

Tape 8:

If I want to write on this white board here, then what I have to do is, I have to choose by human decision those means that I think are going to allow me to write on this board. So I have to choose to reach over and to grab the crayon. I have to choose to take the cap off the crayon. I have to choose to write on the board. If I want to write on this board, I have to choose means that will accomplish that end. In other words, I will not write on the board if I choose means that won't accomplish that end. For example, if I just pick up a piece of paper and start doing this, I'm not going to write on the board. As obvious as that seems and as clear as that is part of everyday life, that we consistently choose, means to accomplish our ends.

It represents a real problem in following the Lamb of God in living the gospel. In every other area of life, we know that there has to be a consistency between the means that are chosen and the ends that are desired in order for things to happen properly. But somehow with the gospel, Christians believe that they can use means other than the means of the gospel and still be doing gospel work. In fact, they believe that they can use means contrary to the gospel and still be doing gospel work.

So let me say it first of all clearly – to live a Christian life it is absolutely necessary to choose those means that are Christ like. There is no other way to live a Christian life. Its basically something like a totality that says to live a Christ like life you have to choose the means moment to moment that are Christ like. To be baptized does not mean that you live a Christian life. Baptism is the beginning, it's the empowering, and it's the uniting with Christ. There is a mystery between the grace of baptism and our freedom. Someplace we become responsible for the choice. Not simply the choice of becoming Christian, but the choice of living as Christians, living a Christ like life, not once or twice, but literally moment to moment to moment. Its always a choice – am I going to be Christ like at this moment, or am I going to choose means other than Christ like means at this moment?

Now, when we talk about the imitation of Christ; when we talk about loving as Christ loved, we are talking about choosing Christ like means moment to moment. That is precisely what we are talking about. The imitation of Christ is the choosing of Christ like means moment to moment. Choosing to love as Christ loved moment to moment. It is a choice of means, not of ends. And therefore, that question that we mentioned, the couple of conferences ago, which is the basic question of the Christian moral life; what would Jesus do here, is a question about what are the means that Jesus would use right here and now. The issue therefore of the problem of means and ends is a terribly important issues in terms of the individuals Christian spiritual life, and that's what I intend to address this morning – the problem of means and ends.

Now we all know the normal saying, and we've all heard it, we've probably all been taught it in school, that the ends don't justify the means. Because you can get good consequences that you want that doesn't mean that you can use any means at all to get them. And that's clear. But where I would like to start is in a different place in this problem of means and ends, and in terms of your spiritual life.

I'd like to start with a reflection that the means, the means, are the ends in embryo. As you choose your means you will get your ends. The means are the ends in embryo. As you choose your means you will get your ends. That is the iron law of the moral universe. Let me explain. What I am saying is, when I say the means are the ends in embryo, and as you choose your means you will get your ends. What I am saying is that there is in actual human history an actual life as lived, a total consistency between the means we choose and the ends we get. And that consistency must be, for example, if I want to build a truthful self, personally, I want to be truthful personally, if I want to build a truthful self, or I want to build a truthful community if I'm part of a community. If my ends is to have a truthful self, or my community's end is to have a truthful community, the only way I can build a truthful self or a truthful community is by the means of truth. Every time I lie, I interfere with building a truthful self or a truthful community. I interfere with the very ends I want to accomplish. If I want to build a loving self, or a loving community, I can only build it by the means of love, I cannot build it by hate. Every time I hate, I un-build it. If I want to build a self or a community in the image of the Lamb of God, then I have to do it by choosing moment the means of the Lamb of God, the means of the lamb of Christ. Every time I choose something that is not the means of Christ, then I don't build such a self, I build something else. If I wish to build a peaceful self or a peaceful community, I can only do it by the means of peace. Every time I raise contention and hostility, I am not building a peaceful community. It's self-evident, it's precisely what Jesus said – you must reap what you sow. You cannot sow corn and get wheat. You cannot sow violence and get non-violence. You cannot sow war and get peace. You cannot sow hate and get love. You cannot sow lies and get truth.

That is the iron law of the moral universe. What is being said is, whatever end you wish to live, or whatever end you wish to come into existence, a loving community, a truthful self, whatever end you wish to come into existence, live it now. Live the end that you want to have happen. Live it in the moment. The Kingdom of God can only come into existence by the means of the Kingdom of God being chosen moment to moment to moment. When Jesus has his 3 temptations that we know in the gospel, these are temptations to use means to bring the Kingdom of God to the world which means won't work, so he has to reject them. We are constantly, constantly tempted to use means other than the means of Jesus to accomplish the means of Jesus, which is impossible. Utterly impossible. If we wish to have a Christian family, or a Christian community, we must use Christ like means to build a Christian family or a Christian community. To the extent that we do not use Christ like means it interferes with our building a Christian family or a Christian community. We may build other things. We may build a prosperous family or a prosperous community, but not a Christ like community. And so one of the things that happened way back at the time of Constantine is this; that Christianity, Christians, the Church, began to fill up with people who wanted to do the work of Christ by using something other than the means of Christ. There is no such possibility in the World. If we wish to do the work of Christ we must choose the means of Christ. The apparition of the lamb of God at knock is strictly speaking in one way, on the historical level as we face it, as it challenges and calls us, is a call to use the means of the lamb to govern our

lives, individually and collectively. It is a call about the means that we use to live moment to moment to moment.

And so, where we're at here is, is that we live in a World where people plant corn and corn comes up because it has to come up. But we live in a World where people plant corn, corn comes up, and then they engage in the propaganda of calling corn wheat. Simply they rename what is taking place. They sow violence and they sow war and then they call it peace in the end. Just because it's in the papers today, what's going on in former Yugoslavia – but the same thing could apply to Northern Ireland or the United States but we'll take Yugoslavia. Does anyone really believe that when whoever the big shots are over there, stop the killing on part of the Croatians, the Bosnians, and the Serbians, does anyone really believe that when they stop the killing, when they stop the murder, when they stop the war, when they sign the treaties – whether that be next month or 5 years from now, does anyone really believe that the state that then exists is peace? Impossible.

What about those tens upon hundreds upon millions of men and women who have gone out and killed people? Who have blown peoples heads off? Who have torn peoples guts out? Who have seen by the tens of thousands dismembered bodies decapitated bodies – do they just go home now and live gentle tender lives? Empty of nightmares and all that goes on after you've engaged in bloodletting? Or what about those men that have gone out on all sides and engaged in mass rape? We're talking tens of thousands at this point – for rape is always a part of war. How do they go home to their wives and their mothers and their children and their daughters – in peace? In the United States they signed the peace treaty for the Vietnam War about 1974. It's all signed you know, and the big shots left, and that was peace. There were approximately 54,000 soldiers, American soldiers, killed in the Vietnam War. Since 1974, since the peace treaty was signed, over a hundred thousand former Vietnam veterans have killed themselves – suicide. War doesn't bring peace. It is impossible. There is an utter inconsistency between homicidal violence and all that goes with it on a mass scale and peace. And that's just the tip of the iceberg when we say suicide. What happens to the families they live in? And the children they bring up? And on and on and on.

What I'm trying to raise here is that 1700 years ago, at the time of Constantine, approximately, Christians began to think as I have said that they could accomplish Christ like ends by something other than Christ like means and it's been a disaster. It's been a disaster in terms of the larger Church but it's been a disaster in terms of the lives of people. It can't be done. There must be a consistency between the ends desired and the means chosen. And therefore if I am abandoned to Christ then I have to be abandoned to the means of Christ. Abandonment to Christ does not mean just staying in the chapel and saying I abandon myself to you Jesus. Abandonment means that I choose the means to live that Jesus chose moment to moment to moment and I abandon all other means.

The reality is in the larger church, Catholic, protestant and Orthodox, and in the individual life, a huge percentage of the Christian population of all ranks have abandoned the means of Christ instead of abandon themselves to Christ in order to get things done.

Impossible. Impossible. And let me show you why. What the terribleness of this situation is. Every human act, every human act has consequences. It's very clear. We see the consequences of every human act. The problem is that while every human act has consequences, what is also true is it not only has consequences that we see, but every human act has consequences that we don't see. And we will never see in this life. Every human act has invisible consequences that we cannot imagine in our wildest dreams.

I remember years ago I met a man who was a friend of mine from years and years past and I hadn't seen him in a long time and I just met him after about 15 years. He invited me to come over his house to dinner and I did one night, I hadn't seen him and we were sitting at the table talking and I was talking to him about the non-violence love of friends and enemies that's Jesus teaching and about using Christ like means to do Christ like things to accomplish Christ like ends and his child caused a problem at the other end of the table. And he gets up from the table, walks down the other end of the table and smacks the child. And of course the child is crying and everything else, and the mother get up and on and on. The child had knocked over a couple of glasses of water – about 4 or 5 years old. He comes back up to the other end of the table and sits down – he's a big man – and he sits down and says now look he said, Franny was the little boys name, he said look, you see Franny knocked over those 2 glasses of water down there and I just went down and I gave him a good crack, he said, he's not gonna knock over water anymore, he stopped and he won't do it again. He said, but if I listened to you with all this following Jesus and stuff we'd be living in a bathtub here. Now I said to him, fine, lets assume that you really did stop him from knocking the water over when you hit him. Lets assume he even did it intentionally that he meant to do it and was fooling around. First of all was that the only way you had to stop him? Was there nothing else available to you? We all know that violence, people choose it because its efficient, it gets things done quickly. There probably was no more efficient way to stop him, than to hit him. But let me ask you this, I said, besides stopping him from knocking over the glass of water, what else did you do? What else did you do that you didn't see? What did you tell him about he really needs in this World to get by? Did you really proclaim that the meek inherit the Earth, or did you really proclaim what you really need in this life is to be tough, hard, and powerful. What did you tell him about Father? The single most important symbol in the New Testament. Fathers will crush and hurt at the smallest little inconvenience. What did you do, I mean you and your wife and the two most significant people in the little babies 5-year-old life? You are everything. And here you caused direct hurt. And what did you tell him about love? What else did you do? Look at the enormous size that you are – you're an adult to a little 5 year old – we can't remember, but adults are huge. What did you put in his mind for dreams? And doesn't it make any difference, that is the American family has totally broken down, with tens upon tens of thousands of children beating up their parents monthly – killing them – doesn't it make sense that if this is the power you rely on to control a family, that the day is coming when this kids bigger than you are and you're old. What other dynamics did you create? What else have you done on the invisible side of existence that no one sees now just to get, just to use one efficient method out of many that could have been used to stop glasses of water from spilling on the table.

But so it is with every action in life – every action in life sends out invisible consequences all over the place. If you're a teacher, and even if you're not a teacher you may have heard the famous quote that all teachers kind of here as they go on and study and so forth and so on – it comes from the education of Henry Adams - a teacher never knows where his or her influence ends, it could affect eternity. A teacher never knows where his or her influence ends, it could affect eternity. The idea is you teach people ideas and then they act on them. But there's far more to it than that in terms of means and ends. Consider a teacher, say a teacher teaches high school geometry to 14 year olds. Teaches geometry. Now you couldn't have a less spiritual subject, seemingly. So the teacher starts class at the beginning of the fall and 2 weeks into class she sees there's this kid in the class, and this kid is no ????, he's never going to get geometry – never. A month into the class, she has him after class 2 and 3 days a week trying to get him to draw the triangles correctly and show him how the various hypotheses – but he doesn't get it. She's with him 2,3 nights a week and he gets a D here, a C minus there, a D minus, an F, he's just not getting it though the year. Nine months go by of school, he's after class 2 – 3 nights a week just trying to pass. The school season ends, he gets his D, he gets out of geometry, he'll do wonderful things in the World, but not with geometry. She's happy he's out, he's happy he's out, that's it. Now 12 years later, 12 years later in his life, something is going on and he remembers something she said 12 years earlier. And he makes a decision based on that that he would not otherwise make. In her wildest dreams, her wildest imagination, when she was talking to him 12 years earlier she could not have known that what she was saying was going to affect his life 12 years later and actually bring him to make a decision that he otherwise wouldn't make. That is it's real but we don't know how it works, that's how it works now. There is an invisible reality in terms of thought going across 12 years, it comes back to him and he remembers and he choose otherwise than what he would.

That doesn't happen once or twice a day – that happens trillion times a day with human beings all over the World. Trillions upon trillions of times a day. That ideas and thoughts and activity that was someplace else in life are what make the decision for the person at this moment. And could never have been imagined to be operative. Never, absolutely never. Day in and day out, we live by the invisible ripples that come to us over time and space that would never thought when they were started that they were going to be working and controlling the moment. This is the way normal life works. The invisible side of existence is real. It is real. In fact most, spiritually speaking, most of what is most important in life happens on the invisible side, where no one can see it.

Consider this, this is just a way of looking at it.....it's from the biological sciences...but did you ever consider how many human beings had to have sexual intercourse within 1 minute of the time they did in order for an individual to exist. Here's the person, right here, the individual person, you or I. Here's the parents, here's the grandparents, here's the great grandparents, and the triangle of course goes our, great great grandparents and so forth. Now, great grandmother dies here, and she dies in 1880, she's 80 years old. Now we all know, we are all very, very clear, just because we've all had a basic understanding of biology, we all know that if we take great grandmother out all together, and she never existed, there goes everything else above that. Great grandfather doesn't

marry great grandmother and therefore doesn't have the Grandfather over here, the whole thing just goes at that point, if great grandmother is removed. But great grandmother does not start out as an 80-year-old woman in 1880. She starts out as a zygote in 1800, that is, she starts out as an individual cell that is the product of 1 of dozens of eggs, but here's the point that is the product of 1 of tens upon tens of millions of sperm. Change the act of sexual intercourse by 1 minute in 1800, and 1 of 2 things is sure to happen scientifically. Either there is no fertilization of any egg in which case great grandmother doesn't exist, or there is the fertilization by a sperm that creates an entirely different physiologically, psychological entity – that great grandfather wouldn't even look at, in fact he's a man that's created. And this is every step of the way to me, going back, only God knows how far. Microscopic events taking place utterly beyond human control, utterly beyond human control, in which everything depends down the line. But think of this – how many invisible dynamics go into any act of sexual intercourse? First of all there's the genetic stuff sexually that just comes with being a human being. Then there's the cultural stuff, then there's the personal stuff, the personal history and the desires and so forth and so on. It is all on the invisible side. All those invisible dynamics that affect people come to play in 1800 within a minute. And if they don't come to play, there is no conception. This is real life.

When the atheist philosopher John Paul Sach saw this, what we just explained – when he saw this isn't even a thread that my life hangs on, when he saw this whole thing it took his breath away. And the way he described it was, it's impossible that I exist. My whole existence has a history of hanging on something less than a thread. So what's going on back here in 1800? Is a piece of the process of my history part of the piece of the process of the history of my existence and I'm 150 years away from being born. But if it doesn't happen within 1 minute, I am not here. And it is utterly dependent on invisible realities in history. Thoughts and emotions and desires that come from all kinds of other invisible places. Family upbringing, culture, and so forth. There is an invisible side to every act that we do. Every act that we do. Every act that goes on, there's an invisible side to, it has consequences we can't imagine. Now this date, I'll just carry this one step further, this date probably doesn't mean much to you here in Ireland, but this is a famous date in the United States – November 9, 1965. Now November 9, 1965 is a famous date in the United States because something happened there on that date that never happened before and never happened since. At about 5:18 in the afternoon up in Buffalo New York, a raccoon ran through some cables in an electric power situation and knocked the cable over and broke it or something like that. And within 12 minutes, the entire east coast and every spec of every state in it was in total darkness. Something that was thought was impossible, that such a thing could happen. Because what happened when the raccoon ran through the cable is it set off other cables to take up for the lack, of you know, it was a high peak time – 5:18 in the afternoon and one thing led on to the other and they all began a short circuit, and within 12 minutes all across the state of New York and southern Canada, and all down the Eastern seaboard to Washington DC. There were about 40 million people in total darkness in 12 minutes. There were no streetlights, there were no house lights, people were stuck in elevators, they were stuck in escalators, stuck in trains under the ground – millions upon millions of people. Those high-rise buildings that people depend on electrical elevators and so forth, there was nowhere to go anyplace.

There was nothing except for flashlights or batteries from car lights or something like that. No one ever thought it could happen – just never thought it could happen. That was on November 9 of 1965. Now look, today, today in 1995 there are – the thing that's really incredible here, is that, and this is a medical fact, a fact of medical history in the United States – 271 and 272 days later, the human gestation period is the all time record for births in the United States. Do you realize that there are tens of thousands of 29 year old American boys and girls, smart, intelligent, you know able to speak languages, do computers, and know all about sports, and well dressed, and really on top of it – that but for a misguided raccoon up in Buffalo, they don't exist.

Most of what is most important in life happens on the invisible side. It happens on the invisible side. A human act sends out, only God knows what invisible consequences. There is far more to every choice than just what we see. Life is infinitely deeper than the surface. Infinitely deeper than the surface, and people are affected far more by what goes out underneath the surface than what we can see. If that is the case, how is it that we can make decision intelligently? If we can only see the consequences on the surface, or anticipate those and consequences go out over time and space that may not become active for 10, 15 or 150 years or more, how do we know how to make a decision with our lives? And there is only 1 way and that is in the here and now, in the here and now, do God's will. That's the only way to make a decision in life that's good. In the here and now, right at this moment, do God's will. For God knows the structure of the Universe. And if we choose in conformity with God's will right now, we can be absolutely certain that regardless of how things look on the surface, the consequences are going to be good. For there is only one reality that God made visible and invisible from the stars to the blade of grass, there is only one reality, and what is morally correct, what is morally in conformity with God's will, ultimately has to work and is good. But if I rely to make my decision exclusively and primarily on the consequences that I can see, how far can any one person see on a clear day? Well not forever, its about 26 miles you can see. You can only see, remember we drew our circle on the board and how much do we know of existence – we only see a little piece and yet we know consequences go out far beyond that piece into time and space and affecting people. The only way to make a decision in life is to do God's will in the moment and then let the consequences go out. Jesus on the cross – if he were only looking and ??? on the cross – if he were only looking at the immediate consequences he could see, it would make no sense to do what he did. But what was he doing? Your will not mine. As bad as the immediate consequences looked, and looked like it wasn't going to work out, he stayed faithful in a crisis situation of God's will and the ripples go out to this day, that's why we're here. He was faithful to God's will because he accepted the depth of the mystery of existence. He accepted the reality that human choice affects more than what I can see – far, far beyond what I can see. And if I am to play my part as God wants me to play my part in existence, then the only way I can do it is in the smallest of activity doing God's will. And what is God's will? For the Christian, it is to love as Christ loves in the moment.

So the monk Thomas Murten sums this up in one beautiful sentence, a really beautiful sentence – Murten says: the first and most important thing to be a good Christian, the first and most important thing to be a good Christian is to be willing to be your own good

person here and now, love as Christ loved here and now, and then be willing to let everything else fall in its own good time, good place, and good way. The first and most important thing to be a good Christian is to be willing to be your own good person here and now. Love as Christ loved in the only place where you have any control over existence – right now, here and now, and then be willing to let everything else fall in its own good time, good place, good way. Faith in a good God means faith that the good deed will have good results even if we can't see it at this moment. That the good life will have good consequences. That the good seed when its planted in the ground will spring up and be a good fruit. The first and most important thing to be a good Christian is to be willing to be your own good person here and now – love as Christ loved here and now and then be willing to let everything else fall in its own good time, good place and good way.

Fidelity to the moment is what we're talking about. Fidelity to Jesus in the moment and then let Jesus, let the providence of God carry the rest of it. What began 1700 years ago when the Church abandoned the Lamb of God, when Christians ??? abandoned following the gentle the kind the meek the non-violent Jesus that loved enemies rather than hated them and killed them and so forth and so on. That forgave indefinitely when the lamb of God was abandoned 1700 years ago when what's called the introduction of the Constantine church – what began was the process of choosing non-Christ like means in the here and now in order to get the consequences I want and I can see. There was a total loss of the mystery of existence and the mystery of God in Jesus and the mystery of the power of god in Jesus. Everything became getting done what I wanted to get done and if that meant using non-Christ like means well fine, that meant using it. That's exactly what can't be done. Fidelity to Christ means fidelity to the means of Christ here and now, and the reason we're faithful is because each of our individual actions sends out ripples over time and space that we can't imagine. We have a responsibility to those around us in the history, which means Jesus, which means God. He created us for acts that we're supposed to do and if we don't do them in the here and now, then they're not done. If we substitute our own agenda of whatever it is. We've all probably come across this in a million ways. I mean, did you ever come across a situation in a family where the mother and the father are in a turmoil on Sunday morning – yelling and screaming at the kids and the kids are yelling and screaming back over going to church to love God and being on time. I means its absolutely right to go to church on Sunday, I mean that's obvious, since the beginning of Christianity, Christians have celebrated the Eucharist on Sunday, that's part of the covenant, that's part of what we're committed to. What we want to do, what we want to leave for future generations now. But the means of getting there. The means have to be Christ like, not just the end. How many people, how many children have walked away from the church? On the basis that Sunday had become such a horrid affair in the morning. And so as soon as they get old enough, they're gone.

Whether we're building a cathedral, or whether we're building an individual Christian life, or whether we're helping others build Christian communities the means have to be Christ like all the way. That's the only way to do it. We cannot say well, I've got such a hard job here, I've just got to set the Christ like means aside for the moment, and I'll get back to them as soon as I get the job done of building the church or getting the heating

system in the church, or whatever it is. That's exactly what we're called not to do. And that's exactly the fundamental problem that started way back 1700 years ago and it's the choice of means inconsistent with Christ to try to do Christ work on earth. And that's exactly what we have to re-establish in our own personal lives. The real commitment that we will do things by Christ like means even if it doesn't look like these are going to be effective in the moment. As it did not look on cavalry like anything was effective. We will do it in order to follow Christ so God can use us as he wants to use us to send out the power of God over time and space.

You know, you probably remember that interview by Malcom Mogerich of Mother Theresa – famous one. In one of this interviews or books that he did on Mother Theresa, he asked her the question that everyone asks Mother Theresa – at least they ask in their heads when they think about it. They say, and he said it out loud, he said look Mother Theresa, I see the few lepers in the leprosarium here and the few people you're taking care of – what you've got maybe 32 people here and a few others here and there and I see that, he said. But I look out on the streets of Calcutta and I tens of thousands in misery. I see people by the thousands lying in gutters with spittle all over them rotting away and so forth. And you've got 32. What good does it do? And her answer was of course, well Jesus would help these people, this is what Jesus would do. He'd go and he'd help the people who were hurt and of course the obvious response is, but there's only 32, you're making no difference at all. What possible good, find its 32, but there are thousands out there in misery and you're using up your whole life for this, what could possibly come of it? You're really not making a dent as they say. And her answer was, my business is fidelity, God's business is success. My business is fidelity and God's business is success. Love as Christ would love in the moment, and then let the ripples go out. Be faithful to the means of the lamb in the moment – that's all, and then let the invisible consequences go out under the guidance of providence. But what we can be sure of, is if we substitute our own little minds on what is effective in the moment for following Christ, the ripples won't go out anywhere they should, in fact they'll be part of the problem. But God has a purpose for us every instant of our existence and from the beginning that's way beyond what we are in our chronological time, way beyond our 60, or 70, or 50 years. We affect out into generations in ways we can't imagine, therefore, the only way we can do that properly is fidelity, the only place that we have under control in our whole existence in this moment. Fidelity to the means of Christ in this moment. And then is let the ripples go out. Mother Theresa says, my business is fidelity, God's business is success. The church and so many Christians have literally reversed that, figuring their business is success and God's business is fidelity. It's not so, and its causing chaos in the individual life and in the Christian communities. The issue is to love as Christ loved here and now because those are the only Christ like means that can build a Christ like life, a Christ like home, a Christ like convent, a Christ like parish, a Christ like diocese, a Christ like church, a Christ like world. The only means. We are to be faithful and loving as Christ loved. And then let the ripples go out and leave the rest in the hands of God. For fidelity is our business and success is Gods.

