

President Kennedy's Inaugural Words Still Resonate with Americans

Ask not what your country can do for you...

If you were alive in the 20th Century, chances are you can complete that sentence.

Indeed, key themes from President John F. Kennedy's inaugural address still ring in the ears—and hearts and minds—of many Americans 50 years after he said them.

So says a new Knights of Columbus-Marist poll. The survey reveals that Americans overwhelmingly believe that key themes from Kennedy's inaugural speech are still important in America today.

The survey focused on several memorable passages dealing with the importance of freedom, of service to the country, and of the role of God in our national life.

Ninety five percent believe "We shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe, in order to assure the survival and the success of liberty" is still an important theme. That same percentage also cites "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country" as an important theme.

Meanwhile, 86 percent point to "Here on earth God's work must truly be our own" as important for American today and 85 percent note "The rights of man come not from the generosity of the state, but from the hand of God" as important. What's more, about three-quarters of Americans see the first two quotes as "very important," while about six in 10 say the same for the latter two quotes.

“Fifty years after President John F. Kennedy stirred a nation with these important words, Americans continue to recognize the importance of what he said, of his definition of what it means to be an American,” says Carl Anderson, Supreme Knight of the Knights of Columbus. “President Kennedy reminded us then that we must be at the service of God and country and that message—as Americans clearly understand—is still very important to our nation today.”