish the film. This was like a penance, he said.

“When I was up there on the cross I learned that in His suffering was our redemption,” Caviezel shared. “Remember the servant is no greater than the master.”

“Each of us must carry our own cross,” he continued. “There is a price for our faith, for our freedoms.”

He told the crowd that the suffering made his performance, “just as it makes our lives.”

Caviezel went on to stress that the resurrection, and indeed our salvation, comes at a price.

“Some of us now, you know them, embrace a fake Christianity, where its all happy talk - I call it ‘happy Jesus’ - and glory.”

“Guys, there was a lot of pain and suffering … *before* the resurrection,” Caviezel stated. “Your path will be no different. So embrace your cross, and race toward your goal.”

Caviezel has spoken openly about his faith and pro-life convictions in the past, and shared how his experience making *The Passion of the Christ* has affected him spiritually. He has also advocated for adoption, and been open about his and wife Kerri’s experience as adoptive parents.

He challenged those at the Catholic gathering to publicly live their faith.

“I want you to go out to this pagan world,” Caviezel stated, “I want you to have the courage to step into this pagan world and shamelessly express *your* faith in public.”

“The world needs proud warriors, animated by their faith,” he added. “Warriors like St. Paul, and St. Luke, who risked their names, their reputations, to take their faith, their love for Jesus into the world.”

“God is calling each one of us – each one of you – to do great things,” he said.

We often fail to respond, dismissing God’s call, Caviezel told the Catholic crowd. And it is now time for this generation to accept that call, surrender ourselves entirely to Him, he said, returning to prayer and fasting, Scripture and the Sacraments.

“But you first must make the commitment to start praying,” Caviezel said, “to fast, to meditate on the Holy Scriptures and to take the holy Sacraments seriously.”

“We are a culture now in decline”, he added, “and our whole world is entrenched in sin; freedom has been replaced with license.”

“For in our country now we are only too happy to go with the flow,” Caviezel stated. “We have a shrine to freedom now where all choices are equal, no matter what the consequences are. Do you honestly think this is true freedom?”

Citing Pope Saint John Paul II, Caviezel explained how society cannot exclude moral truth and reasoning. Every generation needs to know that freedom exists not to do what you like, he said, but having the right to do what you ought.

“That is the freedom that I wish for you,” he told the conference, “freedom from sin, freedom from your weaknesses, freedom from this slavery that sin makes out of all of us. That is the freedom that is worth dying for.”

In closing, Caviezel recounted the scene in Gibson’s *Braveheart* film with William Wallace challenging his men as they faced certain defeat, telling them their enemies may take their lives, but they'll never take their freedom.

Caviezel quoted the line from the scene that, “Every man dies, not every man truly lives.”

“You, you, you,” he exclaimed - pointing to individuals in the audience, “we all must fight for that authentic freedom and live, my friends.”

“By God, we must live,” Caviezel concluded, “and with the Holy Spirit as your shield and Christ as your sword, may you join St. Michael and all the angels in sending Lucifer and his henchmen straight right back to Hell where they belong!”