

origins

CNS documentary service

Homily at National Prayer Vigil for Life

Archbishop Naumann

Pope Francis “has our backs” in the pro-life cause, Archbishop Joseph F. Naumann of Kansas City, Kansas, said to applause in his Jan. 23 homily at the opening Mass of the National Prayer Vigil for Life in Washington. During an “ad limina” meeting with bishops from Kansas, Missouri, Iowa and Nebraska the week before, Archbishop Naumann said Pope Francis had told them, “If we do not defend life, no other rights matter.” The pope said that “abortion is first a human rights issue,” added Archbishop Naumann in his homily delivered at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception the night before the March for Life in the nation’s capital. “Pope Francis was aware of the March for Life in the United

“We must be willing to follow Jesus all the way to Calvary. It takes heroism today to stand for the sanctity of human life.”

States and was delighted to know the anticipated large numbers of pilgrims, especially the participation of so many young people,” said Archbishop Naumann, who is chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops Committee on Pro-Life Activities. Although the “ad limina” meeting was confidential so that the pope and the bishops could speak freely, Pope Francis “encouraged me, I dare say, ordered me: Please tell the pilgrims at the March for Life and the entire pro-life community the pope is with you! He is praying for you!” the archbishop said. Archbishop Naumann’s homily follows.

When I was the age of most of tonight’s congregation, in the last millennium — eons ago, I enjoyed watching “The Twilight Zone.” For its time, it was considered state-of-the-art science fiction.

One entire episode was shot in a hospital room. The doctors and nurses all wore surgical masks to protect the patient from infection. As the show unfolded, it became clear that the patient, whose face was completely bandaged, had been through a series of plastic surgeries attempting to correct a severe disfigurement.

The lead surgeon informed the beleaguered patient that they could only attempt one more surgery. However, the doctor was hopeful this time they would succeed. Most of the episode builds up to this last-chance surgery. In the closing scene, the final sur-

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