



THE WAKE-UP CALL

Kevin O'Brien

Guys, welcome all. Tom, you absolutely crushed that. We are absolutely thrilled to have you part of our first live hybrid conference. Which is a combination for those that don't know of live in-person, those of us being together and building an environment of friendship, right. As well as having a virtual component allowing us to outreach to more men than we have ever done in the past. So I have to give a shout out to all those hosting an event throughout the Milwaukee Diocese. We've got Marquette University. We've got seminarians dialed in spots across the country; Illinois, Michigan, throughout Wisconsin. And here's the thing Jim McCann, and his team in Long Island, New York. In 23 days, those guys took this Men of Christ conference concept from nothing. And now have over 100 men at their parish. Just so impressive.

And as Tom mentioned we have over 50 sites up and running. And for us this is like, this is a miracle. No one in North America is doing something like this. So in a sense, you are all part of history, and this doesn't include all of those that are watching from home who didn't have a place to go. So that's truly exciting.

Now, of course, as you can imagine today just doesn't happen. There is a commitment that is made by guys who are loving God through their effort, loving God, through their deeds. There are thousands and thousands of collective hours went into put this special day together for you. So I have a big thank you for the Men of Christ Milwaukee team specifically, Jim Michaletz. It's his birthday today. Pat Masterson, Pat Ciriacks, Joe Dentice. We're praying for you, brother. Jon Jensen, Tom O'Brien, Keegan Adams standing over here. All our board members. Our regional leader team. Our priests or deacons, Archbishop ListECKI who's been hugely supportive. But here's the thing, specifically, the leaders that are hosting the event at your

Parish. That worked so hard to create this culture of welcome. So, let's do this. Let's get those guys that got involved. And let's get them to stand up, and let's put together our hands and show them a great round of applause. For all of the hard work. We're all clapping here. You know, Christ said, there's no greater love than for a man to lay his life down for another's and this thing of where you put your time, you put your life and they did that.

So what I like to do, I want to set the table for today, kind of lay out how to get the most out of this experience. So, I've got five ideas to help you enjoy the spiritual and mental meal being served up to you today.

So number one, know your what. What are the three to five things that you need to commit to make this day a tremendous success for you? And here are some ideas just to throw them out one, go to confession. I look at confession as the sacrament of grit. It takes a strong humble man to be willing to confess his wrongs, right? So be that gritty guy today. An ego, pride are the killers of the soul. And what does that, what does that pride sound like? Like? Oh, I don't need to confess my sins to a priest or it could be a little bit more subtle. Right? Oh the confession line is too long. I'll wait till next week. Guess what? Next week never comes. So be courageous and patient today. Allow God to pour His grace into your soul and fill you full of peace and joy. Confession, for me, was the thing I did. I was away from it for about 18 years. I went back with a punch in the gut from my brother Darren. So thank you, Darren. I know he's hosting an event. But confessions what changed my life and I'm going to say forever. And the conference for all those that are worried. Well, I'm going to miss parts of the conference. It's being recorded. So if you miss anything, no problem, you can go back and watch it. All right. That was number one.

Presented at the Men of Christ
2022 Conference.

MenOfChrist.net

**MEN OF
CHRIST**
LIVE YOUR FAITH BOLDLY

Number two. This is under the category of knowing your what. Major in the major and the family is a major. Be intentional about your desire to lead your family through your self-sacrificial example. Love on your wife. Pray with your kids, spend time with them. God wants to Father your family through you because as you grow, so grows your family.

Number three, master in the art of showing up. A great quote that I read and I just love it. I think it's so applicable, right? The heaviest weight in the gym is the front door. The hardest part of doing anything is getting started. Nothing matters, unless you show up. It doesn't matter what you believe. If your beliefs do not match your actions. In one of the articles that I was reading. The writer asked a personal trainer that had worked with a number of professional athletes and Olympians. He asked him this question. He said, what's the difference between the best athletes and everyone else? And he mentioned the factors, you would expect, right? Genetics, talent, you know, at times luck, but then he said something unexpected. He said at some point it comes down to who can handle the boredom of training every day. Doing the same lists over and over and over. It is those that have mastered the skill of showing up. So what's going to happen when you don't feel like going to mass? Or praying? Or keeping your commitments that you're making? This is not a quote, feel thing. This is a will thing.

Dr. Carol Dweck wrote a great book called Mindset. And she found in her study, people who were successful across the spectrum of life. Were those that came to learn to love the effort. They embraced their cross. They mastered the art of showing up. Just another fascinating discovery in doing research for this talk was the main difference from those that actually mastered the skill of showing up, meaning they have high willpower, what they say and what they do, there's an alignment there. There's a congruence. For low willpower people. Those that struggle with keeping commitments. It was their surroundings. Hi willpower people. Again, those that keep their commitments, create an environment that they are tempted less. So for instance, you want to lose weight, get rid of the ice cream in the fridge. Now, if you want to be distracted less, right? Remove the news apps on the phone. You want to spend more time talking to your wife, pull the plug on the TV in your room. People who have mastered

the skill of showing up stack the deck in their favor. They surround themselves with goodness. What they watch, what they listen to, what apps they have on their phone. And then what do they do? They cut off the things that distract them. Think about this. Change can be more environmental than it is mental at times. Alright. That was one category. Number one.

Number two overall. Think on paper, right? Think on paper. Help your mind stay engaged. The more control you have over your attention, the more control you have over your future. So take notes and then share those notes with your family. Talk about what you heard. The best way to learn something is to teach it. Teach it to your kids. They want to know what is important to you. Listen to this. A father who has a great belief in his faith, gives tremendous power to his children. It fortifies them in the truth. They grow these deep faith roots in their soul. So no judging or justifying, no hurting or handicapping yourself, right. Be open to what's being said because everything we are presenting is to help you live a life rooted in virtue. And if you do that, there will be moments of insight and discovery that you never knew possible. Also, here's the other thing, when you write things out, it helps you think better. Which what? Leads to better choices which ultimately leads to a better future.

So after each of these talks we are going to have a few reflection questions to help you internalize what's being said.

The third one. Form friendships with great men. You are who you surround yourself with. And now this is something to really give deep thought to today. You become like the people you hang out with. Proverbs has this quote. Or verse. Its sharp people sharpen each other like iron sharpens iron, right? Surround yourself with people that want to make a difference, that want to be more virtuous, that are willing to help you become a true man of Christ. Show me your friends and I will show you your future. So what's the takeaway on this one? Join a dynamic, men's group. Find one near you. We have approximately 60 across the Milwaukee diocese. Or if you don't have one, start one. We have a team of guys that can help you. So just contact us at menofchrist.net with any questions you have. We're here to walk with you.

So why is a men's group important? I could give you a litany of reasons why, but there are three quick ones. One, it forces you to put times and dates on your calendar. It helps you master the art of showing up. And where do those commitments you're going to make today live in your life said, another way. Where do they live in your calendar? Number two, it creates an environment where you're learning about the faith on a regular basis. You can't love what you don't know. And you won't love the faith, if you don't know the faith. Number three, you are surrounding yourself with great men that want what you want. You know, how do you find guys like you? You find them at a dynamic men's group. So, give that some really deep thought today. Alright. Number four, have a bias for Holy action. My hope is that today you leave with shaky leg. You are so jacked. You are so excited that you're like, I'm going to make this happen. I'm going to do this and be pumped up. Turn the inspiration and knowledge you receive into action. You become what you do. The more good we do, the more virtuous we become so take what you learned and apply it as soon as possible. So you turn it into a good habit, a virtue. And virtue demands repetition of good acts, to root themselves in the soul. And here's the thing guys. We are on an amazing adventure and that adventure is called life. And the destiny is heaven, but here's the thing. And Tom mentioned this, we're not alone on this venture. God is with us. He sends us brothers, men of Christ to help us navigate these choppy waters and these sea monsters that are out there. He gives us moments in life to take a dramatic step forward. He gives us decision points. Today is a decision point. Today is a wake-up call for you.

Christ said this, two roads are before you o, man, the way of life and the way of death, choose life, get into this fight. Stop cursing the darkness and turn on the light. What you focus your attention on or I should say, focus your attention on doing good. Make a difference on where you are in your family, in your Parish, in your community. The very nature of masculinity is sacrifice and what helps you get closer to Christ, are your crosses. No, cross. No Crown. God had a son without sin, but not without suffering. So, expect suffering to come. And look at it as a way for you to grow. A Christian man's journey requires us to go through the crucible of life to be purified for heaven. If your, if your life is too easy. You're going down the wrong road.

You only find Christ on the cross. Here's the thing and we see this, we all see this, the wheels are falling off our culture, our country, our parish, our families. They are begging Christian men to stand up and fight for the good. You know, I read an article about eight nine months ago. It was titled Catholic Men Rise Up and Fight and it was written by two women. And as you'd expect, right. And they basically said this, they said we write now to call our men to be what God created them to be. To take their rightful place as warriors in the battle. Our women want us to stand in the breach and fight against this culture of death.

Lydia Lococo who works at the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, just a wonderful woman, mother, etc. She came in and at our last leadership conference and gave a great affirmation talk. And what she did there, guys, we need you. Women want you to do what you're supposed to do. Evil wins when good men do nothing. And then she did this, she pulled out her phone and she said, I got this tweet from my daughters yesterday. And it said breaking, and I'm paraphrasing this. But breaking to all men. Every woman in your life. Even if it's a small one, has a crush on President Lewinsky and she's like, why do you think that is? And she paused and she just let that hang out there. And we all knew what it was. It was David and Goliath. It is a guy willing to lay his life down for his family and for his country. Again, women want this. And here's the thing. The enemy wants us to live in fear. He wants us to fixate on our failures. He wants us to fall into despair. To consume the disordered energy of a world, which has turned itself away from God, say no to that. Right. We move towards what we focus on. Focus on being the man Christ has called you to be and that ties really well into. My last Point, have hope in the future. Have hope in the future. God is for the good. He wants goodness to rain, but here's the thing. He needs you to make that happen. Jesus wills that we collectively have a share with him in the salvation of souls, but he wills to do nothing without us. Meaning the good he wants to do it needs to come through all of us.

Four simple steps to make this happen, right? I just want to kind of almost highlight this one, strengthen yourself. You have to put on your oxygen mask first. As you go, so goes your family, right? Fill up your conviction tank today and then allow that to overflow into your family fortify them.

They need that. They want that, okay. So one strengthen yourself, two flow that into your family, three then this outpouring flows into your Parish.

Father Eric Nielsen said this, he said, men of Christ is called to create islands of Sanity, to prepare for the coming storm. Guys, were in a storm. We know that, right? Where's that island of Sanity? It's your Parish, right? Why the parish, because that's where Christ lives. The Divine physician. And then once we do this, we build this fortress around our Parish in the sense we're coming together building each other up and our families are together. We take this and we get into the community, right? And we take these Christian ideas into our community, and surround the goodness.

You know, it's interesting. Dr. Scott Hahn said this at one of our leadership conferences. This was back in September. He said, we're outnumbered, we're surrounded and the odds are against us, right? He let that hang out there for a little bit. And then he said this, and it's no better time than now to be a Catholic. Why? Because there's so much opportunity for us to make a difference in the world.

St. Francis Xavier said this, many people are not becoming Christian for one reason. Only there's nobody to make them Christian. We are called to Christianize our community. As we dechristianize. We dehumanize. The more Christian our society, the more good there will be in our homes, in our parishes, and in our society, and here's the thing. And you're going to hear this through the theme of today. You're not alone in this battle men of Christ. And we have this saying, what men of Christ, whose men of Christ? We Are. Men of Christ is committed to helping rebuild our culture through you. To help you live out your heroic vocation, to help you achieve your ultimate mission, which is heaven.

Guys here's the thing as I wrap up today. It's a fresh start, no matter what took place in your past. You have a blank sheet to begin anew. Don't endure life, but embrace it, find peace and joy in the struggle. Allow yourself to taste a positive outlook for the future by taking full advantage of today and looking through the lens of hope.

Men, please pray for us that we do God's Will and know that we are praying for you, and I hope this is a life-changing experience for you. So thank you. God bless.

Tom. Holy schnikeys. I put me in coach. I'm ready to go. That was absolutely phenomenal. And you talked about President Lewinsky, such a hero willing to lay down his life. And as you say, people want strong men and often we say to ourselves, it's hard. I feel like I'm alone fathering the family, but not alone. Right? God wants to help. He does want to help. He wants us to be together in this idea. I think sometimes we get ourselves in these silos and we don't reach out to others and that's why it's so important for us from a men of Christ perspective to create this environment to allow them to find friends, other guys. You are who you surround yourself with right? We talked about that and that's something very important. Not only that but how about spending time hanging out with Christ? And how big a factor is that in becoming the best? The best man of Christ that we can be. So it's interesting, right? You are who you surround yourself with right? The more that you hang out with Christ, the more you become like Christ. Isn't that just kind of interesting when you put those two together. Absolutely. And the good people that you're with and I'm blessed to be with you and everybody including our wonderful staff here.