

O my Jesus, forgive us our sins and lead all souls to heaven, especially those most in need of your mercy.

Transcript to accompany the audio recording of the retreat

Behold the Lamb

Preached By

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Shrine of the Lamb of God
Knock, Ireland



This is a transcript of the sixteen conferences of the Behold the Lamb Retreat given at the Shrine of the Lamb in Knock, Ireland. It is not a book nor an extended essay. While it is a near verbatim transcript of the sixteen presentations on the theology, morality and spirituality of the Nonviolent Jesus of the Gospels and His Way of Nonviolent Love of friends and enemies, it nevertheless is still only a transcript. Therefore it cannot convey the full truth and meaning of what was originally communicated orally. What is communicated 'viva voce'—with the living voice—is not quite the same when reduced to the signs and symbols of script. This transcript is offered only as an aid for studying, teaching and pondering the original sixteen spoken reflections on the Nonviolent Jesus of the Gospels and His Way of Nonviolent Love of all the infinitely loved sons and daughters of the "Father of all"—under all circumstances and without exception.

-Emmanuel Charles McCarthy

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1-The Lamb: To Be Adored, To Be Imitated

God is always present, always present. We do not make God present; God is always present. Our task is simply to be attentive to that mysterious, incomprehensible, all loving and compassionate presence. So now, let us take a moment to be attentive to the presence of God, asking His blessing on what we're about to do in this conference and for our whole retreat.

Opening Prayer

Shine in our hearts, O Master, who loves all humanity, the pure light of your divine knowledge and open the eyes of our mind that we may understand the announcing of your Good News. Set in us awe of your blessed commandments, so that, trampling all carnal desires, we may begin to live according to the Spirit, both doing and willing everything for your good pleasure. For you are the Light of our souls and bodies, Christ God, and we render glory to You and to your eternal Father and to your all-holy, good and life-giving Spirit, now and always and forever and ever.

The Authentic Way to Holiness

This retreat that we're doing for this coming week is about one thing: Holiness. Gospel holiness! Everything that we do this week that we are here, *everything* that we do, is about holiness. It is the human effort to do our part to bring our lives more in conformity with the Holy One, to bring our lives deeper into the life of the Holy One—God.

It is about the authentic way to holiness, for there are many ways, pseudo ways, false ways, that have been raised up before humanity that are said to lead to holiness but lead, in fact, to destruction, misery. It is about the Gospel way to holiness.

Now in our society, holiness is not a priority. When was the last time that you picked up the *Irish Times* or the *London Times* and there was a big story about someone who wanted to be holy? Holiness is a non-priority in our society and of course it's a non-priority in our world. My point is not to criticize society or the world. My point is simply just to state a fact. People, generally speaking, to the tune of the vast majority, are more interested in the local soccer match than holiness, more interested in fashion than holiness, more interested in making money than holiness, more interested in how their garden is growing than holiness.

To Be Human Is to Want to Be a Revolutionary

03:38 This retreat is also about, and don't feel defensive in front of this word, this retreat also is about revolution—nothing short of that! Revolution, of course, as a word simply means

turning around. Turning around. You are facing this way and you turn that way, you turn away from something. You revolve. This retreat is about turning around. It is about turning away from, turning around away from false gods, false ideas of holiness, false notions of the way to holiness. It is about turning away from false gods because false gods cannot give humanity, cannot give to the human being, holiness, because they don't exist.

It is also turning towards something because when we turn away, anytime we turn away we have to turn towards something else and it's turning towards the true God, Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God. Therefore, this retreat is about revolution in that sense. But it's about revolution in another sense, too. This retreat is about revolution because, and once again please do not be defensive, listen. To be human is to want to be a revolutionary. Think about the state of the world, I mean right at this very instant. The pain, the agony, the suffering that people are in, the mental pain, the emotional pain, the psychological pain, the physical pain. Think at this moment one person every nine seconds is dying the terrible death of starvation. One person every six seconds is dying from a disease they could be inoculated against. In the country in which I live, the United States, and this is the figure so you know the figure is far smaller [i.e., the number of seconds] on a world wide scale, one woman is being raped every nineteen seconds. One man, one man in prison is being raped every seven seconds. Think of the cancer wards and the terror and the pain, the drug addicts.

In short, you and I live in a world that is a furnace of agony. It is a furnace of agony. To live in this world as a human being is first of all to know that and second of all it is to wish you could do something about it. Whether we ever can or not is not the point. No human being wants things to be as they are and so to be a human being, to be human, is to desire to be a revolutionary, is to desire to be able to turn things around. We may never be able to do it, but because we're human we don't wish the other brothers and sisters of ours on this planet a destiny of misery and pain.

But as the founder of the Soviet Union so aptly put it, Lenin, "You cannot be a revolutionary without a theory of revolution." In other words, if you don't have any plan about what you're doing, why you're doing it and how you do it—you're just meandering haphazardly around—nothing's going to happen.

This retreat then, besides being about stating the way and the reality and bringing people into, hopefully, an encounter with the holy, this retreat is also about a theory of revolution. These two items—holiness and revolution—fit together in this way. In human history, in real human history, not the make believe world of media or politics or newspapers, but in the real, real, human history, not the history that's in the text books

that tells about one little country, Ireland or America, but the history of humanity spread across millions of years and time and space and going forward indefinitely, in real history, the history that at this moment, and the moment before this, and the moment after this, billions of people will be in anguish, in reality the notions of holiness and revolution come together in this way: Holiness *is* the revolution. It is the only revolution, the only revolution.

The Ultimate Social Responsibility is Struggling to be Holy

10:17 Only God, only God can conquer evil and all its manifestations. The Fathers of the Church used to say that the mystery of evil is only one speck shorter than the mystery of God. The mystery of evil is terrible and deep. It is beyond human comprehension as to how it works, its source and how to conquer it. Thomas Aquinas said, “The dumbest devil is smarter than all humanity put together.” We know, in reality, you cannot outthink evil—impossible. In fact, the most terrible evils committed, in the human situation, universally, have been done by bright people. Intelligence is no match for the reality of evil. Holiness is the only revolution—it is *the* revolution. Holiness is God. God is the holy one. And so what is being said is that ultimate social responsibility—ultimate responsibility to your family, to your friends, to your neighbors, to all people who live today and who ever lived and will live—ultimate social responsibility is struggling to be holy. It is holiness that will change everything and anything other than holiness will change nothing for only God can conquer evil and death.

Source of Holiness

13:03 Holiness is, simply stated, our uniting with God. When we unite with God to the extent or to the degree that we do, we are holy for only God is holy. And to the extent that we are not united to God we are other than holy. How do we know? How do we know how to unite to God? How do we know what God is? How do we know what the first step is towards holiness? How do we know what the first thought is in comprehending God?

We all know the passage, “One is holy, one is Lord, Jesus Christ to the glory of God the Father.” Jesus Christ is the holy made flesh. “The one who sees me sees the Father.” “The Father and I are one.” “Holy, holy is the Lamb who was slain.” The word holy is only used for God. Holy. *God* is holy. *Only God* is holy. We are holy only to the extent we participate in God, but God is holiness itself. “One is holy, one is Lord, Jesus Christ to the glory of God the Father.” We know what it is to be holy, we know what holiness is and we know the way to holiness—only—only, through Jesus Christ, the incarnation, the enfleshment of holiness itself.

We are taught that we are made in the image and likeness of The Holy. Our source is holiness and the purpose for which holiness creates can only be for holiness. Our destiny

is holiness. The purpose for our existence is holiness. And our way is to be holiness. Now no one is going to tell you this in the *London Times* and it's almost become embarrassing to talk about in the churches, Catholic, Orthodox or Protestant. But, it is the Holy from which we come. It is the Holy to which we go. It is the Holy that keeps us in existence from this day to that, from conception to death. It is the Holy that keeps us into existence for all eternity and it is the Holy who became flesh in Jesus Christ and who shows us the way, the way to holiness—the way *of* holiness.

The Meaning of the Symbol of the Lamb

16:08 Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, the Lamb of God is the symbol of what it means for human beings to be holy. Here at Our Lady of Knock Shrine, the Lamb of God is the central symbol of an apparition. Our task during this week is to open up to the depth of that symbol. For that symbol is a symbol of God, is a symbol of the Holy. That symbol is a communication through Jesus Christ, to those who see it, of the way of holiness, of the Truth of what holiness is.

So let's ask: What does the symbol of the Lamb of God mean? A lamb is an animal. God is God, the creator of the world. What is not being said obviously is, God is an animal. That's not what's being said. What's not being said is that God became flesh in a lamb. That's not what's being said. What is the meaning of the symbol of the Lamb of God—whether here at Knock or whether in the Eucharist, or in scripture?

Well let's talk about symbol for a minute. What's a symbol? A symbol is a sign. It is not the reality. A symbol is a sign that points to a reality. We know what a sign is, don't we? We drive into Dublin and we just go over the city limits of Dublin and we see the sign 'Dublin'. Well, that's the sign, but the sign is not the reality of Dublin. It's only a sign that points to Dublin. Dublin is a reality behind the sign that's infinitely complex. The sign is only a sign. So a symbol is a sign, a non-verbal sign, a non-alphabetical sign that points to a reality behind it, not to itself. For example, a shamrock. The shamrock is a symbol of Ireland. Shamrocks grow here and everyone sees a shamrock and they think of Ireland. Or a pyramid, a pyramid is a symbol of Egypt. You think of Egypt, you think of the pyramids, the pharaohs and so forth.

Remember when Jesus walks by, John the Baptist points to him and he says, "Behold the Lamb of God." So the Lamb of God is not a new symbol at Knock. The Lamb of God isn't even a new symbol in terms of the Gospels. The Lamb of God isn't a new symbol created in the Mass. The Lamb of God is a symbol that goes back to the very time of Jesus—Behold the Lamb of God. But what does the symbol mean? What is it pointing to, behind the symbol? Well in order to find that out, one of the things we have to do with symbols is, we have to ask ourselves in what way does the symbol have something in it

that intrinsically relates to the reality behind it. And so, for example, the symbol of Ireland is the shamrock, and well, yes, shamrocks grow in Ireland. And there's a whole world of legend and story about shamrocks and Saint Patrick explained the Trinity with the shamrock. And so the shamrock is intrinsically connected to Ireland as the pyramid to Egypt?

21:47 But think about it. There has to be that intrinsic connection between the symbol and the reality for a symbol to work. For example, you could not have a pyramid to be the symbol of Ireland. It would make no sense at all. No more than you could have a shamrock to be a symbol in the Egyptian desert. Impossible. There must be an intrinsic relationship.

This week, when we're here during our retreat and we're thinking and praying on and encountering The Holy, and understanding deeply that to be a holy person is to be a revolutionary because this is not the way God made the world, this is the way the world has become through sin and God wants the world regenerated to something even better than it originally was. And we're part of that, so as we come here and think about holiness and about what God calls us to, we're going to think that out, we're going to ponder that through the symbol of the Lamb of God.

First of all, we are going to ponder it through the symbol of the Lamb of God as I talk about it here in the various conferences. We're going to ponder it and encounter it as we visit the shrine where a model of the apparition exists as it was on August 21, 1879. We're going to encounter the Lamb of God and its symbol every time we celebrate the Eucharist together. And we're going to ponder and contemplate and live in the presence of the Lamb of God and be attentive to that presence every time we participate in Eucharist adoration. But the task is clear. We are going to learn something about the true God through the symbol of the Lamb of God, a symbol which God himself gave us.

Remaining Open to Deeper Dimensions of Truth

24:16 God is of infinite depth. God is of infinite depth; therefore the Gospel is of infinite depth. There are so many people, we know them, we may be this way ourselves. We've all met them. That for whatever reason they lose contact with real life and by that I mean they lose all consciousness that growth is change. Growth is change. If you stay the way you were at ten years old what kind of person would you be? You wouldn't be an adult at all. You would still be ten years old. Over 30 or 20 or 50 or 70 years that you've lived you have changed and in the process of that change, much of it might have been through suffering and fear and pain. It might have been through happiness and joys. It might have been through making hard decisions or easy decisions, or bad decisions, but through it all you've learned and you grew. It may have been through successes or failures, but if

someone comes to you now you can say things to them and you can help them in ways no ten-year-old child can or could.

It is just a physical fact of life that every second of existence the universe is in constant and total change. This pulpit that I'm standing at only appears solid to the five senses of the human being. Everyone in this room knows that there is a molecular change going on second by second by second, not only in this but in every piece of the earth. Everything is changing all the time. You're changing your mind every second and on and on and on.

How many people come to a truth, I mean really come to a truth, they see that something is true that they never saw before. They may be 20 or 30 or 50 or 60 or whatever, they see something is true that they never saw before and they know it in their hearts, they're totally convinced of it and they say "No" to it because this is not the way it has been for the last 40, 50, or 60 years. What they do is freeze a moment of their life and they stop living after that. There is nothing more to be encountered. There's nothing more to be learned. There are no more changes to be made even though God gives them the grace to know that something is true they say, "No, I will not serve the truth. I will serve my own past." Period.

Well, first of all, I remember the situation in the earlier part of this century when Mahatma Gandhi in 1937 was questioned on a particular subject by the press. And the press said, well look, here it is, you're saying this in 1937, but on the answer to the same question in 1916 you said this, which is different from what you're saying in 1937. And then in 1923 you said this, which is different from what you said in 1916 and what you're saying today in 1937. Which one is the truth? And he said, "The one I'm saying today. I've learned something in 30 years."

Regardless of what we think of Gandhi, Gandhi was known as a person of absolute integrity. He may have been wrong but he admitted he was wrong when it was shown. How many public figures are willing to say, even today, "I changed my mind because I was wrong five years ago"? Of course they don't. Yet the reality of the matter is, if the Gospel is of infinite depth because it is about the infinite God then there is always something more to learn for the finite mind. The day the Christian says of the Gospel, "I've got it," he or she is deceiving themselves; they don't have it. They don't have it. There is always a deeper reality to penetrate. There are always deeper dimensions of truths to experience and to live and to know.

Edith Stein: St. Teresia Benedicta of the Cross, Canonized 1998

30:06 A few years ago, in 1987 the Church beatified Blessed Teresia Benedicta of the Cross, Edith Stein. Now Edith Stein was a Jewish woman who was one of the first women ever to get a doctorate in the German educational system in the earlier part of the century. She not only got a doctorate, she got it in philosophy and she got it Summa Cum Laude. Brilliant woman. She was also, although Jewish, she was an atheist, or at best an agnostic. But, because she was a philosopher and she was concerned of things of the mind, she was very, very committed to truth. She knew a person who does not live his or her truth is forced into living a meaningless life. There is an unbreakable connection between human meaning and living what we know is true. Truth is just the conformity of mind to reality. To the extent that our mind conforms to reality we know the truth. To live reality is to live meaning. To live unreality is to live illusion, meaninglessness.

So she was committed to truth. And she's an atheist or agnostic perhaps, Jewish philosopher in 1921. And she goes to visit some friends who are also philosophers in another part of Germany for a little vacation, a weekend. They are called away because of an accident or something like that; both husband and wife have to leave. So she's left in the house alone. Because they were academic people, their house has a library in it. She was an academic person, so because she has nothing to do she starts browsing through the library. She goes through one book after another just looking as people do. Then she pulls a book out of the bookcase which she's heard a lot about, but which she has never read. She browses through it, looks at a few pages, looks at a few more and then she decides to sit down and read it.

And so about 7:30 at night she sits down and she begins to read it. And she reads and she reads and she reads until 5:30 in the morning. Mind you this is a Jewish atheist/agnostic philosopher; she puts the book down at 5:30 that morning and says, "This is the truth." And that morning she goes out to Mass and buys a catechism. The book she picked up was St. Teresa of Avila's autobiography. She had no relationship to that world of ideas before that moment. She had no relationship to Catholicism; she knew who Jesus was but had no deep relationship to Jesus or even God. Even though she was a 30 years old prestigious philosopher, known for being agnostic/atheist, that book communicated Truth to her; she knew it and acted on it immediately.

Several months later, on January 1, 1922, she was baptized and of course ultimately on August 9, 1942 she died as a Carmelite nun at Auschwitz. But it all depended upon her, that when God communicated truth to her she said, "This was the truth," and look what she did. She went out and did something about it before the morning was up. She went to mass and bought a Catechism. In other words, she was totally clear, as she writes, "The day that you know a truth is the day you must begin to live it."

Most of us walk around like there's no more truth to be learned. No more Gospel truth to be learned. The infinite God has communicated totally to us and He wants no more than that we live out of past communications. He has no new mission for us, based on new truth that he wants to give us when he wants to give it to us. Well, He had truth to give Edith Stein and He had a mission for her, a very, very important mission. But nothing could happen unless she said "Yes" to the truth that God gave her.

Fr. George Zabelka

35:34 In 1988 right here at Knock Shrine a priest came to visit, to say Mass and give a talk—George Zabelka. George Zabelka was the Catholic chaplain for the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bomb crew. In 1941 George Zabelka was ordained and became a military chaplain. In August 1945 he was the Catholic chaplain for the bomb crews that destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki by the atomic bomb. He was a military chaplain for 20 years beyond that and then a parish priest. In 1973, at the age of 60, George came across Jesus' teachings of the Sermon on the Mount for the first time. He came across Jesus' teachings of a nonviolent love of friends and enemies for the first time. Did he read the Sermon on the Mount before that? Hundreds of times, probably thousands, but the truth of it never caught. Why it didn't catch, who knows? Upbringing? The institutions he was in? His life? But he never saw what was there.

But in 1973 at a retreat for the first time, George began to see that Jesus meant what he said in the Sermon of the Mount: That it was forbidden, *forbidden*, to do anything but love your enemies. That anything else wasn't the way of God, but that love of enemies was. Violence and homicide were never of God regardless of how noble the cause, and that real sanctity required taking these teachings seriously. For three years he wrestled with it because, remember, we're dealing with a military chaplain; we're dealing with a man who was the Catholic chaplain for the Hiroshima / Nagasaki bomb crews. For three years he wrestled.

Could it really be that the truth he was seeing was the Truth? That Jesus indeed rejected homicide and violence? Jesus indeed insisted upon no revenge, no enmity at all. And as he said at his 50th anniversary of ordination in 1991 at the homily he gave, he's talking about this moment in 1973, he says, "After that retreat I went back to the rectory," he said, "and I looked at the Catholic Bible, and God, there it was, 'love your enemies, turn the other cheek, walk the extra mile, blessed are the meek.' I looked at the Protestant Bible; they said the same thing. I looked at the Orthodox Bible they're all saying the same thing. I couldn't believe it. How could I have been a priest for all those years? How could I have been part of justifying slaughtering hundreds of thousands of people in war and saying it was of God?"

39:10 And so in 1976 after three years of wrestling with this he came to a decision that this was the truth and when you knew a truth that's when you had to do something about it. And so in 1973 he wrote a Christmas letter, like priests do, a Xerox or a mimeograph letter at that time, three or four pages telling what's gone on for the past year to all the people who used to be past parishioners and so forth. At the last paragraph of the letter he said, "I don't want to lose any friends, and I don't want to offend anyone, and I don't want to judge anyone, but," he says, "I must do an about-face. I've studied this issue and I know for certain that Jesus was nonviolent and that he taught a way of nonviolent love of friends and enemies." That was 1976.

The rest of his life from '76 on forward was just an average life. He studied, he read, he thought about it, but nothing spectacular happened. He said what he had to say and struggled to live it the best he could. People were upset with him, but that's the way it is. Then in 1980 a magazine in the United States by the name of *Sojourners* published a story about him and about his conversion from someone who is justifying violence at its height, the atomic bomb, to someone who had made a conversion to Jesus' teachings of nonviolence and love of friends and enemies. They published that magazine in August 1980 and over the next 12 years God gave George a whole new existence. That magazine opened the door to a mission that God had planned for George since before George was born. George went around the world talking to bishops and priests and laity— invited to talk to them—giving retreats, giving conferences, on the fact that the church had to return to Jesus' way of nonviolent love of friends and enemies. And George was listened to. Why? Because, unlike most of us, George was there in real war and no one could fool him about what real war was and tell him stories about how good it was. He could tell you there was no relationship between what goes on in war and the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

And so people listened to him by the millions. BBC made a television program on him, *The Reluctant Prophet*, an hour documentary. Magazines, journals and so forth interviewed him, and the word is getting out and it's all done through George who when he is 60 plus years old struggled with the truth he comes across in the Gospel, a truth that contradicts his whole life up to that moment in time and yet he knows it's the truth and he says yes to it. Does that mean his whole prior life was worthless? Of course not! It doesn't even mean he was guilty of anything. He didn't know any better at that time. He was choosing according to the truth that he had. But what it does mean is that God used that entire life up to that time in order to allow George to proclaim the Gospel in a way that no one else could. He took the priest that was at the maximal use of violence in human history, the dropping of the atomic bombs, converted him and gave him a mission to the world. And God did all that, but George had to do one thing. In his little world he had to say *yes* to the truth when it came to him.

Why we do not see a truth 20 years or 40 years earlier, that's not our business! If God wanted to give us the whole truth of the Gospel at ten years old he could have done that. But if God gives us a truth today, then this is the day that God wants us to see it. This is the day that God wants us to begin to live it.

The Characteristics of the Lamb, The Characteristics of God

44:25 And so we have here at Knock, the symbol of the Lamb, a biblical symbol, a Eucharistic symbol. And what is the Lamb? The Lamb is a symbol whose unity with God is declared by the scripture and by the Eucharist to be that the characteristics of the Lamb are the characteristics of God. For example, the Lamb, as a lamb, is not a killer animal. The lamb is just the opposite. The lamb is gentle. The lamb is meek. The lamb is loveable. The lamb doesn't kill life. The lamb gives its life so others can live. It is not a victimizer; it is a victim. The lamb doesn't induce fear. The lamb induces a smile, happiness. The lamb is not cruel and powerful, fearful; it is meek and it is humble. It is nonviolent. And so when Jesus, who is the incarnation of God, is called the Lamb of God it is saying Jesus is not cruel, Jesus is not full of fearfulness, Jesus is not a killer; Jesus does not victimize. Jesus is gentle and kind and meek—nonviolent. Jesus does not strike terror, but brings a smile.

The Scripture writers could have written, "Behold the dragon of God," or "Behold the lion of God," or "Behold the rattlesnake of God," in relationship to Jesus, but those symbols don't fit. A symbol that fits and the symbol that the church has been using since the beginning, is the Lamb of God. I know it seems to all of us, all of us, as we read the papers, as we look at the television, as we see what goes on around us, that there is just no way that what Jesus teaches can be effective; there is just no way that Jesus, the Lamb of God, can make any difference in this world of power and iron and steel; and yet, that's what the Gospel teaches. That is what the Gospel teaches.

The Indivisibility of Adoration and Imitation

45:11 And so we have here at Knock specifically on August 21, 1879 the Holy Spirit giving, giving, to the people of Ireland, an apparition of God, an apparition of God as the Lamb of God. Why else would that be given to the people of Ireland except as an invitation for the people of Ireland to *live* that image, to see the truth of God in that image, and to choose to put on that image in their own personal lives. Why else would that image be given to the people of Ireland other than that the churches of Ireland, Catholic and Protestant, choose to live according to that image of the Lamb of God. And by choosing to live by that image—change the face of Ireland and change the face of the world.

But like George Zabelka when he heard the truth of the nonviolent God, the nonviolent Jesus who teaches love of enemies, like Edith Stein when she read St. Teresa of Avila's

autobiography, the critical step is, God can do everything for humanity, but God cannot accept the truth for the human being. The human being has to accept the truth him or herself. And therefore, one can raise the issue that there is a grace that comes with every apparition. It is a grace that is offered and if it is a genuine apparition that grace offers something to the human being that the human being can't imagine, as it did to Edith Stein and to George Zabelka and to billions of others over history. But that grace requires accepting it—accepting the grace of the apparition.

The Ultimate Purpose of the Truth of the Gospel Is to Live It—Refusal to Imitate Is a Refusal of Holiness

47:34 And so, we all know that Jesus says in the Gospel, “It is not those that say ‘Lord, Lord!’ but those that do the will of my Father” (Mt 7:21-23). We all know that the truth of the Gospel is not just meant to be adored and proclaimed, the ultimate purpose of the truth of the Gospel is to live it. The word, the verb that Jesus used most in the Gospel is the word “do.” That’s the verb he uses most, “do.” So in the Mass, in the Eucharistic adoration, when we’re over in the shrine where the image is, we adore the Lamb of God. Four times, four times just before communion, the consecrated bread and wine are referred to as the Lamb of God—four times. In the Byzantine Catholic Church and in the Orthodox Church, what’s called in the Western Church the consecrated host, is called in the Eastern Church, the Lamb, the Lamb.

And so we adore. Immediately after the consecration in the Eastern churches—there are no pews—everyone prostrates, *prostrates* themselves after the consecration. They are adoring God. They are adoring the Lamb of God. You only adore God. The technical word for it in the church is *latria*. *Latria* is worship that can be given to God alone and the church says the consecrated host, the Lamb of God, is deserving of *latria*. But what is it that is in us when we adore the Lamb of God and then refuse to *imitate* the Lamb of God. How is that possible? How is it possible to bow down and say “You are the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of the Living God but I will not imitate you?” The truth of the matter is this: the Gospel of Jesus Christ is a Gospel that calls us to imitate God, to imitate the Holy and nothing short of that. And the Holy is summed up in the Lamb of God.

We go to communion and we receive the Lamb of God. The priest says, “This is the Lamb of God. Behold the Lamb of God.” St. Augustine says about communion, “We are to become what we consume.” We are to become the Lamb of God because we consume the Lamb of God. We are to imitate the Lamb of God because we adore the Lamb of God. What kind of consciousness is it that says “I will adore but I will not become? I will

consume but I will not become”? Refusal to imitate the Lamb of God is refusal of holiness. It’s that simple.

There are many people, there are many groups, there are many images we can imitate, but there is One that is holy and that is Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God. And so we know there is no priority given to holiness in this world and there is less priority, if such a thing could be, given to the values and the attitudes and the internal dispositions and the behavior that is symbolized in the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ. No one cares to be like that and yet the Gospel tells us that herein lies genuine holiness. Genuine holiness. You can have all the visions you want and they will not save you. Visions do not save. St. Teresa of Avila, the greatest mystic in the church, made it very, very clear: if the visions of the visionary do not result in the visionary performing deeds of concrete love, Christ-like love, then they are worthless.

Holiness Is to “Love as I Have Loved”—The Imitation of God

52:28 Prayer is necessary for salvation, but it is not sufficient. We must do. We must work at holiness also. We must open ourselves to it and to open ourselves to it means simply to follow Jesus. To do as Jesus would do or to follow his New Commandment as he teaches: to love one another as He loves them, to love as the Lamb of God loves.

I suspect as we look about us and we see right across Christianity, Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant, church after church adoring the Lamb, but refusing to imitate the Lamb of God, I think we can see the terrible consequences of this in our world and in our churches. For there comes a time when our children and grandchildren understand very, very clearly when you will not imitate what you adore you don’t really believe what you are adoring. For if you really did believe this was God and the way to eternal life there would be no question about imitating.

And so I ask you to consider tonight as we go over to the shrine and sit and pray before the image of the Lamb of God to consider asking God, asking Jesus, the Lamb of God, to give you that grace to live the life of the Lamb of God, the Lamb of gentleness and peace, kindness, a life devoid of violence and cruelty—whether it be the cruelty of the gun or the tongue—ask Jesus tonight as you sit before the image of the Lamb of God to give you the grace to live the life of the Lamb of God in your families, in your workplace, in your country, in the store—wherever you are. What you’re really asking for is for the grace to be a revolutionary. You’re asking for the grace to participate in that reality, holiness, that can change the face of the earth. Amen.

[End of Audio]

2-The Lamb: The Mystery of God's Suffering Servant

Introduction

Back in the early 1960's an event occurred which changed humanity substantially and permanently. 500 years before that time, the early 1960's approximately, Copernicus and a few other people who were brilliant mathematicians and physicists, scientists, had figured out that the earth goes around the sun and it's not the sun that goes around the earth. They figured out that there were other planets and that we lived in a world where stars were not just spots in a sky but were a long, long way off. But all that knowledge was limited to a very few people who could do very, very sophisticated mathematics and physics. In the early 1960's when the rocket ship came off of the earth and left the atmosphere and it turned its cameras around it showed that little blue dot in the midst of a immense blackness in space. Then, not only could mathematicians and scientists understand where the earth was and what it was, but every person on the face of the earth now saw how small this globe was in comparison to the entire universe.

The Enormity of the Universe

01:35 Indeed our planet is one of the few planets in a solar system. The earth is about 1 millionth of the size of the sun. One millionth. It would take a million earths to make the sun. Our sun is a medium size star in our galaxy—the Milky Way. In our galaxy, the Milky Way, there are not a thousand suns or ten thousand suns. There are not a hundred thousand suns or a million suns. There are not ten million suns or a hundred million suns. There are not a billion suns or ten billion suns. In our galaxy, the Milky Way alone, there are a hundred billion suns. In our galaxy alone, there are a hundred billion suns, a hundred billion stars like our sun, of which our sun is only a medium-sized star. And our galaxy, the Milky Way, is only one of a hundred billion galaxies with a hundred billion suns in each of them. Now that's reality. That's reality! That's the universe in which we live.

The Mystery of the Individual Person

03:08 The reason that I'm starting at this point this morning is because the theology of the Lamb of God, the spirituality, if you will, of the Lamb of God, let's put it that way, begins in the notion and the experience that the human being, in reality, is not what common sense says it is—or he or she is. You are not what you appear to be to common sense. You and all reality are fundamentally a mystery. A mystery! That is, that when you look at me you say, "That's Emmanuel McCarthy. Oh, I know him, he's a priest and he gave the retreat," and so forth and so on. But the fact that I'm a priest and I gave this retreat is but a speck of who I am. Well you say, "He has a beard and he had long hair." True, but that's but a speck. Just like when I look at you; I say, "Oh well, you wear

glasses or you're 5'4" or you weigh about 140 pounds" or whatever the case may be. Those things are all true but they're not you. They're but little tiny aspects of you—as all reality is an extraordinary mystery, as everything around us is in constant motion, as we live on a little, little, tiny planet amidst innumerable uncountable stars, amidst an immensity of time and space that we can't even comprehend.

As all reality is a mystery that's beyond our comprehension, so also is every human being a mystery beyond our comprehension. We see but a speck of what a human being is. You may have lived 20 or 50 or 70 years and every second that you're awake you've had experiences from the cradle to this moment. And these experiences second by second by second make up what you are; but they're your experiences. I didn't share them. I didn't do them, nor did anyone else. They're you. They're your thoughts, your ideas, your desires. They are uniquely yours. Now I look at you and I see someone who is 5'6", 160 pounds, 50 years old, that's what I see—who may be a doctor, lawyer, or Indian chief and I say, "Oh yeah, I know him," but you're an infinite mystery beyond all that. You have a life in back of you that no one could possibly know. In fact, you can no longer even know it.

Just think about yourself physically. What do you know of yourself physically? Well, we know here's our hands, and I have a toothache, or I have brown hair or something like that. But we're made up of billions upon billions of cells and atoms and molecules all working together in a precision that if they don't work together we have a heart attack or a stroke. Something happens at the tiniest microscopic level that we can't see and we're gone. And we don't know what's going on inside of us—in our brains and our hearts; no one knows. We are mysteries and we live in the middle of a universe that is utterly mysterious. In the strictest sense of the word we have but a one trillionth, or less than that, of a comprehension of even *what is* in reality.

The Mystery of God

07:50 Within the mystery of existence and within the mystery of the human being—you and I within existence, there is the mystery of the *Source* of it all—the mystery of the source of existence, the mystery of God. Where does it come from? Why is it here? Where is it going? Why do I exist, if there is this immensity of time and space in which we live, if there's this immense incomprehensibility of even who we are and what we are?

Oh, I know what the normal process is. We all know what the normal process is. The normal process is that every human being wants to and desires to and chooses to live in a fantasy world. Instead of living in the midst of an enormous mystery, instead of recognizing the mystery of ourselves and others, we say, "I'm Irish and I'm from Dublin"

and that's it. No more mystery, that's what it's all about. Or "I'm American and I'm from Boston" and that's it.

Instead of a mystery what we do as human beings universally is we take this enormous and immense incomprehensible mystery in which we live and in which we are and we cut it down to a little 2 x 4 world that's workable. We make believe that outside that world there is nothing. Now all right and all wrong and everything that's important in existence is what's in that 2 x 4 world. And we won't look beyond that world. We won't consider what the implications are of that enormous immensity of time and space and mystery that surrounds us and that we are; we just stay in that 2 x 4 world and we make all our decisions and everything that's right or wrong and even our understanding of God is built on this 2 x 4 world. Instead of God being a great mystery that's the source of all this tremendous mystery in which we live, instead of God being an incomprehensible mystery that we approach in awe and reverence—God becomes a patriot. He becomes Ireland's God, France's God, America's God, the God of the 2 x 4 world. And that's deadly of course.

Incomprehensible Mystery

10:45 Despair, human despair begins long before we feel it. Human despair begins when we fail or refuse to stay conscious of the mystery in which we live. When we refuse to comprehend the infinite mystery in which we live, to stay conscious of it, then we begin to suffocate, *suffocate*, in the hell of the finite. There's something in us that God gave us that allows us to see and experience the enormity of the mystery in which we live, the mystery that we are, and the mystery that is God. And we refuse to use it. We just cut everything down to a 2 x 4 world and then we begin to suffocate—spiritually. Because in a 2 x 4 world, we more or less know it all. Of course, reality, we do not know, that's only make-believe. Reality begins to impinge on our 2 x 4 world and all we have is a 2 x 4 world. We don't have the grandeur of mystery in which to incorporate all kinds of things that our 2 x 4 world cannot deal with. So we begin to despair: "God isn't there", "God doesn't exist", "life is worthless" and on and on and on.

But let's think about this a minute. We live in an enormous mystery. We are born into a question mark, we live in a question mark and we die into a question mark. That's the way life is. No one knows from whence we come, why we are here, or where we go. We can give the answer: "We're here to know, love, and serve God in this world and to be happy with him in the next" and that's true and we'll talk about it down the line. But every one of those words, "to know God" is to enter into knowing an incomprehensible mystery. "To love God" is to love an incomprehensible mystery. "To die into God" is to die into an incomprehensible mystery. To know, love, and serve God doesn't mean to

know, love, and serve the God of our tiny little 2 x 4 world—it's the God who created and sustains this enormous mystery.

We are born into a question mark, we live in a question mark and we die into a question mark. We are surrounded by mystery. But that's no reason for despair because you know and I know the sun is a million times larger than the earth. It is only one of a hundred billion suns in our galaxy, which is only one of a hundred billion galaxies in the known universe and we feel we only know about 10% of the universe. But here's the point: Whether it's the sun or whether it's the earth or whether it's our solar system or galaxy or all the galaxies, the sun cannot comprehend us but we can comprehend the sun. The sun doesn't know we're here, but we know the sun is here. The sun can give light and heat and has enormous power, but the sun can't love, know beauty, or hope. The sun can't know mystery, it can only participate in mystery. But God gave the human being the faculty of mind not to know necessarily the particular details, but to know the enormity of the reality in which he or she lives. We can comprehend the sun but the sun cannot comprehend us.

The Mystery of the Person of Jesus

15:40 What we are confronted with is that we are confronted with the person of Jesus, not someone who is Irish or Greek. He was a Jewish person, of course, so he was Jewish to that extent. When we confront the person of Jesus we don't confront a Jesus who is simply the product of our little 2 x 4 world and who was made in that little world. When we confront Jesus we confront the mystery of God and we confront the mystery of what it is to be a human being. Jesus is fundamentally a mystery. Why? Just because he's human to start with. He's a mystery like you and I are a mystery. That is not bad. If you want to know a person, the way you know a person is you talk to the person, you reflect on his or her thoughts, you're with the person, you encounter the person, you do things with the person, you love the person. You spend time with the person, in other words, and the more time you spend the more of the mystery you know—of their hurts, and their hopes, and their loves and their joys. And just on that level alone, that's the way we relate to Jesus. If we do not spend time with the person we don't know him or her. But if we do we grow and there's a never-ending growing because each person is an infinite mystery. And so it is with Jesus. On the first level Jesus is a mystery that allows us to grow deeper and deeper into the knowledge of who he is as Jesus Christ.

The Mystery of the Enduring Jesus

17:48 But there is another kind of mystery that attaches to Jesus, isn't there? There's just that strange reality of the billions and billions and tens of billions of people who have lived, this one life sent out energy over time and space in a very, very mysterious way. This one life—that should have amounted to nothing because of the way he lived and died—

somehow here we are 20 centuries later and a billion and a half people are committed to him and have made choices and acted and lived and died in terms of his life. So just on that basis alone there's another mystery to Jesus that's bigger than the mystery of your life or my life.

The Mystery of the Lord Jesus

18:28 But then there's even a third mystery to Jesus. In the New Testament and the Epistles of St. Paul, Jesus is called *Lord*. Now the word Lord that's employed in Greek, because the New Testament is written in Greek, is *Kyrios Jesu Christi*. *Kyrios* is the word that's used. *Kyrios* is not a word that's used for Lord Winston Churchill. For Jewish people, the name for God is Yahweh. But Jewish people never say the name of Yahweh. Because it is so holy they do not use the name of Yahweh. The word that they use in Hebrew for Yahweh is *Adonai*. So Jewish people use the word *Adonai* for God, they do not use Yahweh. The Greek translation of *Adonai* is *Kyrios*. *Kyrios* is Lord meaning God, not Lord Winston Churchill. The Jewish people who were strict monotheists, one God—strict monotheists—and who would not even say the name of God, Yahweh, the Jewish people closest to Jesus, the apostolic generation, took the name of God and applied it to him, *Kyrios Jesu Christi*. What they experienced was that this person who lived and died and rose was divine, was *divine*.

That's the first generation of Christians. That is the mystery that we call the mystery of the source of existence, God, the mystery of the source of existence, God. Those people closest to Jesus as he walked the face of the earth experienced him as that. Now no one experiences you or I as that. That's what they said: *Kyrios Jesu*, Lord Jesus, or *Kyrios Jesu Christi*. Lord Jesus Christ, meaning divine Lord.

We have then four mysteries: (1) the mystery of the existence of the universe of which we are, of immeasurable time and space, and dimensions both large and small that we cannot possibly comprehend. We have (2) the mystery of the human person. Totally beyond comprehension what any one of us is. We have (3) the mystery of the source of all that—God—the one who sustains it, the one who made it. Finally, we have (4) the mystery of the person, Jesus, within all that. The person Jesus, who is made up of flesh and blood and bone like we are and therefore is part of the physical mystery that we call the universe. The person Jesus, who is human like we are and, therefore, is part of the human mystery like we are. The person Jesus, who they ascribe the name *Kyrios* to and therefore is part of the divine mystery.

In the Catholic Church we have seven sacraments. But sacraments is not the name that was originally used for those seven ceremonies: Baptism, Penance, Eucharist, and so forth. The name that was originally used for those events and is still used by both

Catholics and Orthodox in the east is the Seven Holy Mysteries—the Seven Holy Mysteries. At baptism or at communion, and so forth, we enter in a mysterious way, through the mystery of Jesus Christ, we, each of us as a mystery enters into the mystery of Jesus Christ and therefore into the mystery of God, somehow through the mystery of matter—the Seven Holy Mysteries.

Who Do I Say Jesus Is?

23:53 When we confront Jesus we confront someone that demands of us, that *demands* of us, each of us individually, that we ask the question: “Who is this that’s in front of us here?” You see if we’re brought up from the cradle as Christians, as Catholics, we can lose touch with all this. We can lose touch that our religion is about a participation in an encounter with the overwhelming mystery of God and allowing that to act through us. We can make believe that we have the Gospel pretty much 100 percent and lose all sense of the living reality because we get nurtured into patterns of behavior. So we can walk up to communion, receive the host, the body and blood of Christ, and say, “Oh yeah, that’s the holy deed,” totally devoid of the sense of the enormity of the mystery that we have just entered into, the mystery of a person, the mystery of matter, the mystery of the source of existence, the mystery of a life that spreads out over time and space. It becomes habit, it becomes routine. Therefore it does not have the life that it could have for us; it does not give the life it could give.

So also with Jesus when we look at Jesus. We could be indifferent or placid, or “Oh yeah, that’s Jesus.” But what about the people who are right with him in the first generation, the people who walked with him as a human being, the people who talked with him, how did they see him? One of the ways they saw him was that they didn’t know what they were in the presence of, but they knew they were in the presence of something extraordinary, something beyond human comprehension. How do we know that? We know that because in the New Testament the different writers of the different books, the different authors who talk about how Jesus was perceived and who he is and what he is, used different titles to try to describe him. And all the titles are titles that you would not use for yourself, or for me, or for the grocer, or for the lawyer. For example, we just talked about [how] they called Jesus Kyrios. They put the same name on Jesus that’s the name of God. This is impossible. This is saying Jesus is God. We don’t use Kyrios, for the ordinary experience of a human being. Or they take such titles as calling him, *The Prophet* in the New Testament. Not *a* prophet—but *The* Prophet.

The Prophet is different from *a* prophet because *The Prophet* in Jewish tradition is supposed to be the final and last and the ultimate prophet of the Jewish world. They call him Son of Man; they call him Son of God, titles which would not apply to ordinary

human beings. And one of the titles they call him, as you know, one of the titles is Behold the *Lamb of God*. The Lamb of God.

The Mystery of the Lamb of God

28:04 What is the Lamb of God? All we can do with the idea of the Lamb of God, like all we can do with the idea of anything that relates to Jesus, like all we could do with the idea that relates to anything in the world—including ourselves—all we could do is examine the mystery of it. We can never know it fully. But God has given us the capability to do precisely that, to examine the mystery of ourselves, of the universe, of God, of Jesus, of the Lamb of God.

So let's examine that mystery. The Lamb of God, is a symbol that relates directly back to one thing and one thing only in the Old Testament. It relates back to a poem in Isaiah. The poem begins in the first verse of the 42nd chapter of Isaiah. It is called the Hymn of the Servant of Yahweh, or the Hymn of the Suffering Servant. The Lamb of God is another name for the Suffering Servant. In fact, in Jesus' old language Galilean Aramaic lamb and servant are the same word. So John the Baptist who spoke Galilean Aramaic when he said, "Behold the Lamb of God," he would simultaneously be saying, "Behold the Servant of Yahweh." The Isaiah poem is the Hymn of the Servant of Yahweh, the Hymn of the Suffering Servant, the Hymn of the Servant of God. Yahweh being the Hebrew name of God.

Psalm 22

30:15 Now, first of all just let me mention something to show you how important this is. The Old Testament gives the context, gives the symbolism in which the New Testament is written. There's no way to dispense with the Old Testament without finding the New Testament totally incomprehensible. For example, when Jesus dies on the cross he says, as we all know, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Now at one level, which is correct, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" is the expression that many many people use who are suffering and dying, in pain and in misery, being tortured. They feel forsaken by God. And so at one level Jesus is imply articulating a universal human phenomena that can happen. For some mysterious reason we people think, and it's not hard to understand, that when things go well, when we win the lottery, for example, we say, "Thank God." But on the other hand when things go badly and we're in pain somehow we think God is no longer with us.

So Jesus' experience on the cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" is just a mirror of that experience because he was human—a sense of the absence of the presence of God. But it's far deeper than that. Because "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" are the opening lines of Psalm 22, which indeed is a psalm that talks about

the desolation of the human being, but it is a psalm that concludes on a note of extravagant hope that God can save and does save. Therefore, when the first hearers of the Gospel, which is how we always try to understand the Gospel, when the first hearers of the Gospel heard, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” they understood that Jesus was really dying. He was a real human being and was suffering what people suffer. But they also understood that those lines meant that desolation was not the last word because they knew Psalm 22, because every Jew would have heard Psalm 22 every week of his or her life since the cradle. Therefore, all throughout the New Testament there are references to the Old Testament that determine the meaning of the New Testament.

Throughout this conference I will be quoting a biblical scholar by the name of John L. McKenzie. McKenzie, a Catholic priest who died in 1991, was one of the premier biblical scholars of the 20th century. I want to give you a sense just passingly of McKenzie’s status as a biblical scholar. This is important because we have to know the authority of the person that’s talking because so many people talk and it’s like a cacophony going on. The most prestigious society of biblical scholars in the world is called the Society of Biblical Literature. A very limited number of biblical scholars are admitted to it and they’re admitted to it by vote and it’s a worldwide organization and it’s the upper echelon, the upper upper echelon, the crème de la crème of biblical scholars, if you will. John L. McKenzie was not only in it, he was the first Catholic priest ever elected President of it.

The Suffering Servant

34:25 McKenzie says regarding the Suffering Servant, the Lamb of God, “References in the New Testament to the Suffering Servant are so numerous as to be uncountable.” Remember the Suffering Servant is a character from the book of Isaiah, which we’ll read about in a minute. But McKenzie says “References to the Suffering Servant in the New Testament are so numerous as to be uncountable.” And yet most Christians don’t even know it’s there. They don’t even think of the issue of what’s being communicated. Remember the Suffering Servant is the Lamb of God. And references are so numerous as to be uncountable.

All right. Who is the Suffering Servant to begin with? The Suffering Servant is a person, now watch this, but because it is a poem there is some question whether it is a person or a community. However, that ambiguity is intentional. It is meant to be both a person and a community. The Suffering Servant is a person and a community in a poem in Isaiah. The person, the Suffering Servant or the community, the person is gentle. The person is nonviolent. The person is innocent. The person has done nothing wrong. And the person is crushed, is crushed by disaster, is tormented, beaten and destroyed by evil. Yet the

person does not fight back with evil. The person does not return evil for evil even though he or the community, depending, is being crushed. The poem concludes that it is the Suffering Servant, the gentle, nonviolent, innocent person who is crushed by evil and yet refuses to return evil for evil, it is the Suffering Servant who will bring salvation to Israel and to the ends of the world.

When Jesus is baptized by John the Baptist, the story is related by Matthew, Mark and Luke, he goes in the water. And then he comes out and then there's a voice from heaven that says, in all three Gospels it says the same thing, (which means it's probably historically accurate), then there's a voice from heaven that says—there's a revelation in other words—that says, “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” All three Gospels say the same thing. Open up the Gospel of Matthew and you'll see it. “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” Mark the same way, and Luke. Jesus receives that revelation when he comes out of the waters. Whether an actual voice from the sky was heard or not, what is absolutely certain is, at the time of Jesus' baptism that's the revelation he received from God. “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” Scripture scholars are universally agreed, “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased” is a reference to the opening line of the Hymn of the Suffering Servant.

When Jesus is baptized he understands that his mission is the mission of the Suffering Servant of Israel, the Lamb of God. And hence the only Gospel that doesn't relate the narrative of Jesus' baptism is the Gospel of St. John. There, after his baptism by John the Baptist when Jesus walked by, John says, “Behold the Lamb of God,” which is, “Behold the Suffering Servant”.

The Suffering Servant, the title Suffering Servant, the reality of the Suffering Servant is Jesus' original consciousness of himself. It is the original revelation in the scripture. It is the revelation that comes to us of who Jesus is not by the community putting titles on him like Kyrios or Son of Man or Son of God, it's Jesus' own revelation that He is the one who is supposed to be gentle, nonviolent, innocent, who is going to be crushed by evil somehow, but who must not return evil for evil and by that process will *save the world*. Save the world!

40:05 This is Jesus upon coming out of the waters of baptism. Because like “My God, my God why have you forsaken me?” says Psalm 22 to the first hearers, “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased” to the first hearers would have said *Suffering Servant*. Why is this important? Well, you and I as Christians are baptized into Christ. Do you remember when the sons of Zebedee, and it was their mother in another Gospel, when they asked Jesus for the two places next to him in his reign? You know they think he's going to be a great political king, and they want to be right on the right side and left side

of the Prime Minister. They want to be able to dole out the goodies and have power, and prestige and prerogative. They want to be able to tell people “Go!” and they’ll have to go and “Come” and they’ll have to come. They want to make the rules that will govern the world. They want to have the good life. And what does Jesus say? “I can’t give you any place in my reign,” but he says, “Can you be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?” And they say, “Yeah, sure.” But what’s the baptism that he was baptized in? He was baptized into the baptism of Suffering Servant.

In other words, the word baptism in Greek means total immersion. That’s why in practically all churches except a few of the western churches, western Catholic churches, when they baptize children and adults they go totally under water. They put them totally under water, but not just sprinkle them. There’s nothing wrong with sprinkling, but the symbolism is—total immersion. Total immersion into what? Into Jesus as Suffering Servant. Into the baptism he was baptized with—total immersion into gentleness, nonviolence, responding to evil with good, becoming part of that community of people, or community of Jesus that saves the world. Becoming, if you will, in technical language, co-redeemers with Jesus Christ.

Hymn of the Suffering Servant: Isaiah 42:1-9

42:50 Now let me read to you the actual two stanzas from the Hymn of the Suffering Servant from Isaiah just so you have a flavor for it. They’re short; they’re not long. I’ll read the opening and closing stanzas. The opening begins like this:

Here is my servant whom I uphold,
my chosen one in whom my soul delights.
I have endowed him with my spirit,
that he may bring true righteousness to the nations.
He does not cry out or shout aloud,
or make his voice heard in the streets.
He does not break the crushed reed
nor quench the wavering flame.
Faithfully he brings righteousness.
He will neither waver nor be crushed
until true righteousness is established on earth,
for the islands are awaiting his law.
Thus says God, Yahweh,
he who created the heavens and spread them out,
who gave shape to the earth and what comes from it,
who gave breath to its people
and life to the creatures that move on it.

I, Yahweh, have called you to serve the cause of right.
I have taken you by the hand and formed you.
I have appointed you as covenant of the people
and light of the nations,
to open the eyes of the blind,
to free the captives from prison,
and those who live in darkness and dungeons.
My name is Yahweh.
I will not yield my glory to another,
nor my honor to idols.
See how former predictions have come true.
Fresh things I now foretell;
before they appear, I tell you.
(Is 42:1-9)

And now to the end; and note the ending. There's much more, but note the ending here. Scripture scholars have often commented how close the ending of the Hymn of the Suffering Servant parallels the passion of Jesus. In fact, some Scripture scholars have even said, not that Jesus didn't suffer and die, but he didn't suffer and die the way we have it in the Gospels. That what took place was that Jesus suffered and died, but the Gospel writers explaining his suffering and death and its purpose literally took the Suffering Servant last stanzas that we're going to read here and placed them on Jesus' life to explain the importance of his suffering and death. After all, remember, every Eucharistic consecration in the history of the world, including the one we do today, both east and west, even in those churches that we do not believe have valid Eucharist, every Eucharistic consecration contains words from the Hymns of the Suffering Servant. Every one does including ours today, including the Roman rite one that you go to every Sunday. It is deeply imbedded in the New Testament and in Christianity and in the Church even though no one knows about it. So listen to the final stanza of the Hymn of the Suffering Servant, the Hymn of the Lamb of God, remembering that Jesus identifies himself and is given the revelation of his baptism that this is who he is, the gentle, nonviolent, innocent person who suffers but does not return evil for evil and saves the world through that process.

See, my servant will prosper.
He shall be lifted up, exalted, raised to great heights.
As crowds were appalled upon seeing him
so disfigured did he look that he seemed no longer human.
So will the crowds be astonished at him
and kings stand speechless before him

for they shall see something never told
and witness something never heard before.
Who could believe what we have heard?
And to whom has the power of Yahweh been revealed?
Like a sapling he grew up in front of us,
like a root in arid ground.
Without beauty, without majesty we saw him.
No looks to attract our eyes.
He was a thing despised and rejected by men.
He was a man of sorrows and familiar with suffering,
a man to make people screen their faces.
He was despised and we took no account of him
and yet ours were the sufferings he bore,
ours the sorrows he carried.
But we thought him as someone punished
struck down by God and brought low,
yet he was pierced through for our faults,
crushed for our sins.
On him lies the punishment that brings us peace
and through his wounds we are healed.
We'd all gone astray like sheep,
each taking his own way
and Yahweh burdened him with the sins of us all.
Harshly dealt with he bore it humbly.
He never opened his mouth.
Like a lamb that is led to the slaughterhouse,
like a sheep that is dumb before its shearers
never opening his mouth.
By force and by law he was taken.
Would anyone plead his cause?
Yes, he was torn away from the land of the living,
for our fault struck down in death.
They gave him a grave with the violent,
a tomb with the rich,
though he had done no wrong,
and there had been no perjury in his mouth.
Yet Yahweh was pleased to allow him to be crushed with suffering.
If he offered his life in atonement
he shall see his heirs.
He shall have long life,

and through him what Yahweh wishes will be done.
 His soul's anguish, over now.
 He shall see the light and be content.
 By his sufferings shall my servant justify many,
 taking their faults on himself.
 Hence I will grant whole hordes for his tribute.
 He shall divide the spoils with the mighty,
 for surrendering himself to death
 and letting himself be taken for a sinner,
 while he was bearing the faults of many
 and praying all the time for sinners.
 (Is 52:13-53:12)

That hymn is what McKenzie says references to are uncountable in the New Testament. That is the Hymn of the Suffering Servant and that is the Hymn of the Lamb of God. And that is the hymn about how we as Christians should live. Jesus says the meek shall inherit the earth and who are the meek? The meek are the Lamb of God. The meek inherit the earth.

50:33 But look around you. Who inherits the earth? The powerful, the rich, the tough, the cruel. Where do the meek inherit the earth? The powerful, the rich, the tough and the cruel inherit the 2 x 4 world of time and space. But the earth of which Jesus talks about is the universe with all its mystery and beyond the universe. The meek inherit the universe with all its mystery and the source of the universe, God. That's the inheritance of the meek. What is saved? Is the 2 x 4 world saved by the Suffering Servant? By the Lamb of God? No. Ireland, America, China are irredeemable. The state is not an object of redemption in the New Testament.

What is saved? Humanity—people—whether they be Irish, or Chinese or American. The Lamb of God makes no sense in the illusionary fantasy 2 x 4 world, the tiny little world that we create to push out the great mystery in which God placed us. The tiny world that ignores billions while focusing on just a few. But the Lamb of God makes total sense, *total sense*, in the context of the vast mystery of existence, the mystery of the human being, the mystery of Jesus within humanity, the mystery of the source of it all, and the mystery of the source of all existence in the mystery of Jesus.

The Lamb of God! It's an extraordinary concept in the New Testament. We have not fathomed it; we have not dealt with it as a Church, for the most part, or as a community. But the nonviolent, gentle Lamb of God who refuses to respond to evil with evil, but returns good for evil—following Jesus. It is through this process that salvation comes to

all. And so I ask you to consider as you come up to communion today the words of St Augustine that I mentioned last night about Holy Communion. We are to become what we consume. We are to become the Lamb of God. The biblical scholar John L. McKenzie calls the Eucharist the celebration of the community of the Suffering Servant, the celebration of the community of the Lamb of God.

[End of Audio]

3-The Mind of the Lamb

Repentance

We have heard in our Christian lives from the beginning, from childhood on forward, in our Eucharists, in our Catechism, in homilies from priests and spiritual books we've read, that we are supposed to repent. Even right now, this season in which we give this retreat, Lent, is called a time of repentance. Repentance is a central piece of the Christian life. There is no Christian life without continual repentance. You may have noticed this morning in our Divine Liturgy, one of the prayers that we pray every day as it is part of the Byzantine Liturgy, the Byzantine Eucharist, we pray that we may spend the rest of our lives in peace and repentance. *The rest of our lives in peace and repentance.*

Normally, we think repentance is that we go to confession and we've repented and then we go on and that's it. But here's this liturgy, 1500-year-old liturgy, praying that God will grant us the grace to spend the rest of our lives in peace and repentance. So in order to get a handle on what this is, and how this fits into the theme of what we're discussing here this week, the Lamb of God, we must go back to the roots. We must ask, where does the word 'repentance' come from?

Metanoia Is A Change of Mind

01:54 The word 'repentance' comes from the Greek word 'metanoia'. Anglicized, that would be spelled m-e-t-a-n-o-i-a. Metanoia. Metanoia is the Greek word that means repentance. It means convert. As a matter of fact, metanoia is the first word out of Jesus' mouth in the Gospel. The first word out of Jesus' mouth in the Gospel is, "Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand." The Greek word is metanoia.

We translate the word as 'convert' or 'repent'. Technically speaking, the word actually means, literally means 'change your mind,' change your mind. Repentance fundamentally has to do with a mind change. Repentance fundamentally has to do with a change of mind. So let me see if I can explain this. We often think that repentance has to do with a change of behavior. Repentance has to do with a change of mind. Behavior is quite, quite secondary.

Let me see if I can explain this. Suppose we go back maybe a million years in time from where we are now, some place way, way back beyond recorded history. At some point, some man figured out, "If I take my hand like this and I close it, and I hit with that closed fist, I can hurt this person over here; he doesn't want to be hurt. If he knows I can hurt him, he'll do what I say." So he closes the fist. He hurts the person. And he controls him. But, of course, it's only a little while, isn't it, before the other person, a cave man, a

million years ago, says, “Well, if he can close his fist, I can close my fist. And if he can do that, I can do this.” And so, sure enough, he does.

And then time passes. And finally another cave man figures out, forty or fifty thousand years later, “If I pick up this rock and I throw it at him, that rock can do more damage than my fist, and he can’t even get close to me.” So he picks up the rock and he throws it, and, sure enough, he hurts him, and he can control the person, because the person doesn’t want to be hurt. Then it’s only a matter of time until the other person figures out, “Well, if he can pick up a rock, I can pick up a rock.” So he picks up and he throws it. And so it goes.

Eventually one person, twenty, thirty, forty thousand years later, figures out if he picks up a stick, he can hit someone and they can’t get close to him. Eventually the other side figures out if they pick up a stick he, too, can hit. Then they sharpen the stick to make it a spear; that’s even more effective. Thousands of years after that they put the spear on animal muscle and make it a bow and arrow. But, of course, all the time the other side eventually does the same thing. And so then, of course, they can sharpen the piece of wood to make it a dagger. And the other side sharpens and makes it. Eventually we come down to the pistol. Of course, the other side gets a pistol. Finally there’s the button: The bomb.

The Mind Controls The Hand

06:22 But here’s the point. Whether it’s the fist or the rock, whether it’s the club or the spear or the bow and arrow or the pistol or the button, *the hand does not move itself*. The hand does not move itself. The hand is moved from in here [speaker touches his head]. The hand is moved by the mind. Without the will to kill, without the will to kill, up here [speaker touches his head], without the desire to kill, a machine gun is no more lethal than a broomstick. But if you have the will to kill up here [speaker touches his head], then a broomstick can be lethal. The difference between the open hand of hospitality and the closed fist of hostility doesn’t reside in the five fingers. The fingers don’t move themselves. It’s up here [speaker touches his head]. The hostile mind or the mind that gives hospitality makes the difference between how the hand works. *Conversion has to do with the mind*.

Jesus calls us to change our minds. He calls us to look at and interpret reality differently. And he tells us how. Because as you create a certain mind style, then your behavior follows. When two or more people create the same kind of mind style, then you have two or more people dealing in the same behavior, you have a community style. So if I’m thinking, if my mind style is always looking out for how people are offending me and getting back at them for doing it, that will be my life. That will be my mind style, and that

will be how my body will work. I will use up my body time as I use up my mind time. There's an absolute consistency.

08:52 Jesus says in the Gospels, in the Sermon on the Mount, "You've heard it said of old, 'You shall not kill.' But I say to you, 'the person who even gets angry with the brother and sister has already killed.' You've heard it said of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you, 'The person who lusts after another has already committed adultery.'" What He is saying is, people become what they desire. *People become what they desire*. If you stay away from anger, you'll never kill anybody. If your mind is not an angry mind, you will never pick up a gun and kill anybody. Jesus is saying, cut murder off at the roots, and the root of murder is in the mind. If you do not lust, if you stop lustful desires in the mind, there can never be lustful behavior. There can never be adultery, fornication and so forth. Impossible. It can't happen.

So the presupposition of what Jesus is saying in the Sermon on the Mount is, a person becomes what he or she thinks, or what he or she desires. The place where we fight the great spiritual battle is in the head, in the mind. And, therefore, Jesus' theory of how to change the world for the better, His theory of revolution, as we talked about last night, is *conversion*. Change your mind; then the world will change. But without a change of mind, there is no possibility that the world is going to change. It's impossible.

Put On the Mind of Christ

10:55 Now, to what should we change our minds? To what? The answer is very, very clear from the New Testament. "We are to put on the mind of Christ." Those are the exact words. We are to put on the mind of Christ. We are, moment to moment in our lives, called to see and to act in reality as Christ would act in reality. Wherever that may be, in the grocery store, in our family, on the street corner, wherever it may be. We are not just to be Christ-like people in church. We are to be Christ-like people wherever we are. We are to put on the mind of Christ. Why? Because if we do not put on the mind of Christ, there is no possibility that we will be the body of Christ. The body that we have, our hands, our legs, our eyes, our mouth, cannot act in a Christ-like way in history unless the mind is acting that way before it.

St. Teresa of Avila's famous quote, which you all know, that "Christ has no hands in this world but my hands, no eyes but my eyes, no voice but my voice, no feet but my feet," is absolutely, positively true. Each one who is baptized is a Christ bearer to that part of the world where God put him or her. That's where she or he is supposed to bring Christ. But there is no possibility of bringing Christ into a situation if we are not thinking like Christ in the situation. The question is, what does it mean to think like Christ? *What does it mean to think like Christ?*

In terms of what we're talking about here in this week's retreat, the Lamb of God, I'd ask another question. *How can anyone afford to act like Christ in this world?* How? How can you afford to be a lamb among wolves? As a matter of fact, most Christians have no intention of being a lamb among wolves. They have every intention of getting their fair share or more, and if anyone tries to take it, they're not going to be a doormat for anybody. So how can you afford to be a lamb among wolves? How can you afford to be Christ-like?

I remember during the Vietnam War, a fellow that I was counseling for conscientious objection against the war went into his local draft board. They were all Christian men, and he told them that he couldn't go fight in the war because Christ wouldn't kill people. The draft board, all Christian men, said to him, "If you bring that attitude into the world, you're going to get no place in this world." You're going to get no place in this world. And don't we all know it?

We look at the world and there's an immense amount of evil, just raw evil. It's a jungle out there in many ways. How can anyone reasonably choose to follow the Lamb of God? How can anyone reasonably choose to follow Jesus? To adore Jesus is one thing. But to follow Him? And yet we know, from the Gospel, Jesus does not ask us to adore Him. His request is, "Follow me." How is it possible to afford to follow Jesus? Or, said another way, what kind of mind style does it take? What kind of mind style does it take to put on the mind of Christ? For one is never going to follow Jesus unless one first chooses to put on the mind of Jesus.

Jesus Knows the Reality of Evil More Than Any Human

15:48 The way I like to approach this is this: Didn't Jesus know how the world was? Didn't Jesus know at least as well as you or I or Aristotle or Plato or any local politician or any priest or minister or bishop? Didn't he know how evil the world was? Didn't he understand how powerful evil is in the world? If Jesus is who we say He is, He knew what evil was infinitely beyond what we know. *Infinitely* beyond. And yet, knowing that, He said, "Follow me, for I am meek and humble of heart." Yet, knowing that, He identified Himself with the Suffering Servant, the one who suffers evil nonviolently and returns good for evil rather than returns evil for evil.

"Oh," you say, "but I don't return evil for evil. I'm not killing anyone." But you've hurt a lot of people. You've hurt a heck of a lot of people. For nothing has hurt and destroyed more people in this world than the tongue. The tongue is the great causer of pain in the world, not the gun. We know how to hurt with the tongue. But the tongue can't move itself unless the mind moves it. There has to be an intention to hurt. "Well, I'll straighten her out." Or "Did you hear about . . ."

And so, we take a look around us, and we look at what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount. “Blessed are the meek.” “Blessed are the poor in spirit.” “Blessed are the pure of heart,” etc. We look at the symbol, the Lamb of God, a gentle lamb in a jungle of wolves that are out there in the world, and we say to ourselves, “This is impractical. This doesn’t work?” How many times have you heard that?

People say, “Oh, I know Jesus taught the Sermon on the Mount. I know we’re supposed to love our enemies. I know Jesus was nonviolent. I know He returned good for evil. But that’s not just practical.” Think about that. When we criticize Jesus’ teachings, aren’t we criticizing Jesus? When we say Jesus’ teachings are foolish, aren’t we saying Jesus is foolish? When we say that Jesus comes and gives us teachings that don’t work in real life, that don’t conquer evil, that don’t work to our good, aren’t we saying that He didn’t know what He was talking about? And that’s a heck of a Messiah, a Messiah who comes to conquer evil and tells us, but doesn’t know what He’s talking about! Or He lied to us. He said something was going to conquer evil that doesn’t conquer evil. That something was going to lead to heaven that doesn’t lead to heaven. He said, “Follow me, who is meek and humble of heart,” and He doesn’t know where He’s leading us?

It’s not possible that Jesus gave us a teaching that does not work. It is not possible. Jesus did not give us a teaching that does not work. The only possibility is Jesus is not who the church says He is. But if Jesus *is* who the church says He is, the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of the Living God, then what Jesus taught works. For nothing works more thoroughly and effectively to conquer evil than the will of God, and that’s what Jesus teaches. Jesus teaches that what we are to do in the midst of this enormous and terrible reality we call evil in the world, is that we are to relate to it like lambs among wolves. We are to imitate the Lamb of God. We are to put on the mind of the Lamb of God.

How many of us right now would say, after 20 or 40 or 60 or 70 years of being Christian, “My mind is really, really lamblike. I really have a lamblike mind.” Not many of us. So let us go back now. Every one of us is afraid of putting on a lamblike mind because the feeling is that if we follow Jesus, if we really follow His Sermon on the Mount, bad things are going to happen to us. Either to us, or if a group follows, bad things are going to happen to the group. Once again, Jesus says good things are going to happen. But in our little 2 x 4 world we think bad things are going to happen. So how is it possible that Jesus understands Himself as the Suffering Servant, the Lamb of God? How is it possible that Jesus says, “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth”? How can He say, “Follow me, for I am meek and humble of heart”? He says that out of a certain mind.

Jesus’ Frame of Mind: God is Father, God is Love

21:50 So we come back to our original question. We are called to conversion. We are called to repent continually, “in peace and repentance.” We are called to *change our mind, metanoia*. We are called to *put on the mind of Christ*. What is the mind of Christ? So let me say it so simply and so directly that you can never forget it. Never forget it. The center, the circumference and everything in between of the mind of Christ is “God is Father.” Father. God is love. Everything that is the mind of Christ is: *God is Father*. His whole life is understood, every action that comes from Jesus comes out of a mind where God is love. God is Father. Abba.

Jesus’ identification with the Father is total. There are a few places in the Old Testament where God is called Father. But Martin Buber, who is the greatest Jewish theologian of the 20th century, writing on Christianity and on Jesus, says that Jesus’ understanding of Father infinitely surpasses anything that’s in Hebrew scripture. The mind of Christ is committed totally to the Father. Every second He is looking: What does the Father want here. The Father. It’s extraordinary that no place in the Gospels does Jesus call God King. God is Father.

And look at the stories He tells. The prodigal son that takes all and wastes all! Takes his father’s estate and just throws it away, squanders it. And then he comes to his right mind, and remember how the story goes? He [the son] just turned around and started to come back. And the father didn’t sit in his throne or in his chair and say, “Well, I’m going to wait for him and I’m going to straight him out when he gets back here.” The story Jesus tells is, “And the father saw him off in the distance and ran to him.” That’s what Jesus means by Father, Father who is love.

We’ll talk about Pope John Paul II’s famous Encyclical *Dives in Misericordia*, in a few lectures but the opening sentence is, “It is God, who is rich in mercy, that Jesus comes to reveal as Father.” It is God, who is rich in mercy, that Jesus comes to reveal as Father. The whole mind of Christ is filled with ‘God is the Father of mercies.’ God is love.

25:25 Jesus knows evil. Believe me, Jesus knows evil. He knows that evil is no joke. He knows its destructive power infinitely beyond what we know. But He knows also that there is only one thing in this universe that can conquer evil. And that is the power of God. The power of God is the power of the Father. It is the power of love and mercy. Nothing else.

And so that’s what Jesus brings into the situation, moment after moment. When Teresa of Avila says, “In this world Christ has no hands but my hands, no feet but my feet, no voice but my voice,” what that means is, I, me and you, we who are followers of Jesus are supposed to put on the mind of Christ. We are supposed to repent. And what does repent mean in the first instance? Change your mind. To what? To the mind of Christ.

Put on the mind that God is Father. God is love. God is rich in mercy, to use John Paul II's phrase. That's what repent means. It is only secondarily that repent means stop swearing, stop gossiping, stop killing, stop stealing. Those are things that will follow from putting on the mind that God is love, God is Father, rich in mercy. Why? Because, as Jesus says, God is my Father and your Father. Or as Paul says, God is the Father of all.

Everyone is a Child of God, Even Enemies

27:28 What that means is, for example, that the enemy of the state is not an enemy of God. The enemy of the state is a child of God that the Christian is supposed to love as God the Father loves him or her. The enemy of my family is not the enemy of God. The enemy of my family is a child of God, the Father, who is loved by God. Therefore, if we have the mind of Christ on, the mind that God is Father, love, we are to love that person because God loves that person.

In other words, the enemy of our 2 x 4 world, whatever our 2 x 4 world is, is not the enemy of God. He may or she may be doing wrong things. But they are not the enemy of God. They may make our life uncomfortable and they may kill us. But they are not the enemy of God. No more than the prodigal son was the enemy of God. The father couldn't stop the prodigal son from going out and squandering the money, but the father never stopped loving the prodigal son. And the minute the prodigal son turned back to his father, just like that [speaker snaps his fingers], the father runs to the horizon to greet him.

Therefore, change your mind, repent, does not mean in the first instance 'don't kill people', 'don't swear at people', 'don't steal from people'. You see, you will not kill, you will not swear, you will not steal from people, you will not gossip about people, you will not say bad things about people, if your consciousness is that God is Father and I am supposed to carry out the will of the Father, and the Father loves that one. Stealing from that one isn't loving that one. Gossiping about that one isn't loving that one. Killing that one isn't loving that one. It will flow naturally if we truly repent, which is not a thing of suffering and anguish. It's just the opposite. Repentance is putting on the mind of Christ, and the mind of Christ is a mind filled with the true God, who is Father—rich in mercy.

Is the Universe A Safe Place for Human Beings?

30:04 Albert Einstein asked the question, is the universe a safe place for human beings to be? Is the universe a safe place for human beings to be? We know what that means. In the United States everyone is kind of terrified walking out after about six o'clock at night, even in good neighborhoods. Even in neighborhoods that are well policed. Terrified. Maybe that is happening here in Ireland. People don't want to go out at night. They're

afraid. And everyone is terrified in terms of this disease, that disease and new diseases, with what's going on with the chemicals in the air and the electricity and how it is changing the human situation. But that's only the beginning.

So when Einstein asked the question, is the universe a safe place for human beings to be, he knows about the earthquakes, he knows about the cancers and he knows about the craziness in the human heart.

For example, on July 16 two years ago, huge meteorites went into Jupiter. One of them, I think, was about the size of the earth; it was pretty big. They hit Jupiter, and they caused explosions that were larger than the size of the earth. They were only picked up on the telescope two or three weeks before they hit. All of a sudden it comes out in the papers, the same thing could happen to the face of the earth. We don't have the technology to pick up meteorites at any kind of distance. And therefore two weeks down the line, or four or five, you could wind up with knowledge that something like a meteorite that could literally tear open half the earth is coming and there's no way to stop it.

Einstein: Is the universe a safe place for human beings to be, or isn't it? And the answer, of course, is, in the 2 x 4 world, it is a very unsafe place. It is terribly unsafe. It is so unsafe that no one gets out alive. It's like Auschwitz. A lot of pain, a lot of agony, and death at the end. Very unsafe. Right at this instant, right at this very second, there are billions of people agonizing in pain and suffering of one form or another, and tomorrow there'll be billions more, and so forth. It is a very unsafe place to be in the 2 x 4 world.

The Good News is God is Love

33:22 But the Good News is, the Gospel is, God is love. God is Father. You are safe. You are secure. God is infinitely bigger than the 2 x 4 world. That's the Gospel. And that's what the world has to know above all else, that God is love and that people are secure and safe. How much of the struggle of person against person that we see is a struggle to try to find artificial security in the 2 x 4 world? Jesus comes along and says this is a safe place. You are safe. God loves you.

Now, that's very, very comforting, and that's the truth. Repentance means we keep that in mind. Not just a little corner of the mind and then we go off here and function in the 2 x 4 world. Repentance means putting on the mind of Christ, that should be our whole mind. That God is rich in mercy. God loves us. God is love. God is Father. And then other things flow automatically. The gossip stops. The lousy words stop. The stealing stops. The anger at people stops. And the wars stop. But without that [mindset], the 2 x 4 world with a mind that has no sense that God is Father, *is* a dangerous place, and you'd better

be armed to the teeth, whatever that might mean in your world. And we're very sophisticated about doing it [arming ourselves].

God is Father is our security. But God is Father is the only security. All other securities are illusionary. "Well," you say, "I've got \$40,000 in the bank, or \$4 million in the bank." Well, Jesus tells that story, doesn't he? The man fills up the barns, and he says, "Now, rest easy, my soul, for you've got three new barns filled to the brim." And, of course, Jesus says that night he's going to die. What good are the barns? There's no security in a big bank account. We all know that. There's security only in God as Father.

What about weapons? Well, they've given us a lot of security, haven't they? There's no security in a gun, in a tank, in an atomic bomb. None. For even if you survive them, even if you're the winner, you're no closer to the real security than you were before. It's either God is Father or nothing.

With What Will We Fill Our Minds?

36:38 And so here we are, faced with a real decision. And it's the decision about what we are going to fill minds with. There's no question we can fill our minds with the junk of television, or with the junk of politics, or with the junk of entertainment, or many other things. There's no problem living in the 2 x 4 world. That's easy. The whole world helps us to do that. But what about living in the world where God is Father?

You see, here's the point with this. People are valuable, people are valuable, any human being is valuable only because he or she is valuable to God. If we are not valuable to God, we have no value. We're nothing. We might as well be killed in the womb or killed in war or anything. But if each person is valuable to God, then so is every other person. If each person is loved by God then every other person has a responsibility to value that person as God values him or her.

If God is Father, then, indeed, God is my Father. God loves me. But He also loves this one and this one and this one, five and a half billion times over. And if my mind is the mind of Christ, which is the mind of God as Father, then my responsibility is to love that one as God loves him. Not as the political propaganda tells me to love them. Not as the military tells me to love them. Not as my insecurities in this little 2 x 4 world tell me to love him or her. But to love them as God loves them.

"Our" Father

38:36 Repent means to put on the mind of Christ. That has never been in doubt. That is all it means in Christianity. But the mind of Christ is the mind that God is Father. That is everything in the mind of Christ. Now, carry this one step further. We all say the "Our

Father” don’t we? “Our Father, who art in heaven.” All Christians say it. But I remember the priest that I mentioned who was here at Knock years ago in ’88, George Zabelka. He frequently said that he led the troops in the “Our Father.” They were all there before the battle, saying “Our Father.” He was saying it. But they meant, our Father [as in] God was Father of the American troops. It was no thought that God was Father of and loved the Japanese troops. It was God was the Father of the little 2 x 4 world. Not that God was the Father of the whole universe. God was the Father in other situations, the Catholics, or just the Catholics, and not the Protestants. Or just the Protestants and just the Catholics, that is just the Christians and not the Muslims, etc. And we see what the problem is.

God is Father, Rich in Mercy and of Infinite Majesty and Mystery

40:05 We are confronted, then, with a problem, and the problem is this. In order to live like the Lamb of God, in order to live out of the Christ-like mind, there is a real choice that we have to make. Are we going to think of God and continue to think of God as only that little justifier of our little 2 x 4 world, whatever that is? Or are we going to begin to fill our minds with the God who is the God of infinite majesty and mystery, the God who is Father who is rich in mercy. There is a real choice here.

If we fill our minds with that God that John Paul II says is the Father who is rich in mercy, if we fill our minds with the Father who is the Father of Jesus, the God who is love, then we will begin to act differently, and people will see that. Then we can act like a lamb. Why? We can afford to be a follower of the Lamb of God. Why? Then we can afford the vulnerability of the lamb. Why? Because our security is in the Father. No security anyplace else. We’re not even trying anyplace else. For our life and our existence, our death and our eternity, our hopes, our joys, our pains and our sorrows, are all in the hands of the loving and merciful God, the Father who is rich in mercy.

There really is a choice here. So we often think of Lent as a time when we do without food and we cause ourselves pain, basically. And somehow we repent through pain, pain that we take on ourselves. Don’t you worry about that. You’ll get enough pain in your life. You don’t have to take any on. The real task is exactly like we say in the Divine Liturgy, that we “spend the rest of our lives in peace and repentance.” What a combination of words. Peace and repentance. Fifteen hundred years of people praying that *we spend the rest of our lives in peace and repentance!* How can that be? If I’m a sinner, how can I spend my life in peace and repentance? Well, fine, if I’m a sinner, I’m repenting, I can see that. But peace? Of course. It fits like hand to glove.

We can spend our life in peace and repentance because repentance is putting on the mind that God is love, and that gives peace instantly. We might have to change behaviors when we put on that mind. We might have to do away with all kinds of things we thought we

could have. We might have to redirect our lives in new directions. All those things may be hurtful. They may be hard to do. No question about that. But look why we're doing it. We're doing it in order to love as God would love this person.

It is just a fact of the Christian life, mere animal pain does not save. Raw suffering does not save. Identification with Jesus' suffering is identification with Jesus' loving. If you struggle to love as Christ loves, there will be suffering in your life, that's for sure, in a world of evil. It is hard to love in the face of evil. And the sufferings will come. But that suffering is the consequence of trying to love. It is not saying, "God wants me to suffer, and God feels better because I suffer." No. It is love that saves, not suffering.

And what the world needs to see above everything else, what your neighbors need to see, what your children and grandchildren need to see, is a person whose behavior is coming out of the mind that God is love. God is Father of all and loves all. God is rich in mercy. They need to see behavior that comes and *can only come from the mind of Christ*, the mind of Father. This is repentance.

We All Need to Know We Are Secure

45:24 But why do they need to see it? They need to see it because your children and your grandchildren and your next-door neighbor and your parish priest, and everyone, has to know that they are secure in this universe, has to know they are loved by God, has to know they can trust God absolutely and totally in every situation. They need to know it, and the only way it can be taught is not by words, but by doing it. They've got to see people relying on the Father in the face of crises, relying on that He loves and is rich in mercy, and then they will know.

And so we come to the end of this talk, and what we're saying here is, the only way that the Lamb of God makes sense as a model of life, the only way that Jesus makes sense, is if we believe and commit ourselves to living the tiniest details of our life out of the consciousness that God is love, God is Father, God is rich in mercy. Then it all makes sense. When we live out of that consciousness, extraordinary things happen through us that would not otherwise happen, because we are now living in the reality of the true God.

Dorothy Day

47:12 Now I'll tell a story. The person that is usually considered the most influential American Catholic of the 20th century, that's what she was called upon her death in paper after paper and article after article, was Dorothy Day. Dorothy Day was a convert to Catholicism when she was 27 years old. She understood all that we're saying here before she converted. She understood it all. Everything we say here this weekend she understood

before she converted. She set up houses of hospitality to take care of the poor in the Bowery during the Depression. She refused to kill. She refused to go to war. She refused to participate in war. She gave her life over to those that were unloved and unlovable, that had not even institutions to go to, and that couldn't even give her a thanks and could only give her guff. And she lived in the middle of a world that was a world of extraordinary violence.

I remember going to her funeral. In the building right next to where she died, a house where she lived for the prior 10 or 15 years, was the Hell's Angels headquarters. Not even the police wanted to come down the street. And Dorothy had a tremendous impact on American Catholicism. It's not important to talk about it, but take my word for it, when she died she was considered the most influential American Catholic in the 20th century, more influential than cardinals and bishops, more influential than theologians, scholars and philosophers. She touched millions upon tens of millions of Catholic lives, from simple people like my mother to people like Thomas Merton, who was a great Trappist monk, and on and on and on. Yet where does it all start?

49:15 It all starts with the terrible decision to put on the mind of Christ. Not a decision for suffering, but a decision for love. And the decision is what? Is she going to be baptized or not? Is she going to become a Christian? But in order for her to make that decision, she, with her daughter, had to leave the common-law marriage with the man she loved because he would not get married in the Catholic Church. He hated Catholicism for all the evil it had done in the world.

She describes in her autobiography the day she went to be baptized, in 1927. How she took the Staten Island Ferry back over to Staten Island to be baptized, and how it was cold and gray and dull, and there was no joy, and there was no hope, no human hope. But she knew that Jesus was right, that God was love, and that this is what you had to commit herself to. And so she did. She did not choose suffering. She chose to love, not just in her baptism, but when she went to the people that no one wanted to love, and on and on and on.

And so I leave this with you. When she was asked, suppose you get killed in the Bowery by these drunks and violent people, her answer was, "I know—I know—that suffering that comes from following Jesus is redemptive." Suffering that comes from loving as Christ loved, suffering that comes from loving the other person the way the Father would love the other person, is redemptive. And that basically is the consciousness that's required to be the vulnerable, meek, nonviolent, gentle lamb that the Lamb of God called us to be when He called us to baptism.

[End of Audio]

4-The Lamb Who Glorifies God

The Purpose of Existence is to Glorify God

The purpose of existence, according to our faith, is to glorify God. That's why we exist, to glorify God. The question could be asked, why does God need me to be His public relations agent, to say, "Gee, you're a great God," or "You're wonderful," or you're this or you're that? I mean, God is God. He made the universe. Then why is it necessary for me to be glorifying Him, to have that, indeed, as the purpose of my existence, to glorify God?

Well, one of the things that probably has happened is that we've lost touch with the meaning of the word 'glorify'. And I think one of the best ways to get back what really is the strength of what glorify is all about is to remember the Magnificat, and how we used to say it. Now we say, "My soul doth glorify the Lord." But an equally and accurate translation is, "My soul doth magnify the Lord. My spirit rejoices in God, my Savior." To glorify God is to magnify God. To glorify God is to make God visible, the true God.

You know how it is with a magnifying glass. You get something that's a little speck, that people would just walk past and wouldn't even see. And then, you put the magnifying glass to it and they say, "Ah, it's easy to see." Well, that is what we're supposed to be in terms of the Father. We are supposed to be glorying the Father. We are supposed to be magnifying glasses so that other people can know that God exists, that God is love, that God loves them and cares for them.

I Think, Therefore I Am—Descartes

02:20 400 years ago, there was a philosopher by the name of Descartes, and he was trying to figure out what he could be certain of, as philosophers try to figure things out. What you could be certain of. He said, "Well, I can't be certain even that that chair is there. It might be a dream. It might be just an illusion. I might be dreaming. So what can I be certain of?" He came up with a little phrase which he felt was the one thing he could be certain of. The little phrase has become like a little cliché, a little Latin cliché. In Latin it reads, "Cogito ergo sum." "I think, therefore I am." In other words, he was saying he was certain that because he thought, he had to be. He might be thinking a dream, but nevertheless he still had to be thinking, and that meant there's someone—there had to be someone doing the thinking, him, even if it was a dream. So he was certain that he existed. I think, therefore I am.

I Am Loved, Therefore I Am

Well, a thousand years before Descartes, in the baptismal formula of the Church, the phrase was used, “Amor ergo sum.” “I am loved, therefore I am.” I am loved, therefore I am. It was understood way back then, at the very beginning, at baptism, that we would not be unless God, before we were, loved us. It is the love of God that drew us out of nothingness. It is the love of God that sustains us. Amor ergo sum. I am loved, therefore I exist. That was in the baptismal formula because it was understood that God was faithful to His love, that God wasn’t like us, didn’t turn around and walk away from it. Therefore, if I was in the beginning loved, I was loved now and I would be loved forever and ever by God. It is in His infinite, unconditional love that the Christian or the potential Christian was immersed at baptism. Totally immersed, as we said the word baptism meant immersed, totally immersed. I am loved, therefore I am.

Therefore, in terms of the last conference, when we talked that the mind of Christ was filled from one side to the other, from the center to the circumference and everything in between with God is Father, we are now saying that what we are called to do is to magnify the true God by our lives, the God who is love, in a world that doesn’t even know that God exists, in a world that is terrified by all kinds of gods that are the product of the fears and all the other darknesses in people, that are nothing more than the projection of all the darkness inside people upon some entity that they make believe is out there.

Fear Not

06:10 Remember, when the angel comes to Mary at the Annunciation, the first words the angel says are “Fear not.” When Jesus is born, and the angels come to the shepherds, the first words that they say are, “Fear not.” When Jesus rises from the dead and walks through the door, the first words He says are, “Fear not.” Our God is not a God of fear. Our God is a God of love. The God that Jesus communicates to humanity and in whom we are baptized at baptism is a God of infinite and unconditional love.

As I said this afternoon in the conference, no place in the New Testament, no place in the Gospels does Jesus refer to God as King. It is always Father. Think about kings. Kings are people in this world who run one of those 2 x 4 worlds, whatever they may be. Kings are people who exert enormous fear, because they have the power to hurt. Jesus never refers to God as King. God is love. God is the Father who cares more for us than we care for ourselves.

A famous French priest who founded the Little Brothers and Little Sisters of Jesus, Charles de Foucauld, had as one of his mottos, “One thing we owe our Lord, and that is to fear nothing.” One thing we owe our Lord, and that is to fear nothing. Now, how can

that be? How can we not fear in a world where we are so vulnerable? Vulnerable physically, vulnerable psychologically, vulnerable emotionally, vulnerable in terms of our community and so forth. Of course, we know the answer. What Charles de Foucauld means when he says, “One thing we owe our Lord, and that is to fear nothing,” is that Jesus comes and proclaims the Gospel, the Good News, that God is Father, rich in mercy. God is love. And therefore we owe Jesus—we *owe* Him the duty, because He has chosen us to be Christians, to live in that consciousness and to fear nothing.

Now, what we’re talking about here, of course, is not that anyone can experience the emotion of fear at any given time. That can happen to anyone. Just like anyone can experience, all of a sudden, anger or lust or envy. But the difference between the momentary experience of it and what Charles de Foucauld is talking about is, we don’t let it control us. We don’t let fear be the thing on which we make a decision. We don’t let fear interfere with what we are supposed to do. We don’t let fear drive us to choosing means to live by that Christ rejected: enmity, violence, hurt, and greed. In other words, human beings, just because they’re human beings, can momentarily fear, or even longer than momentarily. But they don’t have to let fear become their god. They don’t have to let fear rule their lives instead of the God of love.

10:42 Most gods that exist are gods that are terribly fearful. When one goes across the world and looks at the different religions that have existed over four or five or six thousand years, wherever they exist, most gods approach being terrorists. Real terrorists. They have to be placated or else they’ll destroy and kill and maim. The whole idea of human sacrifice, sacrificing children or sacrificing adults to gods—people just weren’t sacrificed because they enjoyed sacrificing people—they sacrificed because that was a way to keep the god from hurting them.

Now, I assure you, I assure you, it is not such a simple matter, it is *not* such a simple matter to put on the mind of Christ, to give yourself over to a God who is unconditional and infinite love—Father—because we are all products of our culture. And our culture is loaded with fear. None of us come from a culture that is trying to put on the mind of Christ, not one of us. No person in this world ever has. We are all nurtured from the cradle in all kinds of fears, and all kinds of terrible stories about God. But Jesus—*Jesus* is the standard. Jesus does not lie and Jesus says God is Father. He says it in a hundred different ways. Therefore, one thing we owe our Lord, and that is to fear nothing; not meaning we can’t feel the emotion of fear, but we won’t let fear drive us to do what is unChrist-like. We won’t let fear control our decisions.

A Person's God(s) Rules His or Her Life

13:01 Did you ever think of why it is that intelligent people, highly intelligent people, probably as a society more intelligent than we are today, that is, the upper echelons, the educated of Roman and Greek society, why they were polytheist instead of monotheist, why they had so many gods? I mean, these weren't stupid people. They could think. They could think, perhaps, better than we can, as a group. They were all literate. Why did such people think there were many gods? And yet they all did. The answer lies in this. Their understanding was a person's god was what ruled his or her life. A person's god was what ruled his or her life. That you would give your life over to a god was self-evident. And when you gave your life over to something that was the god you were living under for as long as you gave your life over to it.

With the Romans, war was a big deal. Military was a big deal. So a great part of their life was given over to Mars. So Mars was a major god. Sexual romance and love was a great deal. It took up a large piece of the consciousness of the Roman mind. Therefore, Venus was a major god. Drunkenness, well, drunkenness took up a significant amount of time, but not the kind of time war took up. So Bacchus was a minor god. At different moments in life it was recognized that people allow different things to rule them. And what rules you is your god, because what rules you, you give your life's time, your body energy, your thoughts, over to. That's why they were polytheist.

Monotheism

15:25 And it's only when you see that that you see the tremendous implications of the monotheism that started with Judaism. For monotheism makes the same demand on a person, that he or she give their lives, their time, and so forth over to something, but it was to be one thing. We know what the first commandment is, the great commandment that Jesus says: "Love the Lord your God, whole heart, whole soul, whole mind and whole strength." Whole means 100 percent. Monotheists do not give 30 percent of their life to God, 50 percent of their heart, 22 percent of their strength and then give the others to things that are not of God. Monotheism represents something that is not just a concept that there's one God. Monotheism represents a *choice of life*, giving your life over to one reality. And Jesus says that reality, that reality, is love. God is love. Love as He loves, but love. He's the model of it, but love.

Sin is Idolatry: Giving Oneself Over to a God Other Than Love

You have probably read and seen in all kinds of books, in all kinds of saints who have written on the subject and spiritual writers, the sentence that runs something like this: Sin is basically idolatry. Sin is allowing something to take control of your life, giving your whole heart, whole soul, whole mind to it that is not God. There is an idolatrous quality to all sin. "I know that this is not what Jesus would do. I know this is not being

compassionate as the Father is compassionate. I know this is not loving this person as God wants me to love him, as God loves him. But I don't care. I want something he has, so I steal it." The desire for that, whatever it is, controls my life at that moment. I am run by it. I am motivated by it. I have given myself over to it instead of God, who is love as revealed by Jesus. There is always idolatry, a quality of idolatry, in all sin. And therefore we can begin to see how terrible sin is, for it is literally not just turning from God but allowing something else to become our god for a time. How strange it is, isn't it, that we allow thinking we are going to allow something to become our god just for a minute or a day, and the power of the false god in a minute or a day to take over the whole life for years into the future.

But make no mistake about it. The first commandment, that the Lord our God is one, to love the Lord our God, whole heart, whole soul, whole mind, whole strength, is what Jesus is talking about when He says the first words out of His mouth, "Repent." Change your mind, or convert. It says whole mind is to be given to this God, who is Father, who is love.

Imagine this situation: That a child had been nurtured from the cradle by his or her mother and father, by their brothers and sisters, and by their uncles and aunts, into the consciousness that God is love. Imagine the question asked of the child when the child did something wrong, or the child asked what to do was, "Would a loving God do that?" If the community in which the child prayed and lived had as its purpose putting on the mind of Christ, living out of the consciousness that God is love and Father, that child would be nurtured in a certain way. That child would become something.

But [what] if a child is raised in an atmosphere of fear, if the child is raised in an atmosphere where the child has to fear, where the child sees other people fearing? Said another way, if a child is raised in an atmosphere that is operationally polytheistic, not monotheistic, where he or she sees mother, father, sisters, brothers, uncles, aunts, neighbors, all allowing themselves to be controlled by different kinds of gods at different moments and not just the God of love or not even the God of love? That child is also going to be something, and it's not going to be the same thing.

The Church is Meant to Magnify the True God—Love

The Church is the community that is responsible for magnifying God, for glorifying God. The Church is the community that's responsible for glorifying God. But it can only glorify or magnify God to the extent that it—which means its membership: bishops, priests, sisters, brothers, laity—to the extent that its membership lives out of the mind of Christ, lives out of the mind where God is love, God is Father. That is, lives out of that [consciousness]. That is, it actually makes decisions on the basis that God is Father and

God is love and refuses to make decisions that are not consistent with that [consciousness].

Capital Punishment is Idolatry

22:17 For example, did you ever think what a proclamation of idolatry capital punishment is? Now, I know you don't have it yet here in Ireland or in most of the countries or any of the countries of Europe, and we have it in the United States on a grand scale now. But did you ever think what a proclamation of idolatry capital punishment is? Consider. Most Christians in the pew on Sunday consider heaven to be that wonderful, marvelous, magnificent, beatific, awesome, glorious place where God lives in holiness and love for all eternity, infinite and supreme love for all eternity. It is that place that is just beyond imagination in terms of good, in terms of joy, in terms of peace. Heaven is that place. And Christians feel they will go there only when they're absolutely forced to. What that says is that there's some underlying belief that God is not trustworthy, that Jesus may be wrong about God being Father.

Think about the false witness of capital punishment. You have a man. He's committed the most heinous crime you can imagine. It is the worst thing that's imaginable. He has done it, that's for sure. And now, the Christians say, now, because you have committed this heinous crime, you know what we are going to do? We are going to kill you so that you can now go into the embrace of the God of love. No, they don't say that. When Christians kill someone because he or she has committed a crime, they think they are taking everything from that person. They think they're taking the thing that's most important from that person, life. They don't think that they're sending him to the same place that Jesus is. In other words, by the very fact that they want to destroy, the very fact that they want to kill people who do wrong as a form of punishment, it is a sign to the world. They don't believe that death ends in the embrace of God. They think it's the worst thing that can happen.

Holiness and Christ-like Love

25:23 When we say that God is love, what we are saying is this. There are two tremendous realities, two tremendous experiences in the human situation. There is the experience of the holy. It's an awesome and powerful experience. There is also the experience of love. When we say God is love, we mean that in some way, those experiences are rooted in the divine. Therefore, what we are saying in terms of life is that the test of whether something that we are calling holy is really holy, the test of whether something we're calling holy is really holy, is whether its fruits are Christ-like love.

Plenty of people talk about the holy. The world is full of people talking about the holy. All kinds of people can even induce experiences of the holy. For example, you remember

the Ayatollah Khomeini. Millions experienced holiness in his presence. The guy was a mass murderer, a torturer, crude and ugly. But people experienced holiness in his presence.

The Test of Genuine Holiness and Genuine Love

26:56 No, no. When it says God is love in the New Testament, it means that the experience that we are calling holy must be validated by whether its ends, its fruits, are Christ-like love. That's what I mentioned the other night when St. Teresa of Avila says that regardless of the visions that you have and the mystical experiences you have, they will not save you unless they produce the deed of Christic love. That's the test of their validity. And the test of the validity of love, then, is whether its fruits are Christ-like holiness. Not Ayatollah Khomeini kind of holiness, but Christ-like holiness.

We all know people that say "I love" and "I love", and the fruits of what they produce are the extreme opposite of Christ-like holiness. Yet they continue to say "I love." So in the notion 'God is love', we have a real, practical formula for day-in day-out moment-in moment-out ordering our lives: Is what I am calling holiness producing the fruits of Christ-like love in my life? Is what I am calling love producing Christ-like holiness in my life? If it is not, then we're talking about something other than participating in realities that are the God who is love.

The experience of holiness and the experience of love can be independent of each other. In fact, they can be the opposite of each other. How many people involved in all kinds of illicit sexual relations justify it on the basis that it's love? The question of "Is it holy?" never enters the mind, just that it's love. How many people that kill for one reason or another justify it on the basis they did it out of love, from abortion to atomic war? But is killing Christ-like holiness? Can anyone really picture Jesus doing an abortion or dropping an atomic bomb? Impossible.

The Wonderful Reality of Whole Heart, Whole Soul, Whole Strength

29:45 And so we are confronted with a wonderful reality, a really wonderful reality. You and I both would love, would desire, with our whole heart and whole soul, to experience holiness, to experience love. We would desire to experience and be part of those things together. What Jesus says is, all that, *all that*, you can begin to participate in right at this moment if you will but put on His mind, the mind where you work out of the consciousness that God is the Father of all, that God loves all, and that you will be His agent in this world. You will not worry about whether you lose a dime or a hundred dollars. You will not worry about what it seemingly is going to cost you. You will do like Jesus did, the Father's will. You will not worry about how unrealistic it looks or how embarrassing it looks. Only the will of the Father will be at stake.

We can say, “Well, that’s a little much, isn’t it? I’ve got other things to do.” What I’m submitting to you is this; there are other things to do. But ask yourself, what does it mean to love God whole heart, whole soul, whole mind, whole strength? What does it really mean to be a monotheist? Does it even seem reasonable to say that it means as long as I say that there’s only one God everything else is fine and I can let anything else rule my life? That’s impossible. It can’t possibly mean that. That can’t possibly be what whole heart, whole soul, whole mind, whole strength means.

Therefore, you take the elementary kind of reality that we see all over the world, war, just as an example. Taking just the Second World War as a ‘good’ war, supposedly, how is it possible that the Christians who are Catholic and Lutheran who are Germans and the Christians who are Catholic and Lutheran who are English or American, how is it possible that they are both supposedly following Jesus, putting on the mind of Christ, which they’re supposed to do, which is the mind of the Father that God loves all, and then they go out and they tear each other apart? Tear each other’s families apart? Tear each other’s lives apart? Maim and kill? Is that really working out of the mind of God as Father? Of course not. That’s letting the god of nationalism control the life.

The Demonic: Choosing Other Than What Jesus Would Do

33:16 The Biblical scholar that I mentioned earlier, John L. McKenzie, makes the point in his writings on the New Testament that it is the demonic quality of the state, it is the demonic quality of the state, that it wishes to be God. Now that sounds foolish until we just think of what we’ve just been saying. No state would ever say, Ireland or France or the United States or China is God. But that’s not what’s at issue here. The issue is that the state wants you to obey it regardless of whether what it says is in conformity with what Jesus says or not. That’s the demonic quality. And it [the state] will hurt you if you don’t obey.

This is a shameful fact I’m about to tell you. It is very, very clear from the New Testament that Jesus rejects homicide and enmity. There is no question about that in the New Testament. Every country in Latin and South America, every single inch of Latin and South America for over 500 years has been controlled by Catholics. They’ve been the political power. And to this very hour, not one country in Latin or South America will allow a Catholic to say they will not kill in war. There is no country in Latin and South America that says anything but you must kill if the state tells you to kill. There’s the demonic quality of the state. Jesus says do one thing, and the state says, if you do that, we’ll hurt you. It wishes to override God. That’s but one example.

But what I’m raising to you is this, as we go through life, second in and second out, the same thing is going on. The demonic is trying to get us to choose on some other basis

than the basis of what God wants in this situation. You can be in a family, you can be in a convent, you can be in a rectory, and something can go wrong. You can immediately, instead of thinking “How does God the Father, how does Jesus want me to act in this situation?” you handle it like Rambo. Straighten it out right here. That goes on in the grocery store, in the streets. How can that possibly be monotheism, if monotheism means whole heart, whole soul, whole mind, whole strength given to God who is the Father who is rich in mercy?

We Are Baptized Into Christ

36:39 John McKenzie is the single most intelligent human being I’ve ever met. I’ve been around universities for 30 years, and I’ve never encountered a mind of this quality. Absolute brilliance, even in the university world. Brilliance beyond brilliance. This is a man who has spent 60 years day in and day out studying theology, who knows the philosophers of the world backwards and forwards. In his last book, which he wrote when he was about 76, *The Civilization of Christianity*, John L. McKenzie makes the statement “All that I know about God comes from Jesus Christ.” Actually, he says, “All that I *know* or *think I know* about God comes from Jesus Christ.”

You and I are really confronted with something when we are confronted with being baptized into Christ. We are confronted with being made one with Christ, in mind and heart and soul and spirit, indeed even body. We are part of the body of Christ. Baptism means total immersion, and therefore we are confronted with the reality of having been immersed in the mind of Christ, and the mind of Christ is God is Father, mercy, love, eternal. Our choice is, we have been given that gift, are we going to live it? That’s our choice. Faith is a gift. Baptism is a gift, always. Baptism into the Lamb of God is a gift. Our choice is, are we going to live it. Or are we going to continually find reasons to excuse ourselves so we can put something other than the Father in control of our lives?

Glorify God With Your Life

39:14 Now, listen. Remember, we started this whole thing out by saying the purpose of the Christian life is to glorify God. Why? You know and I know, just from having lived a few years, the world is desperate to know that God loves them. People are desperate for that. They may put on veneers of being big shots and important or being callous and not caring, or to heck with religion or whatever, a zillion and one tricks. They may even put on veneers of being religious. But people are desperate to know that God is Father, and amidst this vulnerable world that they are safe.

The only way that you can teach that and proclaim it—there is no other way – you can say it, that’s one thing. But the only way it will ring true is if Christians one after another actually live as if God is love, actually live in a way where the question that is first in

their mind is, “What does the Father, who is rich in mercy, want me to do here?” Or said a simpler way, “What would Jesus do here?” And then people will see what it looks like to live out of the true God. But until they see that that’s something that can be done, and something that is safe to do, the desperate searching continues, and the desperation continues.

When we say that God is our security ethic, what we are fundamentally saying is, we have a new vision, an absolutely new vision given to us by Jesus on what it means to be secure in life. It’s not the gun and the sword, and it’s not a lot of money, and it’s not being important. In fact, we don’t need any of that kind of cruelty and power. We can be little lambs of the Lamb of God. Because we are secure that God is our Father.

Not “My Father” But “Our Father”

42:00 Isn’t it extraordinary? I mean, it really is mind boggling when you think of it, that the only prayer that Jesus taught us, and the most used prayer in the Church, the Our Father, doesn’t begin with the words, “My Father, who art in heaven.” In order to say the Our Father, you have to speak universally. You have to say, yes, God is my Father, but God is that one’s Father and that one’s Father, and everyone’s who ever lived; God is the Father who is rich in mercy for [each]. The minute you say, “Our Father,” the “our” means everybody. God is the Father of all, as it says in the New Testament.

Crisis—Judgment

“Ah,” you say, “it’s all right to talk like that, and I’m perfectly willing to live out of that mind, that God is Father, but, you know, things occur in life where you just can’t live that way anymore. If you don’t act some other way, you’re going to be crushed.” The Greek word for judgment in the New Testament is the word ‘crisis’. Crisis. The moment of judgment is a crisis moment. It is the moment when we are going to decide are we going to live by the truth of Jesus and by the love of God the Father, or are we going to choose something else? Jesus faced that crisis ultimately in Gethsemane, and it is the ultimate test.

St. Thérèse’s Crisis

43:40 St. Thérèse of Lisieux faced that crisis. All her life she experienced God as ‘Papa’. That’s her word, Papa, Father, Daddy, if you will. A real, intimate relationship with God as Father. On April 4, on the night between April 4 and 5, 1896, between Holy Thursday and Good Friday night, she went into her bedroom to go to bed at 12:00, after staying up in adoration until midnight. As she tells it in her *Story of a Soul*, she went into her bedroom and lay down, and all of a sudden her mouth filled with warm blood. In those

days when your mouth filled with warm blood it meant death, a hard death from tuberculosis, because you had passed the stage where it could be corrected.

She says in her autobiography that she did not even get up to see what was there. She knew what was there. She just spit it out in a handkerchief, and she said she went to sleep in total peace, because at last she was going to meet her Papa, Father. She was living out of the consciousness that God is love, and then this happened, it was just a thing, the next step. When she got up in the morning on the 5th of April, she looked and there was the blood. She says in her autobiography how excited and joyful she was because the bridegroom was coming to get her. Her mind was that God is love, God is Papa. And this was the culmination of it all.

However, two days later, on April 7, something happened. On April 7, 1896, however these strange things occur, the emotional experience that she always lived with that God was love, the intellectual certainty she lived with that God was love, the absolute certainty she lived with that God existed, was all taken from her. On April 7, she fell into a state that we call angst, which is a state of absolute emotional certainty that you are going to be annihilated at death. She lost all experience of God's existence and all experience that God is love. All she knew, all she knew emotionally was that she was going to be annihilated like the ant, never to be again, and from that perspective, her whole life was wasted.

In her autobiography, *Story of a Soul*, she says that this happened but she is afraid to talk about it to anyone because it feels to her like it's contagious if she starts to talk about it, that it would grab other people. So what did she do? She says on April 7 of 1986, "I will still live as if God is love." So moment in and moment out, for the next 18 months, with her whole emotional structure telling her she's going to be annihilated and going through tremendous pain and suffering, she continues to ask the question moment to moment, how does the Father want me to relate to this person? What would Jesus do here? With no emotional support whatsoever! And that's the way it remained with her until approximately two minutes before her death when she had some kind of extraordinary experience.

What I am saying this for is this: When there was nothing else for her to give, she gave her whole will. When there was no emotional feeling, when everything was acting against her, she gave her whole will to putting on the mind of Christ and living out of God as Father, God as love, God as mercy.

And how did she live out of that? Two months before she died, unable to eat, choking with every breath, practically, unable to breathe, sick, in pain, high fever, one of the

Sisters makes some soup and comes in to give her soup. She can't eat the soup. She can't even go to Communion anymore. So the Sister tries to give her the soup and she can't take the soup, and she tries, and then the Sister walks out in a huff. And she gets outside the door and another Sister passes the infirmary, and this Sister says to the other Sister, making sure Thérèse will hear it, "They say that one in there is so good she's not even a good Sister."

And you know how the dark side and the devil works? The one thing Thérèse wanted to be was a good Sister. And now here she is, dying, in her last moments, to which she gave her whole life, and they're saying she's not even a good Sister. It just crushed her. Her blood sister, Celine, comes in to see her two minutes later or three or four and sees her crying, says, "What happened?" And she says, she tells her the story. Celine starts to run out of the room to straighten the other Sister out. She calls Celine back, and she says, "No, no, I'll take care of it. I know what I have to do." And Celine says, "How can you take care of it? You're stretched out. You can't move a hand." And she says, "No, I know what I have to do." She says, "When that Sister comes in the next time, I'm going to have to give her my biggest smile and thank her for the soup." That's living out of the mind of Father, out of the mind that God is love. That's what people need to know.

50:20 So, to conclude, I'll just read you a little passage from the New Testament that you all know that says exactly the same thing, and that the world desperately needs to know but cannot know just by words, but they have to see people living out of this truth of monotheism, that God is love, and therefore we are totally secure.

Who will separate us from the love of God made visible in Jesus Christ? Neither trial nor distress nor persecution nor hunger nor nakedness nor danger nor the sword. As Scripture says, for your sake we are being slain all the day long. We are looked upon as sheep to be slaughtered. Yet in all this, we are more than conquerors because of Him who loves us. For I am certain that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, neither the present nor the future, nor power, nor heights, nor depths, nor any creature will be able to separate us from the love of God made visible in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rm 8:35-39).

And that's the Good News. That's what you're called to magnify. That's the purpose of your life, to glorify that God, who is love, the Father of mercies.

[End of Audio]

5-The Church: A Fold of Lambs

Apparitions Emphasize a Piece of the Gospel

The apparition of the Lamb of God at Knock on August 21st, 1879 is nothing new. As we talked about earlier, the Lamb of God is a traditional symbol in the church from the first moments of original Christianity. When God sends an apparition it is not to add anything to the Gospel. The Gospel is complete at the time the apostolic generation closes. An apparition can only emphasize what's already there.

For some reason, God thinks that an emphasis to a piece of the Gospel must be given at this time. God is trying to tell us that something is missing in our lives or in the life of the Church. When we look at the Lamb, as we talked about in earlier conferences, we look at the symbol of God who is gentle, vulnerable, nonviolent, holy, loving, kind. Those are all realities that a Lamb manifests. The Lamb does not manifest hate and cruelty, a killer instinct and so forth. We look at the gentle, kind, loving, nonviolent, Holy Jesus.

Will the Church Again Live Under the Sign of the Lamb of God

01:42 It seems to me there is no more serious problem in the Church—the universal Church today—as well as in the Church of Ireland, than whether it will again become the community of the Lamb of God. Of course, there is no way that the Church, as the theologians say, ontologically can't be the community of the Lamb of God. We are each baptized into Christ, and therefore, we are part of Christ.

However, there is a difference between being part of something just because you are here—for example, being part of the human race just because you are here—and actually going out and contributing, helping, aiding, assisting that reality that you're part of.

It seems to me, the Lamb of God and all that it symbolizes has been lost to the Church—Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant—for a long, long time. It seems to me that there is no more important question facing the Church today—than whether they will govern themselves by the rule of the Lamb of God, whether they will conduct their business, their affairs in this world under the sign of the Lamb of God. Said another way, there is no more important question facing the Church today than whether it will take seriously Jesus' teachings of nonviolent love of friends and enemies.

You see, the Church—Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant—for approximately 1,700 years has excused itself in one form or another from loving its enemies and from following Jesus' teachings that reject violence. But the question that faces each one of us in the Church in general is this: is the Church under a divine mandate from Jesus to teach what he taught on the subject of violence and enmity? Said another way, is the Church, you

and I, that is—I'm not just talking about bishops and popes and priests—but is the Church under a divine mandate to exist in the world as a lamb among wolves?

Does the Church, that is, you and I, not just bishops and popes and priests, ever have the right to put on wolves clothing and act like a wolf? You see, original Christianity, the Christianity closest to Jesus, the Christianity that's technically called 'apostolic Christianity', we are absolutely certain how they answered those questions. Apostolic Christianity taught 100 percent that Christians were to reject violence and were to love their enemies, that in all their affairs they were to conduct themselves consistent with the Lamb of God.

Apostolic Christianity Rejected Violence

6:00 There was no question that the world in every place, in agriculture, in commerce, in entertainment and business and politics, whatever the case may be, in the militaries, there was no question that the world was full of wolves and full of packs of wolves, but the Christian was to go through life as a lamb among wolves. That is apostolic Christianity. The Christian was to imitate the nonviolent Jesus and His way of love of enemies. That's the Christianity before the Gospels were written. That's the Christianity after the Gospels—for a period of time.

Early Christianity, in other words, absolutely rejected homicide and violence and enmity as part of what it could do. There is not a single, not one, not one Father or Mother of the Church in the first 300 years of Christianity that says anything other than that Christians may not use violence, may not kill, must love their enemies. And these were 300 difficult years if you remember. These were years when the Roman government tried to exterminate the Christian community.

There were at least three major public efforts by the Roman government during that time to liquidate Christianity, and yet, no father or mother of the Church said anything other than you must love your enemies. You cannot return violence for violence. You cannot return killing for killing. You must live as a lamb.

Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus

7:58 In the first three centuries of Christianity—in what is the most important document outside the New Testament from that time—we have the Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus, which is a document that describes how the Church functioned about 215 AD. In the Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus, in the section on the Catechumenate, it says, if you are a pimp—a pimp, a person who sells men or women for sexual purposes—if you want to just enter the Catechumenate, you have to give up pimping. Now that makes all the sense in the world, doesn't it? That if you're doing something of that nature

and you want to begin to follow Christ, just begin, you've got to give that up. There's no sense even thinking about baptism if you don't want to give that up. That's not high morality; that's just the basic entrance requirement.

A few sections later, in the Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus, it says, if you are in the military and you wish to become a Catechumen, just a Catechumen, you have to tell your military superiors that you will no longer kill. If they will not accept that, you must resign. If you are not in the military, you may not join—just to become a Catechumen.

In the first 300 years of Christianity, starting with the original group of Christians, the entire apostolic tradition and then on to what we'll talk about in a minute, 313, the Church rejected violence and homicide and enmity. For example, during that time, one of the sayings that was used was that when Christ disarmed Peter, Christ disarmed all Christians. If ever there was a case, for justified violence and homicide, defending the innocent, it was in the Garden of Gethsemane when Peter tried to cut off the ear of the armed servant of the high priest. Jesus said, "No. Put up the sword."

Persecutions of Christians

10:31 The fact of the matter is that these are awfully difficult times of suffering for people because the Romans knew that you could control people by controlling their families. If you threatened the family, you could control the adults; and therefore, during this period of time, if a mother became a Christian, it wasn't just the mother that was brought to the lion's den, literally, it was the whole family. Christian were ravaged by beasts, and they were burnt on crosses of oil and wood, and there is not one word—in 300 years of this, not one word—that comes down to us where anyone said you can take out the sword and kill to save your life.

The understanding was very, very clear from the Gospel. "If you try to save your life in this world, you will lose it. But if you lose your life in this world for My sake and the sake of the Gospel, you will save it" [Mt 10:39, 16.25; Lk 9:24, 17:33].

Using our little analogy from past conferences, if you try to save your life in the 2 x 4 world—that is, if you try to save your life by means that are inconsistent with the will of God as revealed by Jesus, you will lose it. But if you lose your life in that little 2 x 4 world of the nation, of the state or whatever it may be, you save your life in the larger reality of the immensity of eternity in time and space.

And so it went for approximately 300 years. The normal date that historians give that breakdown occurred is the year 313, when everything changed. Now, this is just a date, 313. Just like with any date in history, things are going on for decades and decades after.

The date is kind of the benchmark when something happens, but all kinds of other things are happening before and after. History is not just one straight line at one moment, but the date that's given is 313.

Constantine's Alteration

12:45 In 311, three hundred and eleven AD, you could not be a member of the fighting Roman army and be a Christian. 311. By 416 AD, four hundred and sixteen, under the emperor Theodosius II, you could not be a member of the fighting Roman army *unless* you were a Christian. In 105 years, the whole thing got turned upside down. In 416, it was forbidden for anyone to kill on behalf of Rome except Christians.

What happened? What happened?

In 311, on October 28th and 29th, Constantine was in the battle of his life for his political survival at a place called Melvian Bridge. Constantine was the child, the son, of one of the proconsuls of Rome. His father gave up the job, and he took it. Some time later his father wanted the job back, as people of power often wish they had it after they gave it up or lost it.

His father told his son he wanted the job back, and the son said, "You can't have it." And the father said, "I'll kill you." The son said, "Over my dead body. I'll kill you." So the father and son went to war, and Constantine won. He gave his father the choice of being dragged behind a horse to his death or drinking poison. The father drank the poison.

Constantine then was in a battle with the other proconsuls for rulership of the western half of the Roman Empire, to be the Western Roman Empire. On the evening of October 28th, 29th, 311, at a place called Melvian Bridge, he was going into a battle the next day, and he thought that he could lose it. And as the story goes—we don't know if it's true or not, but we do know that it's the story we have in history. As the story goes, that night Constantine saw in the sky a cross with the Latin words, "And this sign thou shalt conquer."

Now, what's the cross a sign of? It's the sign of Jesus, the sign of Jesus. And who is Jesus? Is Jesus someone who killed someone? No. The cross is a sign of Jesus who refuses to use violence and killing and who even dies loving His enemies, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

15:33 But Constantine was a pagan, and he believed in totems, amulets, miraculous things. So instead of saying, "What does this sign mean? What's this sign trying to tell me about conquering," he goes that very night and has the sign of the cross painted on all the

horses, on all the armor, on all the weapons. That's the first time, at the battle of Melvian Bridge, that a Christian symbol was ever employed, in the history of the world, to lead people into the homicidal violence of war. And it has not stopped to this day.

It is common practice for the priest to say Mass, for the Protestant minister to conduct worship services on the battlefield at nine o'clock in preparation for the boys—and now girls—to go out to kill other people at 11.

The pictures from what used to be Yugoslavia of Catholics with rosaries wrapped around machine guns, of Orthodox Christians with icons on flame-throwers, is the common stuff of Christianity since Melvian Bridge on the night of October 28th of 311 AD.

Constantine won that battle. He became the Emperor of the western half of the Roman Empire. In fact, later on—I think it was 326—he became Emperor of the entire Roman Empire, east and west. In 313, in gratitude—supposedly, but we'll talk about this for a second—in gratitude that he won the battle by the cross, Constantine made Christianity an official religion of the Roman Empire. Until 313 Christianity was an outlawed religion. To be a Christian in the Roman Empire until then was to be like a Jew in Nazi Germany. You could be killed for it. The intensity varied with which Roman government officials executed that, but it was not a formal religion of the empire until 313. In 313 Constantine made Christianity a formal religion in the empire, and then he sent Roman troops out and confiscated pagan temples and gave them to the Christians. Constantine died in 337.

Within a generation after he died—and you can imagine the same thing would happen in any parliament—the voices came that were talking like this: Here we are giving the Christians all these public buildings. Here we are giving them this land. And here we are protecting it for them. Here they are inside their churches saying violence and enmity and killing is wrong. Now, they've got to make up their mind. Either they want to keep their—now—big churches, and they want to keep our protection, and therefore, they've got to make up their mind; if they want that, they've got to stop criticizing it. They've got to make some adjustment in their teaching or else we're going to withdraw our defense of these property rights and then the pagans will take them.

Just War Theories

19:25 In 368 AD, three hundred and sixty-eight AD, for the first time in the history of the church, someone offers a theory for justifying Christian participating in war. 368. 300 plus years after the death and resurrection of Jesus, someone offers a justification for Christians participating in the mass slaughter of war.

The person is St. Ambrose. Now, St. Ambrose, who wrote the first of the just-war justifications in Christianity, is a miracle of grace in the Church, a real miracle of grace. St. Ambrose was the pagan dictator of Milan. His family was the wealthiest family in Milan, and Milan was the wealthiest city in the Roman Empire. Rome was where the politicians were; Milan was where the money was. It's kind of like in the United States, New York is where the money is and Washington is where the politicians put in office are. But Milan was where the real power was.

Ambrose was, like the head of what in the United States would be the Rockefeller family, the super-wealthy family. And Ambrose was a pagan. Now, I say Ambrose was a miracle of grace in the church because remember this is a time in the Church when the Catechumenate took years to go through, not just a few months. Ambrose went through the Catechumenate, was baptized, was chrismated—confirmation—was received into the Eucharist, was ordained a deacon, was ordained a priest and was ordained a bishop in eight days. And he then wrote the first just-war theory.

He himself in his own writing says he doesn't know much about Christianity. Not that he didn't learn, but that's what he says. The criticism here is not of Ambrose because Ambrose did not baptize himself. Ambrose didn't give himself communion. Ambrose didn't ordain himself. Obviously, Ambrose is just a benchmark, a benchmark of something that was changing in the Church. Ambrose wrote the first just-war theory.

His student you all know, St. Augustine. And St. Augustine writes the just-war theory as most churches use it in one form or another today, the justification of war.

22:18 Now, I would say that the vast majority of people that I've ever met in the world, all over the world, who are Christian, Catholic or Protestant, haven't gotten the slightest idea of what the standards of the just-war theory are. All they know is there is such a thing back there, but no one ever taught it to them. The vast majority of Catholics—and by vast majority I mean 99.99 percent and Protestants and Orthodox—they go to war when the government tells them. It's that simple.

But that's not what Augustine says. Augustine is very, very clear in his just-war theory. I think it's important to point out here: it is only a theological theory. The just-war has never been accepted as a dogma of the Catholic Church or any other church. It's only a theory. Augustine points out that you can't go to war when your government tells you to go to war; there are certain standards that have to be met. For example, he says, and all the churches still say today, according to it, it is absolutely forbidden to kill a non-combatant. It is murder to kill a non-combatant. It's mortal sin to kill a non-combatant.

Why? If someone is not trying to kill you, you have no right, whatsoever, to try to kill them. Simple enough.

Well, in the First World War ten percent of all the people that died were non-combatants, and the world was astounded. Nothing like this had ever happened before. Ten percent of the nine million that died were non-combatants; the world was really shaken. In the Second World War 48 percent of the 52 million died were non-combatants. 48 percent of 52 million were non-combatants, and no one—no one—not Catholic, not Protestant and not Orthodox—no one condemned—no one—no hierarchy condemned the destruction of non-combatants during the Second World War.

And today we know the safest place to be when war breaks out is the military. Look at Rwanda. Both sides—both sides are Catholic, and the slaughter rate, the slaughter rate of non-combatants is over 90 percent on both sides.

Augustine, though, lists a whole bunch of standards that had to be met before a Christian could go to war. He never said these standards could be met. He only said if a Christian wanted to go to war, they had to be met. And I would parenthetically say here, I know of no war—and I know a lot of wars—I know of no war that has ever met these standards, and yet Christians have been in every one of them. How's that possible? Because the just-war theory as it exists in the Christian churches is a just-war myth. Only a few theologians study it, and most Christians are never told it, whether they be Catholic or Orthodox or Protestant. Therefore, most Christians are putty in the hand of politicians. When the politicians go to war and they use the radio or television or other propaganda means to create enmity toward another set of human beings, the Christians are right there with everyone else.

Just War Myth

26:02 Remember what Cicero said? The first casualty of war is truth. Truth. The minute war is on the horizon, politicians, military people, lie, lie, lie, lie. Universally and continually. Lest you think I'm making it up, all you have to do is look at any war that has already occurred and see the discrepancy between the politicians' statement before and during the war and what really went on during the war.

Back to Augustine. So Augustine writes a just-war theory, after Ambrose first constructs a just-war theory, or at least the ingredients of it, in 368. Remember now, this occurs only after 300 years have passed of Christianity not participating in this kind of stuff. This happens after apostolic Christianity is absolutely clear that Jesus teaches nonviolence, Jesus is nonviolent, and Jesus teaches a love of enemies, period, by word or by deed.

Well, after Augustine, the flood gates opened. About 200 years after St. Augustine, there is a synod at Arles in France, and the synod of Bishops have a canon that says: “Priests, because of their sacred position in church, cannot use spears in war; they can only use clubs.” It’s beginning to degenerate here.

The Crusades

27:42 Then we come to that grotesque reality that even today, in some Catholic schools, we try to glorify—the Crusades, the Crusades—a horrible and grotesque reality.

Jesus teaches a nonviolent love of friends and enemies.

Christians went out from Europe to the so-called Holy Land slaughtering Muslims and also Christians in the East. But here’s the unique part about it. Christians were granted plenary indulgences for killing a Muslim in trying to save the Holy Land. That is, they were told, if you die killing a Muslim, you went right to Heaven.

The same kind of thing the Ayatollah Khomeini did with the war with Iraq. He gave these little gold keys with the crescent moon and the star to the Iranian children to send them out to fight to kill Iraqis and told them they’d go right to Allah if they died killing an Iraqi. And of course, we also had our Children’s Crusade for the Holy Land.

The first plenary indulgences in the history of the Church were given for homicide. The first non-homicidal plenary indulgence was given to St. Francis of Assisi for people who visited the Porziuncola on August 2nd. Once the enthusiasm was seen which plenary indulgences raised up in people for going out and killing on behalf of God’s cause in the Church in terms of the Crusades, it was only a matter of time before plenary indulgences were given to kill other Christians.

And so the entire Christian community in Albi, France, the Albigensians, were liquidated under plenary indulgence. The Crusaders were given plenary indulgences for destroying them. It’s an awfully dark moment, which we have not yet repaired the damage from. But it has turned Jesus upside down now. We no longer bring the cross to people, the cross of love, the cross of forgiveness; we turn the cross upside down and make it a sword, and we put it at people’s throats and say become Christian or die.

Inquisition

30:33 The inquisition. The first Auto de Fe, that is, the first killing of a heretic or a Jew by burning them at the stake because they were not Catholic was in—that we have a record of—is in 1248 in Trois, France. That is, burning them at the stake with ecclesiastical approval and state support. The last Auto de Fe that we know of, the burning of heretic or

Jew at the stake because they were not Catholic, that we know of, with ecclesiastical approval and state support, is 1828 in Valencia. 600 years of killing people, burning them at the stake, in public displays because they would not become Catholic or because they were teaching different than what the Catholic Church taught. 600 years of this, with practically every major theologian of the time, during that period, justifying it: Thomas Aquinas, St. Bonaventure and so forth.

Can anyone really imagine Jesus saying, “If you don’t follow me, I will burn you at the stake”? Remember, his apostles wanted to do that, didn’t they? Remember the story when they go out to some city and the city rejects them? They come back to Jesus, and say, “Call down fire and lightning on that city.” That’s what they want from him. And he says to them, “You do not know what spirit you’re talking in,” and he does not do that.

Reformation

31:32 600 years of this, and then we come to the Reformation. What Reformation? Who is fooling whom? Who is fooling whom on the Reformation? I’ve participated in these ecumenical discussions, with Anglicans and Orthodox and Methodist and Presbyterians and so forth, and they talk about well, what’s the nature of the bishop? And what’s the nature of the Eucharist? And how many Sacraments are there? And so forth and so on, and it’s all quite intellectual and interesting, and no one’s bad-willed. I’m not saying that. But that’s not the problem. That’s not the problem. All these problems of what the nature of the bishop is, what the nature of the Eucharist is, what the nature of this, that or the other thing is are all secondary.

Martin Luther calls Pope Julius II, who’s the pope at the time—he calls Pope Julius II a cruel animal. This is Martin Luther. He calls Pope Julius II a cruel animal. You know why he calls him a cruel animal? He calls him a cruel animal because Julius II was a cruel animal. Julius II was the last pope we had who actually led military troops into battle. He liked to fight and kill. He did other unpleasant things also, but he liked to fight and kill. He ordered torture.

But Martin Luther was supported by the princes of Germany in doing what he did. The peasants of Germany were people who were living for hundreds of years in squalor oppression and disease, and the wealthy people, the princes of Germany, were living off their blood. When the peasants wanted to try to get a little bit of an improvement in their life and revolted against the princes who were supporting Luther, Luther says—does this sound like the Gospel to you—“It is easier for a prince today to get to Heaven by shedding the blood of a peasant than by prayer.” Does that sound like Jesus?

And we go on to the Calvinists, and the slaughter between the Calvinists and Catholics—slaughtering each other over the Eucharist. Who has the right idea of the Eucharist? We can go on and on, but the Anglicans—Henry VIII, the founder of a religion? Henry VIII is a model of Christianity? Henry VIII is a defender of dogma and doctrine and worrying about nuances of Eucharist? He's a bloody murderer on a large scale.

You see what I'm saying? There's no possibility of any of these divisions ever occurring unless there was first the justification of killing under the name of Jesus. Remember what Jesus says about the devil? He's a liar and murderer. He divides. Diabolos means divide. Violence and homicide always divide. None of the divisions in the churches ever could have occurred but for the violence and the homicide first being justified. They were the stuff that created the possibility.

And so you come to these ecumenical conferences, and everyone is talking about esoteric problems of theology, and no one wants to look back and look at the diabolical realities that were occurring in terms of the means that people on all sides were using to proclaim the Gospel.

And so we could go on with this history, but I think I'll bring it to an end with what, I think anyway, is the low point or at least the symbolic low point of this form of Christianity that we call Constantinian Christianity because it began with the Emperor Constantine painting the cross on weapons and on shields and on horses going into battle. To me the symbolic low point of this form of Christianity is August 9th of 1945.

August 9, 1945, The Symbolic Low-Point of Constantinian Christianity

36:49 On August 9th, 1945, an entirely Christian bomber crew takes off from Tinian Island in the Pacific with the blessing of the Catholic and the Protestant chaplains. They had to drop the second atomic bomb on Kokora, Japan. There are no Jews. There are no atheists. There are no Muslims. It's all Christian.

They get over Kokora, Japan and Kokora is fogged in. They have orders, absolute orders, they can only drop it on visual sighting. Over Kokora, Japan, they can't wait because what happens while they're over Kokora is, one of the four engines on the B-29 catches fire, so they have to close it down. A bit of a mystery that you'll see how evil works itself out. So they immediately turn to the secondary target because the engine is gone and they've got to get rid of this bomb because they can't land with it. It's so heavy. If you've ever seen the Nagasaki bomb, it's a huge bomb. The Hiroshima bomb is a relatively small one, but the Nagasaki is called "Fat Man." It's a massive, I think, 9,000 lb bomb that they couldn't land with. Barely got off the ground with it.

So they immediately feather one of the engines and turn down to Nagasaki to drop the bomb. They get over Nagasaki and it's all clouded in. They can't drop it. They were ready to drop it the minute they get over it, but it's all clouded in. So they're searching—what, where, what can they see. Nagasaki's a port city. The actual logs read that they came over Nagasaki at 10:58 AM, and it was all fogged in.

They don't know what to do, and finally, the bombardier sees through his scope an opening in the clouds. And what does he see? He sees what he's been trained to see for months about Nagasaki. He sees the largest single landmark in all of Nagasaki. He knows he's right over Nagasaki.

He tells the pilot. The pilot says, "Drop the bomb," and the bomb goes. What's the landmark he saw? He saw the Nagasaki Urakami Cathedral. The largest Catholic Church in all of the Far East. That was the ground zero marking for the dropping of the atomic bomb. The bomb actually exploded about 500 meters from it, about 1,500 meters up.

Nagasaki

39:37 A little piece about Nagasaki. Nagasaki was the original, the oldest and the largest Catholic community in all of Japan. Nagasaki *is* Japanese Christianity. There is no city in Japan that is more Christian than Nagasaki. Nagasaki had the largest Christian population of all the Japanese cities. It was the original city where Christianity came. This is an entirely Christian bomb crew; in nine seconds it obliterates the people of Nagasaki who are Christian. That's who died in the second atomic bombing. Christian to Christian.

Now, the ways of God are mysterious. St. Francis Xavier came to Japan on August 15th, 1549. He landed in Japan—the first Christian in Japan—August 15th, 1549. The log still exists. He landed at a place called Kagoshima, which is about six kilometers from Nagasaki, and went down to Nagasaki. He stayed there awhile, and he formed the first Japanese Christian community. He set up a method of missionary work that allowed the Japanese Christian community to grow, and as the decades passed from 1549 on forward, the Japanese community grew and it grew and it grew—all over Japan.

But after about 50 or 60 years, the Portuguese and the Spanish began to try to do in Japan what they were doing in Latin and South America. They began to try to take the religious allegiance of the people and twist it so that the people would become politically allegiant to Portuguese and the Spanish and cease being aligned with the Japanese governments and the Japanese ruling class and so forth.

The minute the Japanese caught onto this, that that's what was happening, they threw every single European out of Japan. They told Japanese Christians, your choices were:

leave, become Buddhist or Shinto—that’s what they were before that—or die. Most Japanese Christians—most Japanese Christians—suffered and died. They suffered and they died.

Paul Miki and 26 Japanese Martyrs

42:18 On the Roman rite calendar, the Mass of the February 5th, it’s the Feast of Paul Miki and the 26 Japanese martyrs. This was the culmination point of a massive persecution where Japanese government officials and so forth were literally burning Christians in boiling water because the idea was not just to get them out of there but to get Christianity out because Christianity was just a European political thing that was trying to overthrow the Japanese world. That’s how they experienced it because of what the Portuguese and the Spanish military and other people that came in there, politicians and priests, had done.

So Paul Miki—Paul Miki and 23 others are Christians, and they’re arrested in Northern Japan for being Christians. And they’re walked all the way down Japan. Along the way, they pick up two more, and where are they walking them too? It’s like Jesus’ Via Dolorosa. They’re mocking them. It’s this kind of thing. They’re making a show of them in order to share people out of Christianity.

And where do they bring them to? They bring them to Nagasaki. They bring them to Nagasaki, the 26 of them, and in a grand display on February 5th of that year. They say, “If that’s your Savior, if that’s your God, we’ll let you die like your God,” and they crucify all 26 of them together, all at once, on the hill of Nagasaki. They put the spear into their heart all at once, and they all die.

And that’s the end of Christianity in Nagasaki. The end of it. It is all over. That’s the end of Christianity in Japan. There is not a drop of it left. A hundred, 200 years go by. There’s not a Christian in all of Japan. None. Zero. No European either.

In 1855, Admiral Perry came from the United States with a gunboat that was so superior to anything the Japanese had that they opened up a little island to let Europeans use it for commerce and for reloading goods and water and that sort of business. A little while after that, in the early 1860s, they allowed Europeans to come on land at Nagasaki; the Europeans had to stay at Nagasaki. They could no place else in Japan. [And they could come] only for commerce purposes.

Hidden Nagasaki Christians

44:57 On March 17th, St. Patrick’s Day, 1865, the Europeans had gotten the concession that they could have a priest, a church in Nagasaki, for Europeans only. A priest from Paris by the name of Petitjean came to Japan and was the pastor of the parish.

Nine o'clock in the evening in March 17th, 1865, St. Patrick's Day, there's a knock at the rectory door, and there are five Japanese women there. The priest answers the door, and he's shocked to see them because Japanese had no contact whatsoever with them, none. He says, "What do you want?" They say that they want to see—they want to see the altar for the Mother of God. He's stunned. How do Japanese know about an altar for the Mother of God?

So he brings them in the church, and he brings them to the altar, to the right of the main altar. Then they want to know if he's celibate, and he said, "Yes." Then they want to know if he comes from Rome, and he says, "Yes." And the conversation continues, and they find out in more detail he's Christian and so forth. The next day, they reveal to him a catacomb community of thousands upon thousands of Japanese Christians who have lived for 200 years in Nagasaki unbeknownst to anybody. They lived Christianity so well—so well—that they had the liturgical days perfect, when Easter was, when the feast days were, after more than 200 years.

Soon after that, the Japanese government hears of it. There's a big persecution, but it stops quickly because of the press and all that sort of business there, and in 1894—for the first time in about 250 years—the Japanese government approves the building of a church in Japan for Japanese people. And where do the Japanese people want it? Nagasaki, of course. It is Japanese Christianity.

Christian Nagasaki Destroyed by Christians

47:04 So in 1894 they build a church, and it takes years and years and years because there's no government support. They're no help from the outside allowed. Poor people building a church—a cathedral—and they build the largest church in all the Orient, and it's christened in 1917. 23 years it took them to build it, and it is the church of the largest and the original Christian community in all of Japan. It is the church of, basically, a catacomb community for 200 years, and that church is basically is ground zero for the dropping of an atomic bomb by Christians on top of that community on August 9th, 1945.

To this day, the pilot of that plane, a Catholic man from Boston named Charlie Sweeney, says he would do it again, and no one says to him: "Charlie, you can't do it again." No one. He's in the paper every August 9th.

Now, obviously, something is terribly wrong. This is not going along in the world like a lamb among wolves. This is just becoming part of the wolf pack.

There is no more serious reality that must be considered than whether God gives this apparition to Knock in order to emphasize what is in the Gospel, that the Church must return to being the incarnation of the Lamb of God, to living in this world like Jesus, the Lamb of God, lived in this world, to be a community, a flock of lambs among wolves because this is the way that God plans to redeem the world, because this is the dynamic that saves, because this is the reality through which the power of God will be released for the salvation of all.

We are so far away from it, and yet the simple fact is that every time we approach communion, we approach and receive the Lamb of God. And as St. Augustine says, we should be desiring to become what we consume. Think seriously about whether *you* should be someone who proclaims to the world in your own little way that I oppose violence and enmity. I wish to follow the Lamb of God, the nonviolent Jesus

[End of Audio]

6-The Love That is Lamb-like

Religion is the Answer to Ultimate Problems

When God acts, God always acts out of love. God always acts to save. God always, always is acting to try to liberate people from the realities that interfere with people being all that they're supposed to be.

All of us have problems, problems that seemingly keep us from being what we want to be. Some of those problems are personal problems, internal, psychological. Others are family problems; they are local, they're parish or maybe even country. Maybe they're cultural problems. Some problems that people have are just time bound. For example, the Black Plague was only at a certain moment in time. It's not a universal problem.

But some problems are universal. Strangely enough, the problems that most haunt the human scene, the problems that are universal in the human life are the problems that are least discussed, that people talk about the least. At three o'clock in the morning, all people have the same problems.

The great Jewish rabbi, Abraham Heschel, talking to the Jewish community said at one time, "Religion is an answer to ultimate problems, and when religion ceases to be an answer to ultimate problems, it ceases to be religion." Religion is an answer to ultimate problems, and when religion ceases to be an answer to ultimate problems, it ceases to be religion. So Heschel goes on to say to the Jewish community, "The primary task of religious education today is to rediscover the ultimate problems of existence." The primary task of religious education today is to rediscover the ultimate problems of human existence.

You see, what he's saying to the Jewish community is this: "You're reading your Scripture, but you don't know the questions the Scripture is responding to. You're reading the Scripture to find answers to questions that Scripture never responds to. You're making Holy Scripture answer questions that it was never intended to answer. And simultaneously, you are totally missing the questions that Sacred Scripture does answer."

It's kind of like—you may have seen this bumper sticker in Ireland, it's all over the United States—the bumper sticker says, "Jesus is the answer." What's the question?

It's kind of like this [story]. As all of you know I am a Byzantine Catholic priest; in the Byzantine part of the Catholic Church, priests marry. It's normal. The monks are celibate

and the bishops are celibate, but the normal is that priests marry. At the parish I was ordained in in Damascus, the priest was married for 45 years, and he was ordained for 43, and he was in the same parish for 43 years. So that's quite normal.

Manipulating Scripture

03:45 Now, I have 13 children. That's not quite normal. (*Laughter*) But one time, twenty years ago, more than that now, soon after our third child was born, who is Charlie, his older sister Michelle, older by only a year-and-a-half, made the big decision to give up her pacifier. It's not too good for children to be sucking on these things for too long. So we kind of convinced her to be a big girl and give up her pacifier, and that's what she did. She gave up her pacifier.

Well, of course, Charlie, who was the little baby now, has the pacifier all the time. So what would happen would be Michelle, when no one was looking, would run up, and stake the pacifier from Charlie. Then she'd run behind the same chair all the time in the living room and sit there chewing the pacifier.

Well, of course, the minute she took the pacifier from Charlie, he'd start screeching, and so you'd hear that screech—you know, that special screech—and so you'd go in the room and you'd say, "Michelle, what are you doing? You gave up your pacifier. That's hurting Charlie, making him sad. That's not what would Jesus would do.

But after two months of this, four, five, six, seven, eight times a day, it gets a little long. So one day we hear Charlie yelling; he's in his high chair, and he's yelling. We go in there, and sure enough, his pacifier is gone. You know exactly where it is. So you get down and there's Michelle behind the chair, and so you start all over again: "Michelle, what are you doing? You're making Charlie unhappy." And, you know, you try to bring her up a Christian child and you say, "Is that what Jesus would do?"

All of the sudden she looks up, chewing the pacifier, and she says, "When did the baby Jesus give up his pacifier?" Ah, she thinks she's got the way out! Now, there's nothing more in the world that I wanted than to stop the pacifier stuff, this causing Charlie to be upset and us to run around and so forth. So I could have said to Michelle, "Michelle, you're three years old. The baby Jesus gave up his pacifier at two. You're a year too late." I would have had a good argument!

The only problem is we know nothing about that. The Scripture has nothing to say whatsoever about when the baby Jesus gave up his pacifier. That's not the question the New Testament is responding to. I can manipulate someone by manipulating the text, but

the New Testament is the answer to certain questions, and one of them is not when do you give up your pacifier.

(By the way, just parenthetically, Michelle is now a medical doctor. A few months ago she went to take an interview for something at a university, and someone came up to her and said, “I know you.” And she said, “I’ve never met you before. I don’t know who you are.” And the person said, “You’re the girl who kept stealing your little brother’s pacifier” All because I’ve told this story for years, and some of it is on tape, and evidently someone got a tape and figured out the connection.)

So Abraham Herschel says that the primary task of religious education today is to rediscover the ultimate questions of existence, the ultimate problems, *the ultimate problems*, of existence. So you ask yourself: “What are the ultimate problems of existence?” And you say, “Well, I don’t have enough money” or “My health isn’t good” or “I don’t know next month’s lottery number” or something.

Evil and Death are the Ultimate Problems of Existence

08:06 We could go on and on with problems. But when we think about it and we think about it and we think about it, universally, humanity has defined the ultimate problems of human existence in two words: evil and death. Evil and death. These are the ultimate problems in human existence.

In philosophy they are called the twin irrationalities because there is no reasonable answer as to why they exist, and there is no answer that can be given by reason alone on how to conquer them. They are inscrutable. They haunt the human scene. They haunt the human scene. There is no one that can escape them. As I mentioned earlier, the Fathers of the Church often said that the mystery of evil was only one inch shorter than the mystery of God. It’s a terrible, mysterious problem: where it comes from, how it works and of course, above all, what it does.

And death—if you have the answer to death, if you can tell people how, for one second, to keep themselves in existence after they die—and be happy, well, my goodness, you won’t have to win the lottery, they’ll be throwing money at your doorstep for the answer!

But there is no reasonable answer to it. There is no reasonable answer to it. And the terrible part about evil and death is that we seldom talk about it. Evil and death do not take their power from quantity. They do not take their power from quantity. We can open the paper in the morning, and we can see a story on page one. ‘500 People Die in a Train Wreck in India’ and we read the story, and we say, “That’s terrible. That’s bad,” and we turn to the sports page. We can pick up the paper and see an article that can read: “A

Woman Raped on the South Side.” We read the story and say, “What a horrible thing,” and then we turn the page and we go the editorial page.

Evil and Death Take Their Power From Love

10:33 The mere fact of the quantity of evil and death in the universe hardly affects us. Evil and death do not take their power from quantity. Evil and death—in a terrible and mysterious dynamic—take their power from love. Evil and death take their power from love. Let one of those 500 people that died in the train wreck in India, let one of them be a husband or a wife or a friend or a mother or a father or brother and sister, and we won’t turn the page to the sports’ page. Life will change forever. Let that women on the South Side be a wife or a mother or a sister or a friend, and we won’t flip the page over to the editorial page. We’ll stop right there, and life may never be the same again.

In the mysterious reality of evil as it actually exists, evil and death take their power from love. They somehow take love and use it to cause pain.

Where I live, in Brockton, Massachusetts, in the daily newspaper for the city, every other day, no exaggeration, every other day there are little remembrances at the bottom of page seven and eight. [These are] little remembrances of people’s birthdays and wedding anniversaries that people send into the paper. And certainly, every two or three days, there’s a remembrance of an anniversary of a death.

And I wrote this one out, not because it’s so different, but because it’s so common. It says:

A birthday remembrance to Richard Tevlin
January 15th, 1959 to July 19th, 1977
In loving memory of my son Rich

To those of you who have a son,
treasure him with care.
You will never know what agony is
until he is no longer there.
Until then,
Love,
Ma

Concern for Immortality

13:10 There’s not a soul in this church today who does not know what that means. This is a woman who has suffered not just death in the sense of an abstract 400 people out there

died or that 10,000 people die every day. This is a woman who has been hit with death as death really hits people, the death of someone she loves. By her own little poem, she's in agony. We know what the poem means. The poem means that there's been some hole, some hole that has been burnt in her heart and her soul that can't be repaired until that time when she again meets the person she loves, in this case, her son. There will always be an emptiness there because there was love there. Everyone here knows that's true in terms of mothers and fathers and grandparents and husbands and wives and friends. We all know what Mrs. Tevlin means by 'until then'. She waits in hope that the day will come when she again will be reunited with her son.

Abraham Herschel, the rabbi I mentioned earlier, speaking on another occasion, says, "Concern for immortality, concern for immortality, begins in a concern for what has happened to those who have gone before us and what will happen to those whom I love that are left behind." Concern for immortality begins in a concern for what has happened to those whom we love who have gone before us and what will happen to those whom we love that we have left behind.

In other words, everyone here knows that. We wonder, not about the abstract 52 million people that died in World War II; where death really gets us is in terms of the one that we love, a mother or father or brother or sister or whatever. The one that we loved who is gone, what has become of them? Really, what we worry about is those that we love *here* that we're going to go before, *what's going to happen to them in the end?* The problems of evil and death, the two unanswerable realities in the human situation by reason—they just tear at existence, and they make no sense whatsoever.

A mother and father have a child. They raise the child. They feed the child. They clothe the child. They buy little teddy bears and toys, and they bounce the child on their knee. They teach the child to walk and so forth. The child's three years old, and one day, as children do, just by accident, no malice or anything else, the child goes chasing a ball out in the street [speaker smacks his hands together] and is dead. Now, there's no way you can tell that mother she's not experiencing evil; because there's love there. She is just overwhelmed. It makes no sense in the human situation, and of course, we know from Scripture itself, it was never intended to be by God.

God is life, and God is love. God never intended evil or death.

We live in a world where we're inundated daily by the thought that the most important realities and the most important questions and the most important things there are to think about and talk about are politics. It makes no difference what country you're in. The mass media is loaded with it. The newspapers fill up most of page one everyday with it. The

politician is the person who's quoted. He's the person doing this. He's the person making a difference, flying here, flying there. It makes no difference whether you're conservative or liberal.

Politics Has No Effect On the Problem of Evil and Death

19:00 Consider this for a minute: Consider in your mind, if you had your perfect world, a perfect political world now. I suppose the perfect political world for a conservative would be something like Plato's Republic. You have a philosopher king, and then you have a military and on down, and people everywhere have their place in a hierarchical order. And I suppose the perfect political world for a liberal would be something as if the whole world were like Sweden. Everyone had vacations and healthcare and on and on.

It makes no difference. Whatever your perfect political world is, let it be in existence for the entire planet. Now picture this scene: A mother is walking down the street, down the sidewalk with her child one day, just playing, little three year old child, just walking down the street nicely. The child slips, just slips as children slip, but the child hits its head in exactly the wrong place and is dead in an instant. That's not abnormal. That happens thousands and thousands and thousands and thousands of times daily, that people leave their front doors perfectly healthy, perfectly well with no problems, and they never return.

In your perfect political world, the mother the next day or two days later is now by the grave of the child. The three year old is being put in the grave. All that love, all that concern, all that care, all that bonding is now being placed in the grave, and of what help are the politicians? Of what help are the Democrats or the Republicans or the Socialists or the Communists? They're of no help. They're dead silent. They have nothing to say. They're powerless. And yet, they fill the pages of the newspapers and the televisions.

We talk about universal questions, the questions that make the great difference in existence. We talk about them rarely, rarely.

How Much Do We Really Know?

21:00 Now, consider this: Suppose this circle represents all of reality, *all of reality*. Everything that ever was, everything that ever will be, every atom, every blade of grass, every star, every person, every thought is in that circle. How much of reality does any one person know? Ohhh, about a hundred zillion trillion times, billion times to the hundred zillionth power less than that dot. We almost know nothing of what is.

I mean, we know how we talk. We talk like we've got about 75 percent, 85 percent worked out, and there's a little bit over here we have to get squared away. But the truth of

the matter is, we live in almost total ignorance of what has been, what is, what can be and what will be, almost total ignorance. Yet we talk as if we got the whole thing figured out. We focus on the little world, the little world that is ours instead of looking at this whole reality and realizing the enormity of the mystery that we're in. As we talked about earlier, we focus on the little dot of awareness that we have, a little 2 x 4 world, and that becomes the whole universe.

The only problem is this: It would be one thing to be utterly ignorant and not even recognize that you're ignorant in a universe of immeasurable time and space and in the context of a reality that was almost infinitely beyond comprehension. It would be one thing to be ignorant and not know it, but it's another thing to be ignorant when in the midst of all this, there is the problem of death and evil because they cry out for an answer, not as a general problem, but for Mrs. Tevlin. That mother beside the grave wants an answer to evil and death. But all she has, all the politicians have and all anyone has to give her to the most important questions in her life—what has become of my child? What will become of him or her? Is she safe? Will we ever meet again?—on that the politicians and the economists and the social philosophers and so forth are dead silent.

Reason Has No Answer For Evil and Death

24:00 Why? Because in the face of evil and death, reason buckles. It has no answer. No answer. *Reason has no answer in the face of evil and death.* Once a person or a community sees his or her littleness, littleness—remember, humility, it doesn't require great grace to be humble, all you have to do is be a realist, and you're humble. We are just little, tiny. Once it is realized by a person or a community that reason, that reason has no power in relation to evil and death, once they realize how hopeless it is, and yet that these realities, evil and death, because they destroy love and have destroyed love must be conquered, once that is realized, people go looking to see: Is it possible that the one who made all this, the Source of all this, could possibly be communicating down here or could possible communicate down to humanity how to live in the midst of this immense reality, how to live in a way that will conquer evil and death, how to overcome evil and death?

Revelation

25:02 The name for that is: is it possible that there is such a thing as *revelation*? It is when reason fails that people go looking for revelation. And so they look. Could it be possible that God, the source of it all, the one who knows how all of this works, could it be possible that God would communicate back to humanity a way to overcome evil and death? All through the history of religion, this is what has been done, the search for that [communication].

Way back in other times and places people thought that God communicated through the flight of birds, and so they studied the pattern of bird flight. It was called augury, and they took it very, very seriously. Other times people thought that God communicated through special holes and places in the ground, oracles. And so they went there to get the communication. Other times people thought that God communicated through specially anointed people, persons.

Messiah, the Specially Anointed

27:00 Anointed. The Hebrew word for anointed is Mashiach, Messiah. The Greek word is Christ. Jesus is the specially anointed person from God who comes here to tell us how to conquer evil and death. It's that straight and that forward, and that's the Good News, that evil and death *can be* conquered. He is the one that shows us the way to conquer evil and to conquer death *because He knows the way*.

Think about this: you are, and I am, unique. There never was anyone like us. There never will be anyone like us. We are unique. Do you realize that because we're made up of a body and because the world is in constant change, not only are we unique, but every second that we have lived, we have perceived existence in a way no one else ever could or ever will perceive it. Right now you are looking at existence as no one else has ever seen it, experienced it. So you are unique. You have a unique consciousness. You have a unique experience of existence.

The Little We Know, We Know Uniquely

What would ever possess a person who was unique to say this to another: "Follow me." Why is my experience and perception of existence superior to your perception and experience of existence? I have lived a certain number of years and have an experience from the cradle. It's unique. It's subjective, but it's only an experience of a tiny, tiny bit of existence. I don't know all this [pointing to the circle]; I just know this [pointing to the dot], and then I know it uniquely. I just know a little speck of existence, but I know it uniquely.

Why should I say to you, "Follow me." Let alone, why should I say to you, "You must follow me, or I'll hurt you." Where do I get that? Why is my existence better than your existence? Why is my experience more true, more valid? Your experience is no worse or no better than mine or anyone else's and vice versa.

There is only one person who can legitimately say, "Follow me," only one kind of person, and that's the person who knows how the whole thing works. I don't know how the whole thing works. You don't know how the whole thing works. You don't know the way to conquer evil and death, and I don't know the way to conquer evil and death. But if

someone did know how all this worked, then that person, *and only that person*, could say, “Follow me.”

Jesus Is God’s Communication to Us On How to Live

30:00 That’s exactly what we say about Jesus, don’t we? “In the beginning”, before anything was made, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God, and all things were made through Him, and without Him, nothing would have been made that has been made, and the Word became flesh and dwelt amongst us.”

Word. Word is our word for communication. Jesus is the Word of God. Jesus is the communication from God, the self-communication from God, that tells us how to live in a way that will conquer evil and death. That’s Jesus. He is the only one that can say, “Follow me” because he’s the only one who knows how this works and how we must live so that Richard Tevlin and his mother meet again, and so that all those who love and have lost will meet again. He is the only one that can respond to the ultimate questions in human existence—evil and death—because he’s the only one that knows how reality works because all things were made through Him. He made it. Jesus.

That’s what’s at stake in Christianity. That’s why Christianity can’t be meshed with other religions. That’s why Christianity does itself its greatest harm when it thinks that it’s really being relevant when it gets into politics. Politics is nothing. Salvation is everything. *Everything.*

Jesus teaches the way of salvation. Remember, you see all these books out by various people on life after life experiences and so forth. Who knows what they are and what they can be, but make no mistake about this. Whether they’re real or whether they’re just psychological imaginings, that’s irrelevant. Make no mistake about it, they are deceiving because for every near-death experience that produces an experience of light and joy and peace, those things they talk about, there is simultaneously another experience that other people have of unmediated horror. Make no mistake about it. Evil and death are not conquered by reading a book that everything is hunky-dory at the end of life. It’s not that simple. It is not that simple.

33:00 As Karl Rahner says, “There is nothing more *unnatural* than dying, for the body and soul were never made to be separated.” That’s the product of sin. However, Jesus, Jesus, comes. These books are coping mechanisms, just like so much else in secular society is a coping mechanism in front of evil and death. Take a drink. Take some drugs. Entertain yourself. Stay busy—as if that made it go away.

Jesus doesn't come to cope. Jesus Christ comes *to conquer* evil and death. Jesus Christ comes to conquer it, and that's the difference. The Church is not a coping mechanism for evil and death, *the Church is a conquering mechanism*, and when it simply becomes a coping mechanism, then it is not serving its mission.

Now, we are here confronted with the serious problem of whether, in fact, we believe the opening of St. John's Gospel: "In the beginning was the Word. The Word was with God. The Word was God. And all things were made through Him, and without Him, nothing that has been made would have been made. And the Word became flesh" [JN 1:1-3]. Is that so?

The Foolishness of Thinking We Can Change Jesus' Way

33:35 If that is so, *if that is so*, then can you see the foolishness, the absurdity of saying—realizing how little we know, how little, how miniscule is our knowledge in the face of all reality, realizing that it's unique, even what we know is uniquely coming to us and realizing who Jesus is, the Word before the universe who made this and knows how it works and can tell us how to conquer evil and death—can you see how foolish it is to say—"Well, Jesus, I know you're the Word of God, and I know all things are made through You, and You are God's self-revelation, and You became flesh, and You know how the whole thing works, and You spoke the Sermon on the Mount; however, from my perspective, I just can't buy it. I've got to change it. I've got to make a few corrections for You, Jesus."

This is nonsense. It's first of all, nonsense just because it's the creature telling the Creator how to function. Secondly, it's nonsense because of what's at stake. This isn't a choice of one philosophy over the other. This is the choice of God saying, "This is the way to overcome evil and death," and my not listening, my changing it, my modifying it. "Got to make a couple of changes here, Jesus. You're not practical. Or you're utopian. You really don't understand evil; therefore, I've got to change it. This piece of the Sermon on the Mount is fine, but we'll change it if need be."

This is nonsense. The only question is: is Jesus who the Gospels say He is? The preexistent Son of God who became flesh, the Kyrios, the Lord, or isn't He? The Messiah? If He is, then He knows the way. It's that simple. And we don't dare change a jot of it regardless of how politically expedient it might be to do so.

Look, suppose Jesus right now at this very minute appeared here, right here. Now, [there's] no doubt that it's Jesus. Everything's there that's needed to validate it's Jesus. He appears right here like He did to Mary Magdalene at the tomb. He could. Now, he says to you, "Look," he says, "I've been watching you, and I want to give you a little

help.” And he says, “I would like to give you a little help, so I’m going to let you have one question. You can ask me one question; I’ll tell you what the answer is.”

And you say, “Oh, boy. Oh, boy. Boy, oh, boy. One question. He’s going to give me the right answer. I’m going to ask Him for next week’s lottery number.” And then you say, “No, no. That’s not it. That’s not it. What question would I ask? What question could I ask?” And then you say, “Well, my mother died. I’d like to know if she’s okay. Well, I could ask that, but then what?” And then you keep working and working and working at it. What would it be? What would it be?

What is the Way to Eternal Life?

36:55 And eventually your question to Jesus would be the same question as the lawyer in the Gospel, who is the authority in Jewish law, who knows the will of God by Jewish law. And he comes to Jesus, and he says, “Master, what is the way to eternal life?” [LK 10:25-28]. He doesn’t care about [the political environment], he doesn’t say, “Jesus, how can we kick Pilate out of here? Jesus, how can we get a better wage? How can we get the Romans off our back?” He says, “Jesus, what is the way to eternal life?”

Now, let me tell you something about that question because it would be your question, but let me tell you why, too. Not just because the question responds to the ultimate dilemma in human existence, evil and death. But you know, immortality is not a New Testament concept. Immortality is a Greek concept that Christians use because they’re in Western civilization.

Immortality is not eternal life. Immortality comes from the Greeks, and the problem with it can be summed up in the Greek myth where the goddess marries the man, and the man wants to be immortal. So she goes to the gods, and she asks for immortal life for him, immortality. So they all agree, and they give him immortality. And there’s great rejoicing, and he’s exuberant, and he’s happy until (*snaps fingers*) all of the sudden he realizes he forgot to ask for perpetual youth, and so he is going on forever, getting older and older and more pain and more misery, on into eternity, never to stop.

Eternal life that the lawyer asked about is something different. Eternal life does contain immortality, but it’s much larger than immortality. Eternal life is immortality with what we would call the gifts of the Holy Spirit: love and joy and peace and patience. And it’s even more than that.

Do you know the last prayer the Jewish people said at the grave of someone who died at the time of Jesus? And the last prayer that they say today at the grave of a Jewish person? It is a prayer for all Israel, not meaning the nation of Israel, but all Jews. Why? Because

they understand that real life, *real life* is relational. Real life is about love and care between people. It's impossible that they could be happy for an eternity without those that they love being there, and so they pray for all Israel because they know, like they have people they love, others have people that they love, and they are praying for the salvation of the community, not just the salvation of the individual.

40:07 Jesus defines his mission in terms of Israel, but he extends it by defining the neighbor as to be even the enemy, beyond Israel. Jesus goes out to the whole world. So if Jesus comes here, you would ask Him the question: "Master, what is the way to eternal life? I know people suffer out there. I know they're in pain. I know they die, and I know they watch their loved ones die. Master, I know they want to be with their loved ones like I do. Jesus, what's the way to eternal life for one and all?"

And He would say to you—right there, right there—He'd be right here—and He'd shake His head and say, "(Sigh) I told you that 2,000 years ago. Don't you remember when the lawyer came to me, and he said, 'What's the way to eternal life'? I said, 'Love the Lord your God, whole heart, whole soul, whole mind, whole strength. Love your neighbor as yourself.' And then I punctuated, and I said, 'And eternal life is yours,' I said. I told you 2,000 years ago."

He starts to disappear, and you say, "Wait. Wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, Jesus. One more question. One more question." And He stops, and He says, "What?" And he says, "I'll give you one more question, but this is it."

"Don't you understand," you'd say to Jesus, "Yes, 2,000 years ago, you gave us that answer. 'Love the Lord your God, whole heart, whole soul, whole mind, whole strength. Love your neighbor as yourself.' But Jesus, don't you understand the key word in all of that is 'love'? And that everything from abortion to atomic war has been done in the name of love? People said that it was loving. *What do you mean by that love that leads to eternal life?* What is that love that is salvific? That's the question, Jesus, the nature of the love that saves.

The New Commandment

41:57 And He'd look at you and shake His head and say, "Told you that 2,000 years ago. Don't you remember, just before I was going out to my passion and death, just before I was about to go out and be beaten and whipped and destroyed and spit upon and kicked and then to be crucified, right at my last supper, I said to you, I told you what I was doing. I said, 'I give you a New Commandment. Love one another as I have loved you.' *I, Jesus, am the definition of the love that saves. I am the definition.* Only God can conquer evil

and death, and I am God enfleshed. I, therefore, am *the* model, the only model, of that love that saves one and all.”

Therefore, the simple question of the Christian life, day in and day out is not complicated. Anyone can do it who’s baptized. The simple question that all you have to ask to live a complete Christian life second in and second out is, ‘What would Jesus do here?’ And do it. That’s all.

Love as I have loved, period. It’s the only commandment in the New Testament that’s unique to Jesus. All the other commandments can be found in other religions in the world, but this one is unique to Jesus, and it’s not a mere commandment; it’s a statement of the nature of the love that conquers evil and death. And it’s that love that the Church, you and I, popes, bishops, everyone, it is that love, and only that love, that the Church should be about communicating.

And here’s the point: if Jesus rejects violence and homicide, if Jesus rejects enemy making and enmity, then that love that is salvific, that love that leads to eternal life is a nonviolent love of friends and enemies. When Christians start altering the teaching of Jesus to justify violence and enmity and homicide, abortion, adultery, greed and all kinds of other things, it’s not altering the teachings of Plato or Aristotle. For Plato and Aristotle were just little specks of consciousness like us. What do they know? Almost nothing.

But when Christians alter the teaching of Jesus, they are altering the dynamics that conquer evil and death. That’s what’s at stake here. There is only one love that saves, and that’s Christ-like love because only Christ can say, “Follow me” because He was in the beginning. He made it all. He knows how it works, and He knows how to correct it. It is absurd for me to say, “Jesus, I know what you said, but from my perspective I have to modify it. You didn’t know what you were talking about.”

As we started out saying, when God acts, God always acts out of love to save people, to free people, to give life. For God is love and life, and Jesus is the enfleshment of that, the incarnation of that.

And so, we are here right now, and basically, what I have just said—basically, what I have just said—is this simple: you can participate in the salvation of the world with every choice to do a Christ-like deed of love. I have just said there is nothing more powerful in this world than the Christ-like deed of love.

The Peak Reality of the Christian Life is the Deed of Christ-like Love

46:18 The Scripture scholar I mentioned earlier, John L. McKenzie says it this way: “The peak reality of the Christian life, *the peak reality of the Christian life*, is the deed of Christ-like love.” John of the Cross, the founder of the Discalced Carmelites says it is this way: “One act of Christ-like love is more precious to the world than anything else that the Church can do.”

Who can believe it? That I can contribute to the salvation of the world by being kind to the man at the grocery store who’s unkind to me. But that’s the truth of the matter. Why? Not because it’s me. Oh, God, this is impossible. Look, I’m only a little speck. That’s not what’s at stake here. It’s not me that does it. It is because I, me, I am choosing to allow myself to be an agent for the power of God. That’s all. It’s God power. Love is the power of God, and it’s because I am choosing to allow God to work through me that that power can work for the salvation of humanity.

But that power in that little deed is the power of God. You can have magnificent deeds of all kinds by all kinds of people, and they can be blazing up on the media and on billboards and played over and over again on television, and people applaud them, and they’re irrelevant. The only deed that counts is the deed that when I say, “What would Jesus do here?” and then I do it. What would Jesus do here? Not what would Aristotle do. Not what would Plato do here. Not what would Hugh Hefner do here. What would Jesus do here? And then I do it, even if it’s difficult or even if it costs me. Even if it costs me my life. “For the one who loses his life in this world for my sake and the Gospel will save it” [Mk 8:35].

So I conclude with just this thought: Jesus asks us to do nothing that is not possible every second of everyday by the simplest soul and that must be done every second of everyday even by the most sophisticated soul if he or she is going to contribute to the salvation of the world. The task of the Christian is to say their prayers, ponder the Gospel and continually ask what would Jesus do here and then do it in peace. For that’s the formula for saving the world.

[End of Audio]

7-The Lamb in a Jungle

Shine in our hearts, O Master, who loves all humanity, the pure light of your divine knowledge and open the eyes of our minds that we may understand the announcing of your Gospel. Set in us awe of your blessed commandments, so that, trampling all carnal desires, we may begin to live according to the Spirit, both willing and doing everything for your good pleasure. For you are the Light of our souls and bodies, Christ God, and we render glory to You and to your eternal Father and to your all-holy, good and life-giving Spirit, now and always and forever and ever.

Survival or Jesus' Way?

We've all heard the phrase that survival, survival is the first law of the jungle. We've all heard people say that out there where we live, you know, not here in church, but out there where we live, it's a jungle. We must survive first, and then we can do other things. Survival is the first law of nature.

We also have heard the words of Jesus: "The one who tries to save his life in this world will lose it, but the one who loses his life in this world for My sake and the sake of the Gospel will save it" (Mt 16:25; Mk 8:35; Lk 9:24; Lk 17:33).

So we are confronted with contradictions between what the world tells us, what philosophy tells us, and what Jesus tells us. We seldom think of it, we seldom consider it, but there is an essential contradiction between what common sense as well as sophisticated philosophy tells us: survival is the first law of the jungle, survival is the first law of nature, and what Jesus tells us.

In fact, Jesus even goes so far as to say, "Just seek first the kingdom of God and its righteousness, and all else will be taken care of (Mt 6:33). He says nothing about survival.

"But it's a jungle out there," we say. "There are people killing and maiming and hurting and gossiping and stealing and you know what—everything. And in that jungle, Jesus' teachings are impractical. We'll be a doormat. People will walk all over us. We'll be hurt."

I would ask you a question, which I think more Christians than we here should answer: Why would Jesus teach a teaching that he did not mean people to employ? Why would Jesus teach something that he did not mean for people to use? It makes no sense. It makes

no sense at all. Why teach that people should do things if you do not expect that they will do them, if you do not think they should do them?

Jesus talked to ordinary people, people like us. For the most part He didn't teach people with great knowledge in philosophy or in the Torah or in mysticism. Ordinary people.

The Way

03:46 The original name for what Jesus taught in the Gospels is found in the Acts of the Apostles. Christians weren't originally called Christians. Christians weren't called Christians until later on down the line in Antioch; we find that in the New Testament. The original name for Christianity was The Way. The Way. That meant a moral way of living, that is, a way of living consistent with the will of God. Jesus taught a way of living that was consistent with the will of God; that was *The Way*. And of course, it meant the way to salvation.

We know, I think every Christian knows someplace deep within him or herself, that Jesus expects us to live what he taught. We can work out all the excuses why we don't have to live it. In this given moment, in that given moment, for this part of our life, for our whole life; there's no end to the ability of the human mind to figure out reasons why Jesus did not mean what he said he meant, why we are excused from living it now, etc, etc.

But in the end when we look at the teachings, and we look at the person who lived them, and we look at apostolic Christianity, the early Christianity, the Christianity right up against Jesus—and they lived it—we don't get any sense whatsoever that Jesus was about the business of telling us, “Here is something and I do not expect you to live. I expect you to change it whenever it's convenient for you or whenever you find it too difficult.” Something in us tells us we were chosen by Jesus to live The Way. We were not chosen by Jesus to spend our life finding reasons why we do not have to live The Way.

Life Focused Through Rational Ethics

06:10 So what's the problem? Why is Christianity haunted, literally haunted? Why is it disintegrating, for all practical purposes, right in front of us? Why is it that Christianity, Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant Christians—people who have chosen to be baptized—spend most of their time, most days today, conjuring up reasons why they do not have to live what Jesus taught and are living something other than what Jesus taught? What is going on? What's the problem?

Jesus teaches love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, pray for those who persecute you, turn the other cheek, walk the extra mile, be meek and humble of heart (Mt 5-6). He gives symbols like, “I am the Lamb of God” and so forth. He rejects

violence and homicide. And yet Christians will find an excuse, moment after moment after moment, of why they do not have to live what Jesus says they should live now.

What I'd like to do in this conference is to suggest to you what the major reason is that Christians continually [use to] rationalize their way out of living what Jesus asked them to live. This is the major reason for the last 1,700 years [through which] Christians have found excuses for not doing what Jesus has asked them to do.

Disastrous Results of Compromising Jesus' Way

08:15 But before we begin, I just want to make a point. Since Christianity began to walk down the road—which is another way and not the way of Jesus—that they have created by rationalizing exceptions after exception after exception to living what Jesus taught, no single, sociologically identifiable group of people has slaughtered more people in war than Christians. We, who were founded by the Prince of Peace, who rejected homicide and violence and enmity, we, in the last 1,700 years, have been the great killers on the face of the Earth—since we began the process of oh so cleverly explaining to ourselves why Jesus didn't mean what he said he meant. And the consequences have been disastrous, for the Church, and God knows how many poor souls.

So what's the reason for all this? That's what I'd like to examine here at this conference. What is the central impediment that drives people to modify the teachings of God? What is it that drives people to say, "I know what You're saying, but God, You're impractical. You don't know what You're talking about; I've got to make an amendment to what You said, or I've got to change it."

John L. McKenzie: The Abyss Between Rational Ethics and Christian Ethics

10:24 The analysis that I'm going to give you is from the writings of that biblical scholar I mentioned earlier, John L. McKenzie, and if you wish to read it in more detail you can find it in his interpretation of the New Testament, *The Power and the Wisdom*. And it begins like this: John McKenzie says that there is an abyss, an abyss, between rational ethics and Christian ethics. An ethic is just the right and wrong; it's the right way to do things. McKenzie says there is an abyss between rational ethics—the ethics of reason, what we consider right and wrong by human reason—and what the Gospel tells us.

Survival is the Primary Goal in Rational Ethics

He makes the point that the primary value, the primary operational value in rational ethics—the ethics of reason—the primary operational value in the ethics of reason is survival. Survival. Survival justifies anything. Why? Because reason alone can do nothing to help a person after he or she dies. Therefore, if there is to be participation in the good, the true, the beautiful, etc, you must physically survive. Therefore, what is

required is whatever it is that would interfere with survival is justified by reason that it can be done away with. Therefore, survival is the primary value in the ethics of reason. If it's personal ethics, it's personal survival. If it's social ethics, it's social survival.

The way he [Fr McKenzie] says you can see this is that there are other values, secondary and tertiary values, that the ethics that come from reason alone have. For example, reason might tell you it's a value that you shouldn't kill and that you shouldn't steal and that you shouldn't commit arson. But think about it: if survival is threatened, all of the sudden—if survival is threatened—you can kill; you can steal; you can commit arson.

What's done in war? What's done in war? Arson, killing, robbery, and it's all justified. When survival is threatened, what would otherwise be vice becomes virtue. We give medals out for people who do things that if survival is not threatened, we would lock them up for.

The key, though—all that I'm talking about is this: in the ethics of reason, survival is the primary operational value. Nothing, nothing, absolutely nothing is more important than survival.

13:50 We know it with governments, don't we? So for example, all governments have these black-arts operations like the CIA and the KGB that work behind the scenes. No one knows what they do. They get funded in clandestine ways, and they carry on all kinds of terrible things that governments carry on without anyone knowing it. But every once in awhile—every once in awhile—one of the terrible things they do, that's illegal, immoral, utterly wrong, somehow comes to the surface and people see it. It's on the front page of the paper that the government spy agency, or secret agency, the Mossad or the KGB, CIA or whatever these groups are has gone out and poisoned someone or someones or assassinated or given 13 million dollars to have a Allende murdered or something like that.

And somehow it rises to the surface, and it's seen, and everyone is in hubbub for a few days, and then the president or prime minister comes out, and what do they say? They say, "I'd like to discuss this, but this is a national security matter." Case closed. And everyone says, "Oh, yeah, it's a national security matter," meaning what? He says what's at stake is the survival of the nation, and therefore we can do anything, and everyone says, "Oh, yeah, what's at stake is the survival of the nation, and therefore this is necessary." In the realm of reason, where reason works in terms of right or wrong, survival is the primary value. As I say, if it's personal ethics, it's personal survival. If it's social ethics, it's social survival.

Christ-like Love is the Exclusive Goal in Christian Ethics

15:44 McKenzie says, on the Christian side, the primary operational value of Gospel life is Christ-like love. This is the primary value: Christ-like love. He goes so far to say what is not an act of Christ-like love is morally worthless in the universe. What is not an act of Christ-like love is morally worthless. Lest you think that's an exaggeration, he is doing nothing but paraphrasing St. Paul's great hymn on love in 1 Corinthians 13:1-3:

If I have all the eloquence of men and women or of angels, but speak without love, I am nothing but a gong booming or a cymbal clashing. If I have faith to move mountains, but am without love, it will do me no good whatsoever. If I give away all that I have, piece by piece to the poor, and even if I let them take my body to burn, but am without love, I am nothing at all."

See, St. Paul picks those categories: magnificent religious oratory, faith, social service — giving away all that I have piece by piece to the poor, social service in the extreme—and even martyrdom, “let them take my body to burn” because if anything could save without love, those things could save without love. And he says no, they do not. Faith, martyrdom, social service, religious oratory do not save without love.

So back to McKenzie's quote. Christ-like love is the primary value—the primary value—in Christian ethics. In fact, he says, an act that is not an act of Christ-like love is morally worthless in the universe. It cannot in any way conquer evil. Christ-like love, the new commandment which we talked about—“Love one another as I have loved you” (Jn 13:34-35)—this is the primary value in Christian ethics.

Now, there really is a big difference if you think about it, a huge difference between just the psychological and emotional disposition of rational ethics and Christian ethics because there's an enormous difference between getting up in the morning and saying, “Oh, boy, it's a jungle out there. I really got to arm and take care of myself” and getting up in the morning and saying, “Today, I am committed to love as Christ loves whoever comes across my path.” Those are two different psychological dispositions, opposite each other.

Survival for the Christian is Guaranteed

18:58 But, says McKenzie, what ultimately separates rational ethics from Gospel ethics so that they never meet is this: what is the primary value in rational ethics, survival, is not even on the list of values in Gospel ethics. He says survival is a non-value in the New Testament. Why? Because survival is guaranteed. “I am the resurrection and the life, he who believes in me will live forever and will not die” (Jn 11:25). No one outside of

yourself can affect your eternal life. No one. As he says in another place, Jesus Christ places no one under a spiritual impediment because they live under bad government. Hitler can't affect your survival, eternal life, that is. No one can. Your next door neighbor can't.

And therefore, what is a primary value in rational ethics —survival —is not even on the list of values in the Gospel. “Those who try to save their life in this world will lose it, but those who lose their life for My sake will save it” (Mt 16:25; Lk 9:24; Lk 17:33). It's a totally different understanding of survival.

So just parenthetically, you may ask, “Well, what's the place of reason in Christian life? How does reason fit into Christian life?” And as McKenzie says, the place of reason in Christian life is to figure out how to *implement* the teachings of Jesus, not how to modify them. We have to use our reason to implement the teaching of Jesus, but the history of Christianity has been a history of using our reason to modify the teachings of Jesus because we are living out of this [pointing to the board]: a jungle sense of survival.

Rational Ethics Cannot Guarantee Survival

21:30 Now, says McKenzie, we can see that the ultimate illusion of rational ethics is this: rational ethics has as its primary value—survival. All others values and noble efforts and so forth will literally be turned upside down if survival is threatened. People will kill, maim, do arson and so forth in order to survive. But, says McKenzie, here is the fallacy of the whole rational ethic reality: what rational ethics promises to deliver, which is survival, is precisely what it can't deliver. You can kill all you want; you can burn all you want; you can lie all you want in order to survive, and you *cannot* add one cubit to your life.

Survival is precisely what rational ethics cannot deliver. It may deliver a little bit of longevity. Maybe it will deliver one or two more years, but survival it cannot deliver. It cannot. Only God can deliver survival. Just to be very, very clear, the spiritual reality, not just the spiritual, but also the psychological reality that actually emanates from this reality is this: Survival is actually a motivation out of fear. We know in the Gospel that fear does not save; love saves. In fact, we know from the Gospel that the ultimate spiritual battle is between fear and love. Where love is perfect, fear is driven out (1 Jn 4:18).

Love Your Enemies (Mt 5:44) Who Can Say It?

23:40 (This paragraph is edited for clarity.)

Christians are continually abandoning, changing, compromising the teachings of Jesus in order to try to survive —the very thing Jesus says can't happen. “If you try to save your life, you're going to lose it, but if you lose your life for the Gospel, you're going to save

it” (Mt 16:25; Lk 9:24; Lk 17:33). Jesus also says “I am the Resurrection and the Life, he who believes in me will live forever” (Jn 11:25). It is only when we see that survival is guaranteed through seeing the difference between a system of right and wrong based on reason and right and wrong based on the teachings of Jesus that any sense can be made of the Gospel sentence “Love your enemies.” Love your enemies (Mt 5:44).

Who is the enemy? The enemy is someone—watch this —the enemy, by definition, is someone who threatens the survival of some self-interest. The enemy can be the person that gossips about me because they threaten the survival of my good name that I want to survive. The enemy can be the fellow at work who may take my job. The enemy can be people from another part of the world who are undoing our economic system or who are going to conquer us or whatever the case may be. But the enemy is always one who threatens the survival of some self-interest.

Therefore —now follow this —therefore, it is not possible to say in rational ethics, “Love your enemy.” It makes no sense whatsoever to say that. You can’t say it. Why? Because rational ethics is based on survival which is based on you having to stop whatever it is that is threatening survival. You do not love those realities that are threatening your survival. You prepare against them, and if necessary, you kill them. You get them out of your way.

Love your enemies only makes sense on the one set of conditions. That is, as McKenzie says, Jesus’ teaching of love you enemy does not mean you put someone out there, and you love him or her and name them your enemy. That is, you put an enemy out there. *Love your enemies means there is no reason to make anyone an enemy if you’re a Christian because no one can affect your survival. No one outside yourself.* There is no reason to consider any human being an enemy.

Mind you, people can affect your good name. They can take that from you. People can take your money from you. People can take your life from you. But no one, absolutely no one can affect all that you need for eternal survival, happiness and life. No one. And therefore, no one need be an enemy.

Love Your Enemies: Three Additional Points

27:08 Let me tell you something about love your enemies. Love your enemies, in the New Testament, is the single sentence —the single sentence in the New Testament —that all schools of biblical theology and scholarship can agree is the very words of Jesus. “Love your enemies” is the very sentence that Jesus spoke. It is not something that the community put in his mouth. It is his own words.

To quote Martin Buber again, the great Jewish theologian of this century: “Jesus’ teaching of love your enemies is rooted in Hebrew Scriptures, but it infinitely transcends Hebrew Scriptures.” Jesus teaches love your enemies, that’s first.

Secondly, every time love your enemies occurs in the New Testament it always occurs in the plural, never in the singular. That means there are no enemies excluded. There are no enemies you shouldn’t love. You could say, “Oh, I love the Russians, but I don’t love my next door neighbor. That one I don’t love. That enemy, no.” Anyone, regardless of where they are, that would normally be considered an enemy cannot be an enemy to the Christian. For the Christian, the enemy of the state is not the enemy of the Christian. The enemy of any state for the Christian is a child of God who is to be loved as Christ-God loves that person. Christians are not to fall into the survival ethics of the state and become people full of enmity towards other human beings.

Thirdly, love your enemies. Besides always being in the plural, and besides being the very words of Jesus, there’s one final thing. Every time the sentence love your enemies occurs in the New Testament, it occurs as an imperative sentence, a command. It is never a declarative sentence. It is never just an option to love your enemies. It is an *imperative*. Jesus tells us that this is something that we must do.

Once we have seen this, it begins to make sense. The real spiritual issues for each of us is not that Jesus’ teachings aren’t clear. To quote John L. McKenzie again, remembering the level of biblical scholarship that this Catholic priest achieved in this world, he says, “If we cannot know from the New Testament that Jesus rejected violence, we can know nothing of his person or message.” It is the clearest of teachings. If we cannot know from the New Testament that Jesus rejected violence, we can know nothing of his person or message. It is the clearest of teachings. (*New Testament Without Illusion*, p. 252).

New Testament’s Clearest Teaching

30:28 That is, if we can’t know from the New Testament that Jesus rejected violence, we can’t know that he’s the Messiah. We can’t know that he’s the Son of God. We can’t know anything about the Trinity. We can’t know anything about the Virgin birth. There is nothing clearer in the New Testament than Jesus’ rejection.

It isn’t that Jesus is unclear. As the great Hindu practitioner of nonviolence, Mahatma Gandhi said, “It is only Christians that don’t see Jesus as nonviolent.” Everyone else in the world who picks up a New Testament says, “There’s a nonviolent person. There’s a person who rejects enmity and hate and revenge.” It’s only Christians that somehow can modify all these teachings so that they can practice these things [enmity, hate, revenge]

and still say they're following Jesus. Jesus' teachings are clear. There is no problem with that.

It is foolishness to say Jesus didn't say what he said. He said it, and it's very clear that He meant it. The problem is not in the clarity of the teachings. Jesus is one of the greatest teachers in the history of the world. *The problem is in our fear.* The problem is in us, not in the clarity of Jesus' teachings. The problem is we fear, and we struggle and cling to a survival in this jungle, and it's a terrible struggle.

There's a book, if any of you would ever want to read it that takes this whole business of the average person's capacity daily to be motivated and to use his or her life up almost exclusively in struggling for just raw, physical survival. It's called *The Denial of Death*.

The issue is that Jesus says that's even a struggle for us. Jesus says, if I can paraphrase Him, "I have risen. Don't worry about survival. Get on with loving." That's all. It's a very simple message. "In fact, get on with loving those who are difficult to love too. I'll take care of all the rest."

It's kind of like Teresa of Avila. Do you remember Teresa of Avila? She was having a terrible time with the nuns and with the convent and with all kinds of other things going on. Everything was falling apart, and she was worried about how she was going to keep this going, how she was going to keep that going and then there was sickness and other things.

And Jesus appeared to her. And then there's that famous sentence. She starts complaining to Him about this and that not working and this falling apart over here and that falling apart over there, and Jesus said to her, "You take care of My business, and I'll take care of your business." You just go on in love, and I'll take care of the survival part of it. What I want to survive will survive. Don't you worry about it. Which is the same thing as "Seek first the kingdom of God and its righteousness, and everything else will be taken care of." That's what it is.

The Question of the Bomb Shelter

34:30 John L. McKenzie, the biblical scholar that I mentioned earlier, many years ago was on a television show, one of those early talk shows back in the late 50s. He was on it with a lawyer from Northwestern University and a political scientist from the University of Chicago and a theologian from DePaul or Loyola.

The question of the day, for that particular hour talk show, was something from long ago: Suppose someone builds a bomb shelter for an atomic bomb in their back yard. They

spend their money and so forth, and then the sirens ring and there's a nuclear attack coming. The man goes down to his bomb shelter which can hold one person indefinitely, but it cannot hold two.

So the man is now in his bomb shelter. He's got his television on waiting for World War III to come. All of the sudden a neighbor comes and knocks at the bomb shelter door; he's terrified, and he wants to get in. So the moral question was, to all these people, does he have to let him in or not? Should he let him in or not let him in?

So John L. McKenzie was a very loquacious person, would talk on almost anything, but about three-quarters of the show went by and he hadn't said a word on the subject. Of course, everyone else was talking. You know how the thing went. It was all survival ethics, rational ethics. It went, "Well, the man who built the shelter spent his money to build it. He deserves to be in it."

Another party would say, "Yeah, but suppose the guy that built the shelter and is in it is an alcoholic, and the guy knocking at the door is a doctor, and he could help people after the nuclear attack. Then what?" Well, then the other party would say, "Yeah, he might be an alcoholic, but he knew enough to build a bomb shelter!" And so on it went.

So McKenzie hadn't talked for about three-quarters of the show. Finally the narrator says, "Father McKenzie, you've been here on our show before. What you had to say was quite interesting and quite good, but you haven't said anything, and we're almost through the show. You haven't addressed the problem at all. Why not?"

McKenzie said, "I haven't addressed the problem because for the Christian there's no problem." And the narrator said, "What do you mean there's no problem? There's a guy in the bomb shelter, a guy outside. The door is locked. The atomic bomb, nuclear weapons are coming. They're going to be dead in five minutes, you know, should he let him in or not let him in?"

37:27 McKenzie said, "For the Christian, there's no problem here." He says Christians are told to love their neighbor by Jesus, even if their neighbor is an enemy. But love your neighbor in the New Testament does not mean that kind of philosophical love where people sit back and say, 'Oh, I love humanity.' It's not that at all. Love your neighbor in the New Testament means you love the person you come across moment to moment to moment like Christ loves. It's that simple. It's not a generalized, abstract, philosophical notion. It's a concrete, moment to moment, whoever you come across, that's who you're supposed to love according to the New Testament.

“Now,” he said, “we assume the man in the shelter is a Christian.” He said, “The man outside the shelter is terrified. He’s in anguish. He’s banging at the door wanting to get in. He’s in desperate need. The Christian inside knows how to help him and give him peace, so the Christian inside simply opens the door, lets him in and goes out himself. There’s no problem” he said.

And of course, the narrator immediately said, “Yeah, but if the Christian goes outside and lets the other side in, the atomic bomb is coming in five minute, he’s going to be killed.” McKenzie says, “So what? He’s loved his neighbor. He’s going to go to heaven.” And then there was that dead television silence. It might have only been nine or ten seconds, but it was dead air time and it’s embarrassing.

And then the narrator said, “Well, we’ve really got to get on to addressing this problem because we’re coming towards the end of the program,” as if McKenzie hadn’t answered it. He did answer it.

If what? If you believe what Jesus says—“the one who tries to save his life in this world will lose it, but the one who loses his life for my sake and the Gospel”—loving his or her neighbor—“will save it” (Mt 16:25; Lk 9:24; Lk 17:33)

The issue is not the clarity of the teachings of Jesus or even how they should be implemented. The whole impediment is the fear—the fear—that comes from the desire for physical survival.

The Gospel is Simple to Understand

39:51 As McKenzie says in another one of his writings—remembering, major biblical scholar here—he makes the point that the New Testament documents, the four Gospels, are written to basically a 12 year old level of literacy. Anyone that can read the newspaper can read them and know what they say. You don’t have to have a PhD to understand them. They mean what they say, and they’re newspaper level literacy, and they would have to be if they were for all people in all places.

But he makes the point, “The Gospel,” these are his words, “The Gospel is simple to understand, and it’s simple to execute.” There is nothing complicated about it at all. We’ve got libraries!—I mean, God knows how many forests we’ve broken down figuring out why the Gospel is so complicated.

McKenzie says the Gospel is simple to understand and simple to execute, *provided you’re willing to suffer*. Everything gets messed up when you try to avoid doing what Jesus said because it will cause suffering or even inconvenience.

Abortion and War

41:15 Now we have reached the point where we must talk about one subject that is very, very important to talk about in terms of all this. And that subject is abortion. It would be unacceptable to have a conference talking about the Lamb of God and not to talk about abortion. And it's only after I make this presentation to this point that I think my presentation on abortion, which I think is Gospel correct, is the only possible position, out of the Gospel, that it will make sense to you.

But really, it would be unacceptable to have a conference on the Lamb of God and violence and nonviolence and love of enemies, etc. without addressing this problem.

I approach it this way: consider in your mind a picture. The picture is of a small, clean, well-lighted room. It has high-technology in it, modern technology. Two or three people are there that can use the technology. Technology is but an extension of the senses. The microscope or the telescope is an extension of the eye. The bulldozer is an extension of the hand. So people are trained to use this technology.

One of them looks through something and sees one, two, three little dots. They know if they look further, they will see that those dots have human hands, a human heart, an entirely human genetic system, and above all, a human future, but they don't look any closer than that. They don't look that close. They just see the dots. They turn on the technology, and they destroy the dots.

That is a stealth bomber over Iraq at 52,000 feet during the Iraqi war. The dots are the enemy. They are the ones that threaten some self-interest. I don't know what self-interest is being threatened by those dots. Maybe the pilot thinks or the bombardier thinks if they don't kill them there in the sand of the Iraqi desert that they'll have to pay a dollar more a gallon for gasoline. Maybe he thinks if they don't kill them there that the Iraqis will be on the shores of the United States in ten months or something. I don't know. Maybe they think if they don't drop the bombs accurately, they won't get a good rating, and there will go their job as an airline pilot when they get out.

I don't know why those dots are the enemy, what self-interests are affected so seriously that those dots have to be destroyed. But I know that pilot considers those dots the enemy, and therefore, he kills those human beings.

Now, picture another clean, well-lighted room, high technology, two or three people there who can turn on the technology and use it. One looks into a piece of the technology and sees one, two, three little dots. They know if they look further, they will see that those

dots have human hands, a human heart, a totally human genetic system, and above all, a human future, but they don't look any further. They turn on the technology, and they destroy the dots.

44:37 That's an abortion clinic. The child in utero has become the enemy to the mother and father. I don't know why the child has become an enemy to the mother and father. The mother may feel if she has the child outside of marriage that it'll be a scandal, and she'll be embarrassed, or she'll lose standing in the community. They may feel that they can't afford another child, and their bank account—or they won't have the money to do it. It may be that the girl feels that if she's pregnant and she goes through with the pregnancy, she'll lose her scholarship at school or something. I don't know.

But that child threatens some self-interest, and because that child threatens some self-interest, it has to be destroyed. It's the enemy.

Now, here's what I'm saying to you. Listen very carefully. It is *not* Jesus' teachings—it is not the teaching of Jesus—it is the teaching of simply rational ethics philosophy to say you cannot kill in utero, but you can kill people post utero. Jesus does not teach that you must love your enemies in utero, but you can kill them post-utero. Jesus' teaching is you must love your enemies in utero and post utero. It is a philosophical teaching that says you have to love your enemies, you cannot kill in utero, but you can selectively kill post-utero. That is philosophy. That is not the teaching of Jesus.

And here's where the problem comes in. Jesus' teachings are love all your enemies and reject all killing. But that is not the position of most of the people who are against abortion, and therefore, they are not credible. That is, if they are saying they are teaching what Jesus is teaching, they are not, because Jesus rejects all homicide, in utero and post utero, all killing of enemies, in utero and post utero.

It is the rational ethical system that says you can kill some, and you can't kill others. Then it's only whose ox is being gored. And so those people who are for abortion say what? They say, "Fine, you say we can't kill the child in utero when there's a difficult pregnancy that would cause tremendous damage to life—at least we perceive it would—but you can go out, and you can kill for church property. There's an entire 1,700 year old history of the churches, Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant, justifying the destruction of people in order to protect property rights, church or state. So when you've got a problem, you can kill, but when we've got a problem, we can't kill." And it becomes unbelievable—the witness is weak—that's what I'm saying—because the witness is not teaching what Jesus taught.

Can you imagine the power of the witness of the Church against abortion if what had taken place for the last 1,700 years is that the Church had been saying 100 percent, “No killing of human beings,” just as Jesus said? No enmity. It would be a powerful witness, but now it’s the witness of saying, “You can’t kill in utero, but you can kill post utero,” and people just come back and say, “Why should you make the decision for me where I can kill? I’ll make my own decision where I can kill. That’s just your impression. That’s not what Jesus taught. That’s your particular view of reality.”

So I say to you this: The only Gospel presentation in terms of abortion is total rejection of homicide across the board, in utero and post utero. Total rejection of killing the enemy, whether the enemy is in utero or whether the enemy is post-utero. There is no other Gospel presentation. After that, you are no longer teaching about the revelation of Jesus, you are making a decision by your own reason who can be killed and who can’t be killed.

49:10 I remember years ago on a talk show, a Baptist minister said to me when I made this presentation that the child in utero was innocent and therefore could never be killed, and that was the difference. And I said to him, “Where do you find Jesus saying that?” And I said, “Even if what you’re saying is true, the United States,” at this time, 1980s, “the United States has every major city in Russia targeted with nuclear weapons. How many abortions do you think would take place if one nuclear weapon hit in Moscow? And that would be intentionally killing the innocent. And he said, “No, those would be Russian fetuses.”

I am telling you, the Gospel presentation is *no homicide and enmity against anyone*. If it’s not that, it’s rational ethics, just philosophical speculation out of the little human mind and then it’s a matter of whose ox is being gored and who has the political power to force their rights.

Jesus tells us trust the Father —trust the Father —in difficult times and in common times. Love your enemy in utero and post utero. Trust that God will take care of you if you love in difficult situations. But you can’t tell people to trust in difficult situations and not kill when you yourself haven’t been doing it for the last 1,700 years when the crises came to you. Consistency is at the root of credible witness. Trust the Father. You take care of His business; He’ll take care of your business, in utero, post utero.

[End of Audio]

8-The Means of the Lamb

The Logic of Means Producing Ends

The Christian life takes place moment to moment to moment. It's not a matter of going to church on Sunday or saying our prayers in the evening. We are baptized, totally immersed into Christ, and then from every second there on, we are living the Christian life.

If I were to want to walk out that door, I would have to choose the means to get out that door. I would have to walk down from the pulpit and walk forward out that way and down to the left and then to the right. Then I'd have to lift up my hand, and I'd have to push the door.

Human life, moment in and moment out, is a continuing choice of means to accomplish things. For example, if you want to take a note right now on what I've said, you'll pick up the pen. You'll put the pen on the paper, and you'll write. Human life is continually choosing means to achieve ends, big ends, small ends. Moment to moment, human life is a choice of means. This is the only way life can work.

Now, let's say I wanted to go out that door, and let's say the means I chose to go out that door were to throw these papers up in the air. Would I get out the door by throwing the papers up in the air? Of course not. Because the means I chose for getting out the door won't actually get me there.

Now, let's say you wanted to make a note on your paper about something that I said, and instead of picking up the pencil to write, the means that you chose were to whistle. Would you have a note? Of course not.

Christ-like Ends Require Christ-like Means

02:06 Now, I'm using exaggerated examples to make a simple point. If you do not choose the means that actually accomplish the task, you can't accomplish the task. That may sound like a tautology. That may sound like it's self-evident, that if you do not choose the means to accomplish the task, you cannot accomplish the task. But what I'm suggesting to you here in this retreat is that if you do not choose Christ-like means, you cannot live a Christ-like life. Or said another way, if the Church chooses un-Christ-like means to carry on its work—for example, war, capital punishment, greed— if the Church chooses un-Christ-like means it can't carry on Christ-like work.

Christianity is filled with people that want Christ but do not want to use the means of Christ in their lives. The fact of the matter is this: abandonment to Christ is not simply the act of sitting or kneeling in the chapel and saying, “Jesus I abandon myself to You.”

Since the Christian life takes place moment to moment to moment—there is never a moment when we’re not Christian—abandonment to Christ means, in the moment, abandonment to the means of Christ, moment to moment to moment using the means that Christ would use. That’s why moment to moment to moment, the simple question of the Christian life is: what would Jesus do here? And believe me—it really does take *abandonment* to choose the means of Christ in the moment. It is not always easy.

In fact, sometimes it can be as difficult as martyrdom. Think about it. The way the world teaches us from the cradle is not the way Jesus teaches us. Now, say we have been nurtured that it’s all right to talk about people, to gossip about them. That is, to hurt them with the tongue. And people do that universally. It’s a way of getting back.

Now, suppose what takes place is someone hurts us, I don’t know what they do, they may steal something from us; they hurt us in some way. A few hours later, we get a chance with another person to hurt them by talking about them.

Now, right in that moment there, there is a choice. Society would say there’s nothing wrong with talking about them. Society would say there’s everything right, perhaps, about putting them in their place, letting people know what evil people they were, getting back at them. But Jesus says, “Pray for your persecutors. No revenge. No retaliation. Love your enemies” (Mt 5:43-44).

5:50 And therefore, in that moment when we have that other party that we can talk to about this one who’s hurt us we have a real choice: do we use the means of the world? Or do we use the means of Christ? So it goes all through life, in small matters and in large. *Abandonment to Christ is abandonment to the means of Christ*, and very often I must die, literally die, to the self that was I nurtured to, to my secular-nurtured self, if I am going to follow the means of Christ in the moment.

I think it is awfully important, however, in order to thoroughly understand how important this notion of means is that we really discuss it in some detail, because in some way that is very, very fundamental and inescapable, *we live or we do not live our Christian life by our choice of means in the moment*. We can have all the good intentions in the world, but everything comes down to what do I do at this moment.

Do I follow Christ by doing what Christ would do here, following His means? Or do I abandon Christ and follow the means of the world in the moment?

So let me begin this discussion, which is basically a discussion of the serious, serious spiritual problem of the relationship between means and ends. Now, we have probably all heard the statement that the ends do not justify the means, and that's all well and good, but that's not where I want to start.

Means are Ends in Embryo

07:54 Where I wish to start is at another place. I want to start with a statement from Mahatma Gandhi, where he says that "The means are the ends in embryo. As you choose your means, you get your ends. That is the iron law of the moral universe." So let me go over that: "The means are the ends in embryo. As you choose your means, you get your ends. That is the iron law of the moral universe."

What he's saying is that in actual real life as it is concretely lived, there is an irrevocable connection between the means you select and the ends you will get. There is an utter consistency between your choice of means and what you will get as ends, and there is no way in actual moral life in this universe to break that. So the means are the ends in embryo, in their beginning.

All he's saying is the same thing Jesus is saying when He says, "You must reap what you sow" (Gal 6:7). If you sow corn, you have to get corn. If you sow wheat, you have to get wheat.

9:45 Of course, people can do propaganda. Gandhi and Jesus and reality are not concerned about propaganda. You know what propaganda is. Propaganda is where you sow corn, you get corn and you call it wheat. That's just an illusion. That's not real. You've got wheat [Speaker corrects himself; he means corn] that's what you've got. You've got the corn is what you've got. You don't have wheat. Just because you name something wheat doesn't make it wheat. That's propaganda; so propaganda is irrelevant here.

What Gandhi, what Jesus is saying when they say you must reap what you sow is this: that if you want to build a truthful self or a truthful community, you must do it by the means of truth. Every lie, every lie, regardless of how small, destroys building a truthful self or a truthful community because there is a consistency between the means chosen and the ends that come about. And when you choose truthful means, you get truthful ends, community or self. When you choose lying, lying as a means, you don't build a truthful self or a truthful community.

If you want to build a peaceful self or a peaceful community, you must build it by the means of peace. War does not build peace. Impossible, utterly impossible that war builds peace. What we're saying, remember, is there must be a consistency between the means chosen, what you sow and what you reap. This is the iron law of the moral universe. And yet, all kinds of people say peace comes from war. In fact, some people even call war peace.

Example From the Reality of War

11:44 Take for example today in what was formerly Yugoslavia. Now you've got human beings who have been at this for about five years now, slaughtering, destroying, raping, maiming. Day in and day out, the means that they're using are the means of violence and destruction and hate and revenge.

Now, some day down the line, the big shots will sign a peace treaty. Is there one possibility in a hundred trillion that peace will come with the signature of a peace treaty? There isn't. There's no possibility.

When you have been engaged in rape and bloodshed and arson and murder for five, six, seven years, do you go home to your families now, and are you kind and gentle and tender people? Are your dreams right? How do you relate to your children after you've raped other people's wives and daughters by the tens of thousands? How do you relate to your own wife and daughter? After you've destroyed other people's mothers and fathers and brothers and sisters, how do you go home and face your own?

There's no peace after war. That's a piece of public relations propaganda, that when the big shots sign the treaty, you have peace. The Vietnam War ended in 1975. 56,000 American soldiers were killed in Vietnam during the years of the war. 56,000 American soldiers were killed. Since the end of the war, 1975, twice as many Vietnam veterans have killed themselves as died in the war. Well over 100,000 veterans of the Vietnam War have committed suicide.

And the only reason we know these things is because it's not so easy to cover them up today as it was in days past—the horrible world of mental illness that flows from people that participate in war, the destruction of families. There is no peace from war. So let's go back to where we were.

Only Peace Builds Peace

14:00 If you want to build a peaceful self and a peaceful community, you must do it by the means of peace. If you want to build a truthful self or a truthful community, you must do it by the means of truth. If you want to build a nonviolent self or a nonviolent

community, it has to be by means of nonviolence. Every act of violence destroys the nonviolent self or the nonviolent community. If you want to build a loving self or a loving community, you have to do it by the means of love.

And yet, I assure you that the vast majority of people talking today in media and politics and in the churches are trying to communicate that you can build realities opposite than the means that you're choosing. They are trying to say that you can sow corn and get wheat, than you can sow violence and get peace. It is not possible. It is impossible. You must reap what you sow.

Christians are Meant to Build the Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of Love

15:05 Here's the problem: you can only build the kingdom of God by the means of the kingdom of God. That's what we're supposed to be about in this life as Christians, building with Jesus the kingdom of God. The only means that can build the kingdom of God are the means that Jesus says build the kingdom of God.

Politicians and philosophers and journalists may say all kinds of other things, but only Jesus knows how to build the kingdom of God. To say, "I am not going to use the means of the kingdom of God, the means that Jesus teaches in the Gospel, but I am going to build the kingdom of God with means that are not of the kingdom of God" is absurd. And that's what so many are saying.

I think at this point it really is important to understand how deep and how powerful is this reality of means in human life for good and for evil. We don't normally think of this in our spiritual life. We normally say, "Oh, it's only a lie," or "It's only this" or "It doesn't make that much difference."

But Jesus tells us that our task is moment to moment to choose the Christ-like deed if we are going to build a Christ-like life. Said another way in terms of the apparition here at Knock, the apparition's clear communication to the Church is: If you are going to build a community of the Lamb of God, you have to use the means of the Lamb of God. You can't build the community of the Lamb of God by using the means of the wolf.

So let's look very, very deeply at this whole business, this whole problem of means and ends as it relates to our personal spiritual life and to our communal life.

[Several minutes of tape is not transcribed here.]

Jean-Paul Sartre said "It is impossible that I live."

This isn't life held together by a string. This is life held together by forces we can't imagine, and yet, that's exactly what happens.

Most of Life is Invisible Yet it Affects

20:46 You and I have probably heard someplace along our lives that little quote that actually comes from a book called *The Education of Henry Adams*, about teachers. Sometimes teachers would have it in their room, but the little quote is, “A teacher never knows where his or her influence ends. It could affect eternity.”

Let’s say you teach the most unspiritual of subjects, something like geometry. You’ve got this 14 year old boy, and he comes into your class to study geometry at the beginning of the school year. After about two weeks, you know this kid is no Euclid. He’s not getting it. He’s just not getting it. However, you keep him after class two, three times a week, and he gets Ds and Fs and Ds and Fs. You keep struggling with him. You give him extra credit work. May comes along, and he finally gets his D and he gets out of the geometry class, and he may do something great, but it won’t be geometry.

Now, 12 years later down the line, something’s happening in his life. I don’t know what, just something, and he remembers something you said to him after class 12 years earlier, and he makes a decision that he would not otherwise have made. This is not abnormal. This is how life works a billion times a day. Realities from one moment in time that no one could imagine would be controlling in another moment are actually controlling. They travel through some invisible course of mind and memory that we don’t understand, and they activate way down the line for both good and for evil.

I can’t tell you the number of people I’ve talked about. You’ve experienced it in your own life—evil that you’ve done, evil that you’ve participated in, evil that you’ve known, ten, 15 years later, all the sudden it’s there again as a thought or whatever it might be. And so also with good.

Earlier I mentioned Rabbi Abraham Heschel. Heschel, writing to the Jewish community says, “Most of what is most important in life takes place on the invisible side of existence.” We can’t see thought. We can’t see beauty. We can’t see fear. We can’t see but it’s all in here [speaker touches his head]. It’s all invisible. It travels by routes we don’t know, and yet it affects.

Unimaginable Ripples Go Out From Our Behavior

23:53 I remember a friend of mine that I grew up with and we went to law school (I was a lawyer at one time). I lost contact with him, maybe ten years or so passed. One day in Boston I met him on the street, and he invited me up to dinner one night a few weeks later, and I went to the dinner. It was a nice situation, talk about old times and so forth.

He asked me what I was doing, and I started to talk to him about the whole business of the nonviolent Jesus and his nonviolent way and loving your enemies. (He was a lawyer).

About three-quarters of the way through the meal, his little boy hit a glass of water that fell over on the table. So there's a big to-do and a big mess. The little boy was maybe four, I think at the time, or five at the most. And so there's a big to-do, and his wife got up and cleaned it up.

25:00 So no more than five minutes later, lo and behold, another whole glass is knocked over by the little boy. Now, whether he did it intentionally or whether it was fun or whether it was an accident, we don't know. Well, anyway, this fellow was at the head of the table. I was sitting next to him. He's a big big man, about 240 pounds, He got up from his seat and walked around the table, and gives the kid a crack—hits him. Of course the kid starts screeching, and his wife takes the little baby out of the room. And, you know, just a mess.

Well, it's kind of embarrassing. Here you are talking to a fellow you know is Catholic like you are. You've known him all your life. You're up at one end of the table talking about Jesus' nonviolence, and he gets up and turns around and hits his kid. That's just one of those moments.

Maybe eight, nine months later, I met him accidentally again. [After] we said hi he said to me, "Hey do you remember the night you were over the house and Franny," that was his little boy, "Franny knocked over the glasses of water"? I said, "Oh, yeah, I remember it." And he said, "You remember, I went down and I just gave him a smack," he said. And I said, "Oh, I remember." He said, "Well, let me tell you something, Charlie." He says, "You know, he hasn't knocked over a glass of water since then, but if I listen to you and this Jesus and nonviolence junk, we'd be living in a bathtub by now."

Well, this time I wasn't in his house eating, and I asked him, "What do you think you did when you hit him? Was there no other way? Supposing he even did intentionally knock over the glass of water, which no one knew, but supposing he did, was there no other way to stop that other than hitting him, other than hurting him? You and your wife are the single most important people in his life. You are totally loved by this little boy, and when you walked down there, as huge as you are—just because you are an adult—and you hit him, you terrorize him, and you hurt him.

"What do you tell him about love? What do you tell him about being a father? What do you tell him about the Father's love? What does he believe about God as Father at that point? Are you telling him that the meek inherit the earth like Jesus said? Are you telling him to follow Jesus? Or are you telling him what he really needs is the ability to hurt

people to get what he wants in this world, to get by in this world? In other words, over and above stopping the glass from knocking over, from spilling, how many other ripples did you put in his consciousness?"

And therein lies the reality. Every human act sends out visible and also invisible ripples. Every act is far more than just what we see. Infinitely more than what we see, and we don't know where they're going, and we don't know how they're going to affect. But going back to Rabbi Heschel, most of what's most important in life takes place on the invisible side of existence. In worlds that we can't imagine, they're invisible, but they are set off by something, and they have tremendous consequences. We may not like to see life that way, but that's the way life really is. Politicians, journalists, media people, philosophers like to think they've got life in control. There's no control.

November 9, 1965

28:58 You wouldn't know what this date was, but this is a famous date in the United States. November 9th, 1965 is a famous date in the United States because at about 5:20 in the afternoon a raccoon ran through some cables up in Buffalo, New York, electric cables at a power station, and set off a chain of events that no one knew could happen.

In a matter of about 12 minutes, the entire east coast, from Buffalo, New York all across southern Canada, Ontario, Montreal, huge cities, down through Boston, New York, Washington DC, that entire section of the east coast was absolutely blacked out in a matter of 12 minutes. All power was drained out of the system. No one ever imagined such a thing could happen.

I was there, and I remember the situation. I was at Boston College at the time, and a friend of mine was a rector at the hall. I was sitting there talking to him in a room about 5:20 at night, and all the sudden all the lights went out. He thought it was the students fooling around with the main switch in the hall. With a certain flourish of vulgarity he got up from of his desk and went flying out of the room to straighten out the students, when all of the sudden he realized the whole world was black.

There were no street lights. There was nothing. The only light that existed was from flashlights and independent generators. Everything, even street cars were stopped. Elevators were stopped, right where they were; they just stopped right there. Escalators. People trapped in these 50, 60 story buildings, nowhere to go. Electric doors stopped. Everything. And it went on for about eight to 12 hours before they got it all corrected.

Now, I'm going to tell you a fact of medical history in the United States. This is a fact of medical history. 271 and 272 days after that—the exact human gestation period for a

child to be born—is the all time birthing day in the United States. Nine months to the day after that event more children were born in the United States than in any two days in the history of the country.

Now, that was 30 years ago. Right now in the United States there are tens of thousands of healthy, intelligent, with-it, smart, educated, on-top-of-the world 30-year-olds that, but for a misguided raccoon 30 years ago, would not exist. And that's a fact.

Control is an Illusion

31:55 Where I live in Boston, there surrounds Boston something called route 128, and route 128 is a center of high-tech engineering research, bio-chemical research, all kinds of things. It's a center for the country for this, and people come from all over the world to work and study there.

One of the companies that advertises on television for people to work for them, and they're advertising for people with doctorates now, on television, is a company called TRW, a big high-tech firm. The advertisement tells what a great company it is to work for. At the end of the advertisement, they have this TRW logo, just the three letters TRW, and it kind of moves a little, and there's a voice-over. And remember, they're talking to people of high education, and the voice-over says, "Join the TRW team and feel the power of total control."

This is the illusion of the age in which we live. It's a total and complete illusion—the illusion that there's control, that I just have to manipulate the means enough, and I can control. That is not so. From every human act—every human act—ripples go out that we do not see for good or for ill, and they go out over time and space, not even necessarily in our own generation, but our lives affect generations into the future in ways that we can't imagine.

Choose the Will of God in the Moment

33:46 So the question is this: how do you know how to act? How do you know how to act when you don't really know the consequences, fully, of your actions? How do you make a choice when you don't know the consequences? The answer is very, very clear and always has been, from Abraham on forward through Jesus to us today. You choose on the basis of what you understand to be the will of God, period. You choose the will of God in the moment, and then you let the ripples go out.

Thomas Merton, the Trappist monk, sums this up in a very, very powerful sentence. Speaking about the Christian living the Christian life, the Christian being very, very

conscious that moment to moment he or she is supposed to choose the means of Christ, Christ-like means, is supposed to love as Christ loves in the moment.

He says this: “The first and most important thing to be a good Christian is 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 your own good person here and now, love as Christ loved in the moment and then be willing to let everything else fall in its own good time, good place and good way.

The spiritual truth behind that is this: it is the faith that the good deed will produce good results. If I choose the will of God in the moment, God will take care of how the ripples go out even if it doesn’t look so good in the moment. If I think it’s the will of God, then God will take care of the ripples.

We can imagine Jesus on the cross saying—from just the point of view of what’s happening to him in the moment—saying, “This isn’t working out.” But the fact is, he is doing this explicitly because it’s the will of God. He has told Peter to put up the sword. He has accepted death. He is forgiving His enemies who are destroying Him on the cross, “Father, forgive them.” He is doing all this because it’s the will of God. It looks like it’s all over. It looks like nothing’s going to happen from it. It looks like a life wasted and destroyed. Except because it is the will of God, it has the power of God in it.

There could be no more insignificant death than the death that Jesus suffered on the cross. Jesus was just one of ten thousand people who were crucified by Rome in that part of the world over a ten-year period. Crucifixion was as common as automobile accidents in the United States. But the point is Jesus was going forward in the Spirit of God, doing what was the will of God, even though it looked less than insignificant. It looked destructive. And look at the fruits that came from it. Resurrection!

Abandonment To Christ or Abandoning Christ?

37:32 So Mother Teresa, it seems to me, sums up all this problem of being faithful in the moment to the means, abandoning yourself to the means of Christ in the moment, and then letting God take care of all the rest, even if it doesn’t look in the moment like it’s coming out too well. Her sentence that just captures this so well is, “My business is fidelity. God’s business is success.” My business is fidelity. God’s business is success. I just choose to be Christ-like in the moment, and then the effects of that will go out over time and space in ways that I can never, never imagine, because that’s the power of God. But I can have total faith that it will be good.

If I abandon the Christ-like act in the moment—if I abandon it—I still send ripples out over time and space, but they're not good, regardless of how good they are to me for the moment. Therefore, we are confronted with a real choice in terms of what we're going to do moment to moment.

Are we going to make our decision consistent with our immersion and baptism, total immersion into Christ? Are we going to make our decision to abandon our self to the means of Christ, to love as Christ loved in the moment, regardless of how it affects us in the moment and then let the ripples go out, let God work with it? Or are we going to choose some other means than Christ-like means and then the ripples will go out also?

We really do have a choice. Abandonment to the means of Christ or abandoning Christ. When St. Teresa of Avila says, "Jesus has no hands but my hands, no feet but my feet, no mouth but my mouth in this world," that means that I—I, me—have to choose in this moment to abandon myself to the means of Christ, because the only other choice for the Christian is that I abandon Christ, and I say, "You will have no mouth, no eyes, no feet here. I will do it my way."

Too much of what has gone on in Christianity—ininitely too much—is walking away from the means of the Lamb in order to use some other means in order to accomplish items of worldly success. And I don't mean grandiose items. I just mean worldly success on the smallest scale, what goes on in families and neighborhoods and so forth.

Only Christ-like Means Bring Christ-like Ends

40:38 It is the attempt which is the basic fallacy of Constantinian Christianity that we talked about earlier, of choosing non Christ-like means to try to achieve Christ-like ends. The Church has only one goal, and that is to bring Christ to the world. You can only bring Christ to the world by the means of Christ. It is that simple. But if we do that, the ripples will go out in ways that are unimaginable, absolutely unimaginable. But if we choose non-Christ-like means to bring Christ to the world, then there is an inconsistency between the means and the ends. We will be trying to sow corn to get wheat. It won't work.

So I leave you at this time with just this consideration: our task is to be a Eucharistic people. We are to come forward as members of the fold of the Lamb of God, adore Him, praise Him and ultimately receive Him, consume Him and then moment to moment, we are to be Him wherever we are. That's the way we renew the face of the earth, by choosing the means of Jesus, the means of the Lamb. It is the *only* way to renew the face of the earth.

Every time I abandon the means of Jesus, every time I refuse to be faithful to the means of Jesus, I may be taking care of myself, but I am doing nothing for the salvation of the world. So the consequences that are going to go out from any means that I choose that are non-Christ-like are a dead end at best.

Remember John McKenzie, I said earlier in the prior lecture, “An act that is not an act of Christ-like love is morally worthless.” This is what he’s talking about. The only acts that can send the salvific energy of God out into history are Christ-like acts performed moment to moment to moment. Only they can send out those invisible ripples.

But you say, “If I act in a Christ-like way, I may be hurt. People may step on me. I’ll be a doormat. They’ll steal from me. They’ll make fun of me. I’ll be embarrassed. I won’t get the job.” And I say to you, the task is simple. Do the Christ-like deed and let God take care of the consequences. It’s so clear. Just remember Mother Teresa’s little saying, “My business is fidelity. God’s business is success.”

Be faithful. Be faithful to the means of Jesus moment to moment to moment. Let God work through you. Let God work through you as someone who’s trying to live like the Lamb of God. Let God work through you for the salvation of the world moment to moment to moment. Your life will reach out into time and space in ways that you cannot imagine. Your business and my business is only fidelity. God will take care of the success, but faithful we must be to His means.

[End of Audio]

9-The Lamb Who Is Rich In Mercy

Introduction: The Lamb is a Symbol of Divine Reality

The Lamb of God in Scripture, in the apparition here at Knock, in the Eucharist, is symbol of divine reality. Divine reality. It is a symbol of divine reality as revealed by Jesus Christ. When God acts, God acts in order to save. The Lamb of God is a symbol that points to the salvific mercy of God. It's really important, it seems to me, to reflect on a document in order to understand the Lamb of God, a document that I think is the most significant document that Pope John Paul II has written. It is a little encyclical that he wrote way back in the beginning of his pontificate called *Dives in Misericordia*, Rich in Mercy. Rich in Mercy. It has not gotten the attention that other things that he has written have and other things that he has done. But in my mind, it is the finest thing he has written and one of the most important things he has done in his papacy.

All Human Beings Desire to Know What Kind of God is God?

(This paragraph has been edited.)

You see, in real human life, in real human life, whether you're a Catholic or a Muslim or Jew or an atheist or—atheist I say very clearly—a Shinto or a Buddhist, whether you live today or 500 years ago, whether you lived in New Zealand or whether you lived in Africa or whether you lived in Egypt, is the same question about God that is at the center of human consciousness. Indeed, it is the question that we all struggle with, that we all have indelibly implanted at our psyches at birth about God and from which all religion comes. And that question is: What kind of God is God, if God exists? And what does God expect of me, if anything? The entire history of religion is a struggle to know the answer to that question. What kind of God is God, if God exists? And what does God expect of me, if anything?

Now, the answers that have been given to that question are multiple. Some say God is this. Some God is that. Some say God expects this. Some say God expects that. But Jesus comes with an answer to that question, a very, very clear and definite answer to that question. So clear that it can't be missed. It's our task, as Christians, first to see that answer and then to live out of that Truth.

Jesus Reveals God as Rich in Mercy

03:40 What I'd like to do is I would like to read to you what Pope John Paul II says in his encyclical *Dives in Misericordia*, Rich in Mercy, about the answer to that question. I would like to begin with his opening sentence. Remember what the question is: What kind of God is God if God exists? And what does God expect of me, if anything? And remember, too, when a Pope writes an encyclical, he doesn't get up one Wednesday

morning and say, “Gee, I think I’ll write an encyclical,” and dash it off and finish it by Wednesday night. This is a long and arduous process where every sentence is weighed against Scripture and the tradition of the Church to make sure everything is in order before it ever leaves because the whole world is going to read it. The finest theologians and Scripture scholars and spiritual people in the Church proofread it and reread it to make sure, literally, that every “i” is dotted correctly. And that’s only proper and right if something is going out to so many people.

So Pope John Paul II begins his encyclical, *Dives in Misericordia*, saying this about God, the God revealed by Jesus. The first sentence: “It is God who is rich in mercy, whom Jesus Christ has revealed to us as Father” (*DM I.1*). It is God who is rich in mercy, who Jesus Christ has revealed to us as Father. So we take that great question that is indelibly implanted on the human mind, everyone’s mind: What kind of God is God? And we look at the opening sentence of the Pope’s encyclical; he says, “God is God who is rich in mercy” Our God, the true God, is a God who is rich in mercy. He goes on to say, “Making the Father, who is rich in mercy, present as love and mercy is Christ’s own consciousness, the fundamental touchstone of His mission as Messiah” (*DM II.3*).

Now, that’s an extraordinary statement. The Pope has just said, first of all, that it is God, who is rich in mercy, that Jesus Christ has revealed to us as Father. Then he says, “making the Father present as love and mercy is in Christ’s own consciousness.” That is in the mind of Christ Himself, the fundamental touchstone of His mission as Messiah. Do you see what that means? I don’t wish to exaggerate it. He is saying in Christ’s own mind, this is the basis of everything that He’s about, making God known as mercy. It is the fundamental touchstone of His mission as Messiah. Once again, this is not the Pope’s opinion. An encyclical is a document written in terms of the entire tradition of the Church. Jesus comes to let us know that God is rich in mercy.

Christians Must Reveal God as Mercy

07: 30 The Pope goes on to say: “In human history, love must be revealed above all else as mercy. It must also be actualized as mercy.” Now, listen to this: “Christ’s messianic program, the program of mercy becomes the program of His people, the program of His Church” (*DM V.8*). Christ’s program is a program of mercy. And that program that is Christ’s program is to be the program of His people, the program of His Church. You and I, the Pope, the bishops, the priests are supposed to be fundamentally about one thing: being merciful people, and through that, revealing that God is rich in mercy. This is not a complicated thing. It’s being said very, very clearly.

So let’s go back to our original question that we said was indelibly implanted on the human psyche of every human being regardless of when or where they were born: What

kind of God is God, if God exists? And what does God expect of me, if anything? John Paul II has just said the kind of God God is is a God who is a Father who is rich in mercy. And what does He expect? He expects that the program of my life be mercy. As simple as that. The nature of God is mercy, and therefore, since we are made in the image and likeness of God, we can carry out that same program; we can participate in that reality of mercy.

Now, I realize that so many people get all caught up in so many different dimensions of Christianity, whether they be Catholic, Protestant or Orthodox; it's not just us. We get all entangled in so many things, and we can't see, if you will, the forest from the trees. We have this devotion and that devotion, and we're worried about this and that and so forth. Of course, we get the terrible thing going on, which we have today of people arguing all over the place about this and that and the other thing in the Church. Scholars are saying one thing about something and then people are saying, "Well, that's not what I heard at such and such a time, or all my life," and on and on and on. This is a terrible kind of division. It's not the heart of the matter. It's not relevant. And, it's not necessary. Only one thing is necessary. The Pope says the touchstone of Jesus' messianic program is mercy. It is God who is rich in mercy that Jesus comes to reveal. All we have to be about is Christ-like mercy. The other stuff is not relevant.

It seems to me that when we reflect on this, what we're saying is something very, very simple. We're saying that you and I, by the gift of baptism, by being chosen by Jesus—after all, we did not choose Him, He chose us—we were chosen by Jesus to be in this world where we live, wherever it might be, in a convent, in a rectory, in the grocery store, in a family—we were chosen by Jesus to use our lives up to be reflections of divine mercy. That's what our life is supposed to be about. We are to be reflections of divine mercy.

Mercy Constitutes the Very Essence of the Messianic Message

- 11:58 Listen to the Pope, talking about that matter in his encyclical here. He says, "We must note that Christ, in revealing the love—mercy of God, at the same time demanded from people that they also should be guided in their lives by love and mercy" (*DM II.3*). Now, listen to this sentence from the Pope in a formal encyclical, not just talking in St. Peter's Square on a Sunday afternoon. [This is] in a formal encyclical to the Church. Listen. "This requirement," that people be guided in their lives by love and mercy, "forms part of the very essence of the messianic message, and constitutes the heart of the Gospel ethos" (*DM II.3*). The heart of the Gospel is mercy, and that people be guided in their lives by mercy constitutes the very essence of the messianic message.

Now, those are strong words that a Pope would rarely use, that something is the very essence of the messianic message and that it constitutes the heart of the Gospel ethos. You can't say this any stronger. That's what John Paul II says about God demanding from people that they should be guided in their lives by love and mercy. We are to be reflections of divine mercy. We are to be little embodiments of mercy.

Think about the Lamb of God. How many times have we said in our lifetime "Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy on us." We reach out to that image which is a symbol leading back to God. We reach out with mercy. Our faith teaches us that every time we make a prayer of mercy to the Lamb of God, God responds. We may not see the response instantly, but God honors *all* prayers. But we know instinctively that what we are reaching out for is mercy.

Serious Examination of Conscience

15:02 Each of us—one and all—is confronted with, if you will, the need to make an examination of conscience. When non-Christians see you and me, what do they see? Is their first impression when they see us, when we talk to them, when we're with them for five, 10, 15 minutes, the first day we're with them—when non-Christians come in contact with us, is their first impression: "Wow, there's a merciful person"? If it isn't, why not? Is it because we're not merciful? Is it because we have made something other than what Jesus wants us to make the center of our lives? When you think about it, when people come in contact with us, they can say, "Gee, there's a smart person." "There's a hardworking person." "There's a person that really knows something about carpentry." Or perhaps they even say, "There's a Catholic." "There's a Protestant." "There's an Orthodox." But do they say, "There's a merciful person"?

What I'm suggesting to you is that when the Pope says, "We must note that Christ, in revealing the love and mercy of God, at the same time demands from people that they also should be guided in their lives by love and mercy," he is very, very explicitly suggesting that we, in some very real way, are responsible for communicating to others that God is mercy. We do that by living lives of mercy. You say, "Oh, that doesn't quite follow, maybe." Listen to the Pope. Listen. One more sentence from another area. He says, regarding that we live merciful lives, ". . . it is not just a case of fulfilling a commandment or an obligation of an ethical nature; it is also a case of satisfying a condition of major importance for God to reveal Himself in His mercy to humanity: 'The merciful . . . shall obtain mercy'" (*DM II.3*).

You see, what is being said there is the world cannot know that God is mercy if Christians will not commit themselves to mercy. I'm going to say it another way. I'm going to say unless you have a real zeal for mercy, unless you really want to be a

merciful person, then God cannot work through you to reveal Himself as He wishes to. Suppose you were a soccer fan, a real—you know how zealot soccer fans are, and they really know all the players and the history; every time you come in contact with them, they're always talking about this or that or the other thing? You immediately know, this guy is a zealot soccer fan. So it is with anything that people have a zeal for. They live it; they reflect it; they talk about it.

But how many of us have a zeal for mercy? I'm suggesting to you that mercy is not just one among many things we can do. I'm suggesting to you all the things we do as Christians are supposed to lead to being a merciful person. Why? Because it's by being a merciful person that God reveals Himself to others through us. That's what the Pope says. It is not just the case of fulfilling a commandment, "Be merciful," or an obligation of an ethical nature. It is a case of satisfying a condition of major importance: for God to reveal Himself in His mercy to humanity. I'm talking on a lot, but this really is not complicated. It is as simple as answering the question what kind of God God is and what God expects.

God is a Father who is rich in mercy, and God just expects us to be merciful. Merciful at the grocery store, merciful walking down the street, merciful all the time with our families, husbands, wives, merciful with those people that we live with and in the convent and the rectory. Merciful, that's all. Anyone can be harsh. Anyone can be cruel. Anyone can be judgmental. Anyone can put another person in his place. That takes no trick. We all know how to do that. We learn that from the cradle. But to be merciful! What a life! What a life!

Justice is Compatible With Hatred

20:22 You can go about and say, "Well, maybe I'm not very merciful, but I'm just. I'm just." Well, listen to the Pope on justice. Same encyclical, *Dives in Misericordia*. "Not in vain did Christ challenge His listeners, faithful to the doctrine of the Old Testament . . . 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' This was the form of distortion of justice at that time; and today's forms continue to be modeled on it." Now, here's the line: ". . . justice alone is not enough . . ." (*DM VI.12*). Justice alone is not enough.

Think about it. Two people go to court. They're arguing. They get the best of lawyers. They argue their case. They get all the justice that the world has to offer. All right. Each gets all the justice the world has to offer. Those people can come out of court hating each other. Justice does not save. Mercy saves. You can demand your rights in the convent. You can demand your rights in the rectory. You can demand your rights in the family and every place else. It doesn't save. Christ doesn't ask us simply to be just. Christ asks us to be merciful. I am often flabbergasted how so many people in the Church don't see that if you are merciful, there will be a superabundance of justice for other people. You don't

have to worry about justice if you're merciful. You're not nitpicking between, "This is mine. This is yours. This is mine." Be merciful, you give people all kinds of justice. It's a whole different feel for life.

Do you know the little—not little—the very, very important sentence in the heart of the beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount? "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." We all know that. It's a magnificent, a magnificent presentation on a simple little formula for having total peace in life. Just forget everything else, be merciful, go on with life and mercy is yours. Somehow we get it very, very confused. We treat "Blessed are the merciful and they shall obtain mercy," like a law. We treat it like a law. The law runs something like this: "Well, I helped that person across the street, so there's an act of mercy." We add up our acts of mercy, kind of, and we say, "Well, I've been merciful, so God," who's like a district court judge or something, "even though I've done all this wrong, maybe He'll be a little light in the sentence."

First of all, in order to straighten that out, the first thing is we have to get it straight about what judgment is biblically. Judgment is not God sitting up there like a district court judge. People judge themselves or communities. If a man drinks a quart of whiskey a day for 15 years and the snakes come up over the top of the bed, as we said, at three o'clock in the morning and terrify him, that's not God sending the snakes. That's 15 years of boozing. And so also with a community. If a community squanders its natural resources on war and doesn't, for example, take care of its sewerage systems and take care of its health programs and take care of its educational needs and sanitary needs, well, then when disease comes and there's no way to stop it, it's not God sending the disease. It's the squandering of resources on something other than mercy.

Judgment, biblical judgment is people judging themselves. Now, "Blessed are the merciful, for they should obtain mercy," is the same principle. It means that if you participate in the reality of mercy, you will know mercy. In fact, it means that if you participate in the reality of mercy, you *will experience* the mercy of God.

Dostoyevsky's Lady of Little Faith

25:11 I'm not sure if I mentioned this or not, but if I did, I'll just go over it. It's important on this point. In Dostoyevsky's famous story, *Brothers Karamazov*, there is a story in the middle of it called, "The Lady of Little Faith." In that story a woman thinks she's going to die. She's about 45 [years of age] or so, and she goes to see the holiest man in Russia because she's terrified of dying. She throws herself at the feet of Father, who's the holiest man in Russia, and tells him that she's terrified that she's dying and that all her piety, her Orthodox piety, going to church and saying the prayers, it's all been a sham. She doesn't know God. She doesn't even know if God exists now that the crisis is here.

She says to Father Zossima, “You must prove to me three things: that God exists, that God loves me, and that my soul is immortal.” Zossima, the holiest man in Russia says to her, “No one, no one on this earth can prove to you that God exists, that your soul is immortal and that God loves you. It’s impossible.” And she collapses in a puddle of agony because she’s terrified over death. And after she calms down and wears herself out with anguish, he pulls her up and he says, “I cannot prove to you that God exists, that your soul is immortal and that God loves you. But,” he says, “I can show you a way to become certain of it.” And she brightens up. And she says, “What? What?” He says, “Begin to perform little deeds of Christ-like mercy, and you will grow in the certainty that God exists, your soul is immortal and that God loves you.”

You see, she wanted a philosophical proof. She wanted the theological proof. She wanted the textbook proof, “This and this and therefore this.” No such thing exists. The mind can always find an alternative. But he says to her, “I can’t give to her a proof, but I can show you a method to become certain of it. Begin to perform little Christ-like deeds of mercy, and you will grow in the certainty that God exists, that your soul is immortal and that God loves you.” You see what he’s saying? “I can’t prove to you that God exists, but if you will participate in the reality of mercy, you are participating in the reality of God, and you will *know* that God exists; God is merciful.”

By Participating In a Reality We Know the Reality

28:09 It’s kind of like the little analogy I use about person who has never seen water. Hypothetical story, imaginary story. A person has never seen water. They’ve lived 30 years and never seen water, never touched water. They’ve read about water. They’ve studied about water, read poetry about water. They know the chemical makeup of water. Matter of fact, they’ve gone all the way and gotten a PhD in water. But they’ve never touched water. They’ve never seen it, never felt it. And one day, someone brings down to the side of a lake, and they just step in water, one foot in the water, and they say, “Ah, water.” They know the reality by participation infinitely beyond what they could know it by just abstract thought. And then they swim. And then they drink. And all of the sudden, water is totally something different now.

It’s the reality that they’re participating in, and so they know it, and that’s what Zossima is saying. “Begin to perform little deeds of Christ-like mercy wherever you are, and you will grow in the certainty that God exists, your soul is immortal and God loves you.” Participate in the reality of divine mercy, and you will know the reality of divine mercy.

So we come back to the beatitude, “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.” The beatitude means if you will just be merciful, you will receive the greatest of

all mercies. You will know that God exists. You will experience God's mercy towards you. Not by logic but just by participation. You will experience the greatest of all mercies if you participate in mercy. To use John Paul II's words, you will experience that God is your Father, "who is rich in mercy." We can read all the books we want, but the reality comes down to one thing: Are we or are we not going to have a zeal for the Christ-like deed of mercy?

Everyone Desperately Needs Mercy Shown Them

30:36 Think about it. Everyone you pass on the street, without exception is suffering from something. This world is a furnace of agony. Most people cover it up pretty well. A lot of people can't cover it up so well. But everyone's suffering. Whether it's worried about children or worried about work or God knows what. Therefore, with so much suffering, what opportunity to bring mercy! Mercy can be nothing more than just a generous smile where a frown would be. It can be the smallest of things, the biggest of things. That's not the point. Christians are called to be artists of mercy, to help someone unexpectedly, when they do not expect help; they don't even think they need help. Just to do something for them. In the family, a husband, wife, in the rectory, the opportunities are infinite because the world is in such suffering.

Remember we talked in our conference this afternoon about abandonment to the means of Christ in the moment, the means of Christ because Christ came to reveal God as a Father rich in mercy. Everything he did was meant to do that. All we mean is moment to moment to moment asking ourselves, what would the merciful Jesus do here? Wouldn't He smile? Wouldn't He give a helping hand?

You see, at this point, we are so far removed from using our Christian time up in terms of war and violence and homicide and revenge. These are the opposites of mercy. Just because someone's an enemy of Ireland or America doesn't mean the person isn't in desperate need of mercy, as much as anyone else is. Just because the person doesn't show up for Mass on Sunday doesn't mean the person isn't in desperate need of mercy. By desperate, I mean just that he or she is a human being. More so if they don't show up at Mass on Sunday. They need someone to manifest the mercy of God to them. We are not here as Christians and part of the Church just to save the saved. But Jesus tells us, and the Pope tells us right at the beginning, at the first sentence, "It is God who is rich in mercy that Jesus comes to reveal as Father." And therefore, that's what we have to be about. This is nothing more than St. Thérèse's "Little Way."

St. Thérèse of Lisieux

33:31 Look at the opening paragraph of *The Story of a Soul*, the Catholic book that has sold more copies than any other book in the 20th century. She [Thérèse] never intended this as

a book, just as a writing for the family. She was worried that if she wrote this little autobiography about the family that it might cause too much self-concern, and it might cause [her to] just get off track as a nun. But then she prayed over it and so forth, and this is what she writes. She says, in response, “What I am about to do is what I plan to do for all eternity, to sing the mercies of God.” The whole autobiography of a soul, the whole life of St. Thérèse is singing the mercies of God.

But how? Moment to moment to moment in little tiny deeds of mercy. And look at the power that came out of her life! Look at the invisible ripples that have gone out over time and space. She was an artist at mercy in a convent that had real problems. For example, there was a nun that took care of the laundry. No one wanted to be assigned to the laundry. *No one* wanted to be assigned to the laundry with this nun. People dreaded that task, and when they were assigned there, they went through it with a grim, stoic kind of atmosphere, kind of attitude. [Thérèse] went to the prioress and asked to be assigned there. She asked to be assigned there, and when she got there, even though the nun was no different to her than to anyone else, which was highly critical, always saying this is wrong and that is wrong and you’re not folding this right, unceasingly, Thérèse had only one thing on her mind: to ask herself, “What would Christ do here in this situation to be merciful towards a sister?”

When Thérèse was dying, the sister made the point of saying how much Thérèse liked her; she always smiled when she talked to her. And of course, we must understand. Thérèse really did like her because what she saw was someone who is hurt in some way, someone who is suffering in some way, and she was bringing the cure: a smile of mercy. She couldn’t tell the nun how to fold the stuff and everything else, but she could bring mercy through a smile. That’s the little way, the moment to moment means of mercy.

I know there are other ways to go about life, that’s not even an issue, of course there are. But what we know is this. We know that mercy, mercy, is the method for knowing God. God is not going to be found at any more books at book stores. They can give you a little direction. God is found in living life in a particular way.

Jesus Reveals Mercy in the Garden of Gethsemane

37:12 I’m sure you remember the story of Jesus in Gethsemane, a very, very serious, very, very serious moment. He’s in the Garden at Gethsemane, and we know that Jesus has no death wish because He says, “Father, if this cup can pass from Me, please let it pass from me” (Mt 26:39; Lk 22:42). This is not someone searching out martyrdom. It said He’s sweating blood, which means He’s obviously in a high state of anxiety and concern. Crucifixion was no joke. We know what the story is. The armed servant of the high priest comes with his men, and they’re going to take Jesus. Peter pulls out the sword,

remember, and he guts off the ear of the armed servant of the high priest. Now, think about this. When you cut off someone's ear, you're only a couple of inches from slitting their skull. Peter is in a murderous rage. There's a murderous fight going on; this is not patty cakes.

This is, I think, this is an extraordinary moment in the history of the world, in Jesus' history, in salvation history. Peter cuts off the ear of the armed servant of the high priest (Mt 26:51; Jn 18:10). When someone cuts your ear off, you're instantly in utter agony. You're in screaming pain. I have a friend who's a nurse at an inner-city hospital and she says it's often astounding how many people come in, in the emergency ward, shot, screeching and yelling in agony because they're shot. That's the point. They're saying "It's not supposed to be this way." They've seen television or they've read books. They think shooting is a nice thing. Well, you get shot, you get shot. But what you've done is you've just totally upset the entire nervous system and structure. You've exposed nerves to air and everything else. You could be Rambo and you get your ear cut off, and you're screeching in pain. There's nothing you can do about it.

Peter cuts off the man's ear. He's lying on the ground writhing in pain. Now, what does the world say? What does rational ethics say at that point? Rational ethics in the world says at that point, when you've got the guy down, kick him and finish him off. What does Jesus say? He says, "Put up your sword," first of all (Mt 26:52; Jn 18:11). He doesn't want the defense of violence. It often seems to me, this is the critical moment in the Passion story, *the* critical moment. Jesus has a chance to escape. There's chaos. There's fighting. The leader, the armed servant of the high priest is down. Jesus has a chance to run off and come back and preach another day.

But Jesus also knows that He is here to reveal God as Father who is rich in mercy. He knows, He may wish He didn't, but He knows He has power to heal unlike anyone who's ever walked on the face of the earth. He sees this man, the one who's in front of Him right now in torturous agony. And the choice is this: leave, leave, to come back another day and preach, or be merciful to the person on the ground at the cost of your life. The question is: Which choice would reveal God as Father who is rich in mercy? This man on the ground is no more or no less a child of the Father that the Father wants mercy extended to than Peter, James or John. So Jesus, in revealing the mercy of God right in Gethsemane, even to the enemy, even to the lethal enemy, at the cost of His life, walks over and heals the ear of the armed servant of the high priest, loses His freedom and loses His life in order to perform a deed of mercy.

41:58 This is our God. This is the Lamb of God. This is mercy incarnate, enfleshed. This is the one who chose us to be a reflection of Him, and hence, a reflection of the Father, who is

rich in mercy. And so, think about this: Not one of us, not one of us, I say, is going to come to our last breath saying, “Lord, have justice on me.” No one is going to come to say, “Lord, have justice on me.” It’s, “Lord, have mercy.” And if it’s mercy we want, then mercy we should give. Jesus tells us, “I want mercy” (Mt 9:13).

How many times have people done things during Lent? They’ve given up this, given up that and so forth. Gosh, you don’t want to even live with them they’re giving up so much. They sacrifice this, sacrifice that. Jesus says, “I want mercy, not sacrifice.” It’s fine to do that, but the idea is that you can’t take away from; it has to add, it has to help you become an artist of mercy. If it doesn’t do that, forget that kind of sacrifice. Find another thing to do. “I want mercy, not sacrifice.” And so, if it’s mercy that we want from God, why not give mercy to all those others that want mercy? And that’s everyone. There is no more secure way to approach God or to live life than to be a messenger and to be an instrument of God’s mercy.

Right on the cross, just before He dies, [Jesus had] two final great acts of mercy. The poor thief who thinks he’s so bad he even deserves to die, he just says a little sentence, “Lord, remember me in your kingdom” (Lk 23:42). And in an act of stupendous mercy, stupendous mercy, the whole life is wiped away, and Jesus says—He makes His first saint—“This day you will be with me in Paradise” (Lk 23:43). Only God knows all the terrible things the thief has done. He just asks for help, and there’s a superabundance of mercy given. And then His final, “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do,” reaching out in mercy to those who are even destroying Him.

John Paul II, *Dives in Misericordia* says, “The Church lives an authentic life when she professes and proclaims mercy—the most stupendous attribute of the Creator and of the Redeemer” (DM VII.13). Mercy is the most stupendous attribute of the Creator and of the Redeemer. The Church lives an authentic life when she professes and proclaims it. You and I are the Church. It is so, so simple and so, so powerful, so, so important. All that is being asked is, be merciful as Christ is merciful, moment to moment and you will know the God of mercy. And in ways that you don’t understand you will proclaim that God is mercy to the world. And life will be different for people, both temporal and eternal.

I assure you, we are so far removed from anything that is violence or hate or anything; that’s not even a thought. The Gospel has nothing to do with that stuff, regardless of what people say. But I assure you, and the Pope assures you, and the Gospels assure you, and Jesus, when He says, “Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy,” assures you (Mt 5:7). If you decide that the atmosphere of your consciousness is going to be an atmosphere of mercy, that you are going to have a real zeal for mercy, that you are going to be an artist for mercy, that your life is going to be committed to Christ-like mercy, I,

BEHOLD THE LAMB

(Rev.) Emmanuel Charles McCarthy

the Pope, and the Gospel and Jesus himself assure you that one day you will hear, “Blessed are you for being merciful, mercy is now yours for all eternity” (Mt 5:7). That’s the Good News.

[End of Audio]

10-The Security of the Lamb

(Music)

Paul Harvey's Comment on Nuclear Weapons

In our last conference we discussed that great question out of which all religion evolves, the question that is indelibly implanted on the minds and the souls of each human being that's born and from which all religion comes: What kind of God is God, if God exists? And what does God expect of me, if anything?

I think it's really important to give some very, very serious consideration to what we hear around us that people are saying about what kind of God God is and what God expects. I think it's very important to give it consideration in order to match it up with what Jesus says because what Jesus says is what counts for us. We're called by Him.

I remember several years ago, I was driving my car to give a talk at Cornell University in the southern part of New York State. The radio was on, and I heard a syndicated radio commentator by the name of Paul Harvey start off his program by saying that the United States had to increase its nuclear arsenal. It had to increase its nuclear arsenal, needed more nuclear weapons because American mothers were not having enough children. They were not, therefore, keeping up with the Asian hordes. And you either fight wars by technology or with people. If you don't have the people, you have to have the technology. Therefore, there was a need for America—if it wished to keep its standard of living—to increase its nuclear arsenal.

At the end of that particular program, he asked his audience to write to their congressman or congresswoman so that they would pass a prayer amendment to the Constitution of the United States that would let children pray in public schools. You can't do that in the United States. Now, I use that little story to tell you that it's my judgment: I don't want my children praying to the same god as Paul Harvey's children, if Paul Harvey's children believe as he does because Paul Harvey is praying to an idol. Paul Harvey believes there's a god that wants, first of all, nuclear weapons in existence, that justifies their existence and their use. No such god is known to me by Jesus.

Secondly, he believes that the United States should keep its standard of living. Over 50 percent of what is in the United States for its standard of living comes from the blood and sweat of child labor in third-world countries, Latin America, South America, Southeast Asia. So I don't believe in that god that Paul Harvey's talking about. What he's talking about is an idol, doesn't exist, not if Jesus is the revealer of the true God, the God who is mercy and the God who wants mercy. The economy of the United States, as of Europe, as of all first-world countries, is built on a brutal mercilessness towards women, children,

the poor of the third-world. It is estimated in the third world that there are 100 million—100 million—children between the ages of four and 12 who are working in sweat shops to make goods for the first world, us. I don't believe God wants that. I don't believe God wants that standard of living. And I don't believe God wants us to defend that by the mass homicide, slaughter of war. In other words, I don't want to pray with a person who is praying to a bloody idol.

What Kind of God Makes All the Difference

05:16 40 years ago, a little more, Dwight Eisenhower, when he was running for president of the United States, used to close a lot of his speeches with the same sentence. He used to say, "I don't care what kind of god you believe in, just so long as you believe in god." I don't care what kind of god you believe in, just so long as you believe in god. Like so many other things that politicians say, it sounds profound, but is actually just so much drivel. It makes no sense at all. Can you imagine Jesus saying, "I don't care what kind of god you believe in, just so long as you believe in god"? Nonsense. The whole great issue that everyone is struggling with is precisely what kind of God you believe in is. It makes all the difference in the world whether it's a God of mercy or a god of mercilessness, whether it's a catholic God in the sense of the God who is Father and loves all people or whether it's a parochial god, only a god that loves our group, whether it's a god that says it's all right to live off child labor or whether it's a God that says it's an abomination to live off child sweat shop labor.

There's almost nothing that God hasn't been used to justify. You probably all remember and know that on the belt buckles of Hitler's army, every single person in Hitler's army, their belt buckle contained the German words, Gott Mit Uns, God with us. There is no limit to what God can be used for.

The great issue still remains: What kind of God is God, if God exists? And what does God expect, if anything? We all know that the answers that have been given to that question over the centuries have been many. Some say God is evil. For example, they look at all the suffering and death in the world, and they say God just does it; God is an evil principal. Others say God is indifferent to the world. He just creates it and then lets it run like a machine, a kind of deus ex machina. Others say that God is just a God that wants people to perform liturgical rights and cult properly, and as long as they do that, He doesn't care how they live. And so the answers are uncountable as to how people have responded to the question: What kind of God is God, if God exists? And what does God expect of me, if anything?

The Teaching of Jesus Summarized in Matthew 25:31-46

08:18 I would like to offer you today, this morning, a reflection from the teachings of Jesus about what God expects. The reflection comes from the 25th chapter of the Gospel of Matthew. It is the famous Last Judgment passage. There is no question that this is the teaching of Jesus, not necessarily His exact words, but this is His teaching; Scripture scholars are agreed. We all know the passage, but I just want to read it to you because in terms of what we're doing this morning and have been doing and will do, it's so important. In terms of your own lives, my life, the life of everyone on the planet, it is a terribly important passage. It reads,

“When the Son of Man comes in His glory, escorted by all the angels, then will He take His seat on His throne of glory. All the nations will be assembled before Him, and He will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates sheep from goats. He will place the sheep on His right hand and the goats on His left. Then the king will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you of my Father who are blessed. Take your heritage in the kingdom prepared for you since the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me to drink. I was a stranger and you made me welcome, naked and you clothed me, sick and you visited me, imprisoned and you came to see me.’ Then the virtuous will say to Him in reply, ‘Lord, where did we see you hungry and feed you, thirsty and give you to drink? Where did we see you a stranger and make you welcome, naked and clothe you, sick or imprisoned and go to see you?’ And the King will answer, ‘I tell you solemnly, in so far as you did this to one of the least of these, my brothers and sisters, you did it to me.

“Next, He will say to those on His left, ‘Go away from me with your curse upon you to the eternal fire prepared for the Devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you did not give me food. I was thirsty and you did not give me to drink. I was a stranger and you never welcomed me, naked and you never clothed me, sick and imprisoned and you never visited me.’ Then they in their turn will ask the Lord, ‘When did we see you hungry or thirsty, a stranger, naked, sick or imprisoned and did not come to your help?’ And He will answer and say, ‘I tell you solemnly, in so far as you neglected to do this to one of the least of these, you neglected to do it to me.’ And they will go away to eternal punishment, and the virtuous to eternal life. (Mt 25:31-46)

11:25 Now, it has been a very serious problem in the history of all the Christian churches, a very serious pastoral problem, a problem of guiding souls, that people have been told about many, many things that will or will not interfere with their attaining eternal salvation. But too often and too consistently over the history of all the churches, the very thing that Jesus talks about that brings people to salvation and that interferes with salvation is totally ignored, namely, mercy. All kinds of rules are set up to follow and to obey and so forth. You can listen to the Protestant preachers on the radio and television on Sunday morning in America, and every one of them is saying this and that is going to send people to Hell, and this and that. But no one talks about mercy or the lack of mercy.

Now, let's get something straight right from the beginning. You are a human being. I am. It is your prerogative, your right to accept or reject the understanding of what kind of God God is and what God expects that Jesus tells us, just like it's your prerogative as a human being to accept or to reject Jesus as the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of the Living God. However, what you cannot do, what is impossible to do, is you cannot accept the person and reject the teaching. This has been the history of Christianity for far too long, accepting the person of Jesus and ignoring His teachings. You can't do that because if Jesus is the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of the Living God, if He is the One who comes to judge the living and the dead, He is the One who knows the standard of judgment. If He says something is the standard of judgment at the end of time, He knows.

But He knows more than that because if He says this kind of activity is the standard of judgment at the end of time, what He is really saying is this kind of activity is how you should live moment to moment. If He says whether you've been merciful or merciless is going to determine your eternity, what He is saying is, "Be merciful moment to moment to moment." The standard that we have at the end of time is the standard we should be living by in the present.

Apathy in the Face of Relievable Human Misery Is Radical Evil

14:40 Matthew 25, the Last Judgment passage, negatively now, negatively says this in one sentence. It says, "Apathy," indifference to suffering, "Apathy in the face of relievable human misery is radical evil." Indifference to human suffering is radical evil. Remembering now that the biblical notion of judgment is not that God sits there like a district court judge, but we judge ourselves. We become as we do. We become as we think. We become as we choose. And if a person, as I used the example in the last conference, if a person drinks a quart of whiskey every day for 15 years, and the DTs [delirium tremens] occur—the snakes come over the top of the bed at night—that's not God sending the snakes over; that's a consequence of choice. What Jesus is saying in Matthew 25 is this: Mercilessness, indifference to human suffering, apathy, has terrible consequences in the human soul, terrible consequences. You know, in the passage of

Matthew 25, Jesus uses the word, depending upon how you translate it, hell or eternal damnation. There's no way to take that out because it's actually there.

Maybe we should stop a minute and think about this. First of all, how does the word "hell" function in human life, in human language? Well, you know, some people have an image of hell that's anthropomorphic, the Devil with the pitchfork and the fire. Other people have an image of hell that's psychological, like being trapped in a nightmare for all eternity that you can't get out of. Other people have an image of hell, the Anglican Church just published something along these lines, other people have an image of hell that's called ontological. That is that God is being, and if you do things enough against God, you literally annihilate yourself forever.

17:27 But whatever image people have, it's wrong because it is only an image about a reality that we have no contact with as human beings. We use an image to point, but we don't know the reality. The image is no more hell than the sign Dublin is Dublin, the road sign. However, the word hell functions this way in human language: hell is the word that human beings use to say that a certain kind of activity is so contrary to the nature of God, so contrary to the nature of the universe that God made, so contrary to the nature of human beings that that activity results in eternal negativity, that an activity is so contrary to the nature of God, to the nature of the universe and to the nature of being a human being that if you participate in that activity, you wind up in a situation of eternal negativity somehow.

That's what Jesus says about indifference to human suffering. Apathy in the face of relievable human misery is radical evil, He says. For you cannot get any more radical in terms of evil than to say that a particular act puts you in hell. That's what Jesus says about indifference to human suffering.

Listen to the preachers here and there and everywhere and read the sermons over the centuries of the great preachers, not just Catholic, but Orthodox and Protestant, and they are loaded with warnings and statements that are going to send people to Hell. But I tell you, they are almost devoid of any discussion about what Jesus says results in eternal negativity: mercilessness, indifference to pain, apathy towards misery. Hardly a word exists in the great sermons of the world.

I assure you. Christian preachers, for centuries, have talked about being sent to hell if you didn't go out to fight for your country. Literally, [if you don't] go out to kill for your country, you would be sent to hell. That's part of Christian preaching for centuries. You know as well as I do because you have lived how you have heard this sermon and that sermon, the sermon delivered so eloquently that you actually felt your feet burning in the

church. But never a word about what Jesus says is the problem: indifference to human suffering. Always something else, always some other standard, always some other rule. But Jesus says there is something about indifference to suffering that changes a person so badly that if he or she persists in it, there is a danger of eternal negativity.

Good Samaritan: What Will Happen to Him If I Don't Help (Lk 10:25-37)

21:25 In other words, think of the story of the Good Samaritan. Remember the story? The man is on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho and he's beaten up, and he's robbed. First, the priest goes by him and sees him and then just travels on. Then the Levite comes, and he sees the man on the side of the road, and he too travels on. And then the Samaritan comes and he helps him, the enemy, the enemy of the Jew, he helps him. Jesus tells this story.

You know and I know, the priest probably came along, saw the man on the side of the road and began to think, "Gee, if I help him, maybe there's robbers here. This is a set up. They'll rob me." Or, "I've got a sermon to deliver down at the synagogue," or whatever the case may be. "What will happen to me," you know, "if I help him?" The Levite comes along, and he says the same thing. "What will happen to me if I stop, and I'm robbed helping him? Or he beats me up, and I lose my money?" Now the Samaritan comes along, and he helps him, because the Samaritan did not say, "What will happen to me if I stop and help?" He said, "What will happen to him if I don't stop and help?" The Samaritans concern was he knew there was another human being there suffering, and if he didn't stop, what would happen to that other human being? The other two were trying to save their life in this world, "What will happen to me?" and so they left him in his suffering.

So I'm raising in front of you this morning an issue. And the issue is this: that God comes to us in Jesus and tells us that at the end of time, the standard is going to be, "I was hungry and you gave me to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me to drink, etc." Basically, "I was in need, and you helped me." The standard is going to be whether we were merciful or merciless. What is being said is if we are merciful, every deed of mercy creates us, builds us, fills us with the life of God, who is mercy. And every merciless deed empties us of that life.

Structured Apathy Built By Previous Generations

24:06 I'll just read this to you; it's something that was in *TIME* magazine. It's about college students, and it's just one little paragraph that might make a point. It says,

The loudest noise on campus now is the grind for grades. Corporate recruiters draw record crowds of students bringing good tidings that there are jobs for June graduates. Student demonstrations are rare, and when

they do erupt, the protest is not over some big political issue but just such things as local tuition increases. Eric Mowery of Haverford says, ‘We are definitely apathetic, but it is a beneficial apathy. It is an apathy of satisfaction. We have been through enough for awhile. We need a break. Now, we can go forth and party without a sense of remorse.’

Just let me comment on that for a second. Haverford is a Christian college in the United States, a good Christian college with highly intelligent students. Here’s a boy that has gone through four years of Christian college; he’d be about 21 or 22 years old, and he says, “We are definitely apathetic.” He’s proud of what Jesus says is radical evil. And he comes to a Christian environment. Now, *TIME* Magazine isn’t picking on Haverford College. I know the Catholic college scene in the United States pretty well, and I can attest to the same thing: massive indifference to human suffering, massive indifference, indistinguishable from the secular colleges. The name of the game is to accumulate talents in order to go out and make money to take care of number one.

I am not picking on Eric Mowery. I’m not picking of Haverford College. I’m not picking on the Catholic colleges. I am just saying that this is the structure of reality, that is it’s the structure of consciousness in terms of young people. Listen to Eric’s words, “But it is a beneficial apathy. It’s an apathy of satisfaction.” Beneficial to whom? The one person who dies every nine seconds in this world from starvation? The one person who dies from a disease every six seconds because they can’t get the money to be inoculated against it? Beneficial to the 100 million children working in sweat shops in the third world? It is an apathy of satisfaction. Who is satisfied?

27:06 What I am raising here is this: This young man is 21 years old, 22. He did not create himself. He did not build the institutions he went through: family, school and churches. They were built by the two generations before him. That’s us. If he is what he is, it’s because we made him that way. Do we really care? I remember being here in Ireland, and I remember a young woman took one of my retreats in Ireland, back about six or seven years ago, eight years ago. After the retreat, she thoroughly agreed with what I was saying and so forth. Then she started telling me how delighted she was that her brother had just gotten a job in a company that was making parts for the cruise nuclear missile. No sense that this is an instrument of grotesque mercilessness, and her brother was now about to put eight hours a day of his life into making an instrument of destruction, an instrument, as Pope Paul VI said, that even if it’s never used, is a crime against humanity because it robs the poor of what they need.

And that brings us to the issue. We in the first-world church—and you are in the first world, and I am in the first world—we have not only developed an ethic that justifies

homicide, the mass homicide of war, capital punishment and so forth, we in the first-world church have developed an ethic that justifies apathy. We have developed a way of thinking about Christianity that justifies indifference to human suffering. Now, you will never find a priest or a pastor or a minister or a bishop get up and say you can be apathetic. That would be clearly so contrary to Matthew 25 it couldn't be said.

But the way the ethic has been developed is this: First-world churches teach an ethic of justified apathy by teaching an ethic, (a way of right and wrong), by teaching an ethic that they have a right to pursue the good life for themselves and their families regardless of the source of the good life. In other words, "I have a right to pursue the good life for me and for mine." Ah, you say. You say, "I'm really not that way. I'm just a simple, middle-class, moderate person." Consider this: One person dies every nine seconds in the world from starvation, as we said. We could go on giving the figures of the desperate need human beings are in. And remember, the figures are just statistics. But remember, every child that dies of starvation, there is a mother and father that has to watch it die. There is more than one person suffering. Every person that dies from a disease they could be inoculated against, there are those who love him or her that also suffer.

Now, we say, "I'm not a person that has a lot of money. I'm not a person that is indifferent to human suffering." I ask you to consider this: How much money every year is spent in Ireland on alcohol in a world where one person dies every nine seconds. Alcohol is absolutely non-necessary for existence. None. It can't help existence in anyway. No one needs it to live. In the United States, for example, it's a business that runs into the hundreds of billions of a dollars a year. I haven't looked at the figures in the last seven or eight years, but in the United States, the money that's spent on horse, dog and harness racing is 88 billion dollars a year. We're talking billions here. Just before I came here, a couple of weeks before I came here, I read a statistic in the paper that in the United States last year, 410 billion dollars was spent by people in casino gambling—410 billion dollars! That's just a little short of the whole government budget. Average people, middle class people, go out and they will spend 80, 90, 100 dollars for tennis shoes. Tennis shoes made in Southeast Asia by a child who's getting 32 cents an hour so they can have high-class tennis shoes. Said another way, how much money is spent on style and fashion? Smoking, cigarettes?

Mind, Time, and Money

33:00 Here's the point. In real life, concrete existence, we have three things that we use for ourselves or for others: our mind; our human time, our life's time; and our money. Mind, time and money. But here is a fact of life: mind, time and money that's spent in one direction is mind, time and money that can never be spent in another direction. Mind, time and money that's spent for my pleasure is mind, time and money that can never be

used to relieve other people's pain. It's that simple. We didn't create this universe; we didn't create this world; and we didn't create ourselves or others. We are but stewards of the God of mercy. We are stewards of the God of mercy. We have developed a culture of indifference to human suffering.

There is plenty of money. There is a funnel of money that is bottomless for war and for luxury and for style and for fashion. But where is the money to help the hundred million children working in sweatshops who produce our cheap goods?

Many years ago in the United States, there was a famous lady, Catholic lady, a wealthy Catholic lady. When wealthy people get a divorce, in the United States anyway, this whole thing is usually taken care of by lawyers, and no one sees what really goes on. They file the papers at the end of all kinds of secret proceedings, and everything is done very, very diplomatically. Even though the divorce is a public thing, nothing really gets public because they come to amiable agreements. Well, this particular divorce got kind of saucy, kind of mean. And so, instead of it being settled out of court, it went to court. And this particular Catholic lady, whom all of you know—there's no sense mentioning her name—this particular Catholic lady was shown on the court documents that the previous year she had spent 10,000 dollars on underwear. 10,000 dollars on underwear.

Now, can you imagine in a world where one person dies every nine seconds, in a world that's a furnace of agony and needs so much help, a person spending 10,000 dollars on underwear. What kind of consciousness does it take in terms of mind and time and money to go and shop for 10,000 dollars worth of underwear? And yet she did. She spent about 40,000 dollars getting her hair done, etc.

Mercy Is Christian Asceticism

36:16 The danger here is that we start waving a finger at her and start throwing stones because which of us is without sin? Which of us in the first world has intentionally and by decision based on faith in Jesus directed his mind or her mind, time and money to mercy rather than to self indulgence? I don't mean we're supposed to starve to death. The mind, time and money that I'm talking about is the luxury mind, time and money, not the mind, time and money you need for clothes to keep you warm, for food and so forth. I'm talking about the mind, time and money that's not needed for sustenance. I'm not talking about a law or a rule; I'm talking about mercy. I'm not talking about directing it here or there; I'm talking about an identity with suffering people and wanting to help them rather than wanting to have a Guinness.

You see, the central symbol of Christianity is the cross, and the cross is a statement, clear as can be, of the postponement of gratification by me so that others can have life. The

cross is a cross of mercy. The cross is a symbol of giving up things that I think would be good for me so that others can live. In other words, let me say it this way: Mercy is always an ascetical practice. The asceticism of Christianity is mercy. God has no interest in you suffering through not having an ice cream soda if you want to have an ice cream soda. That's irrelevant. But in order to be merciful, in order to be an artist of mercy, as we talked about last night, in order to be a person of mercy, it means redirecting mind, time and money out of normal patterns we've had since childhood, secular patterns that are totally justified by the secular culture and redirecting that mind, time and money into responding to human suffering, wherever it might be.

Mercy is the Christian form of asceticism. We must sacrifice what we want so that others can have life. We must give up or give a gift, if you will, of things we could have but don't need in order that others can have things that they absolutely need to live. Said in a simple form, we must set aside our luxury for those who don't have sustenance to live, that simple. However, when we do that we become like God. Literally, we become like God. For God is mercy, mercy that sacrifices so that others can have life.

Propaganda of Progress

39:57 Look at the newspapers. Look at the television. Look at the stupidity of what's going on there in terms of improving the world. You hear what's said. You see what's written. It's the whole myth of progress that's put out there. You know how that goes. That somehow, the one person who dies every nine seconds from starvation, the man every six seconds being raped in prison, the hundred million children out there producing in sweatshops goods for the third world [first world is meant]; you know how it goes, the myth of progress, the lie, the propaganda of progress.

It says this: Progress will come to the poor and the suffering and the oppressed without any sacrifice on my part, without any pain on my part. Progress will come to the suffering of this world without any risk on my part, without any disciplined service to them on my part. Somehow, things will get better, the myth goes. Somehow the poor will get richer. Somehow the people in slavery will be moved out of slavery and oppression. Pain will go away. The sick will be healed. The lame will walk. The imprisoned will be free, rehabilitated, healed. Guards will no longer torture prisoners. Progress will come, while I worry about being in fashion, while I worry about the soccer match, while I raise another Guinness.

It won't come that way. It won't come that way. We have developed in Christianity, Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant, a very, very unserious attitude towards suffering and towards the fact that God wants it eliminated, responded to. We are very, very unserious about it in the Church. We assuage our conscience by saying there's little groups out here

and little groups out there that help. That's not what Jesus is talking about. We are not going to be judged on the fact that we gave a few pounds to a little group who's doing good. The question is, at the end time, I was hungry and you gave me to eat. I was thirsty and you gave to drink (Mt 25:31-46). The question is not for the little group. It's for us to be merciful.

Human Suffering is a Sacramental

42:40 It's a most serious problem. But it's not a law. It's not a rule. That's not what's at stake here. It's about participating in the life of God, participating in what Pope John Paul II said in his encyclical *Dives in Misericordia*, participating in mercy, which is the most stupendous attribute of the Creator and the Redeemer. It is about becoming divinized, becoming holy. Mercy is the road to holiness. It is about ceasing to be merciless, for that is the road to the unholy. That is not of God.

Everyone here knows how it's possible to be merciful or merciless just with the tongue. There's a real choice at that moment. Whether the tongue is going to be used as an agent of the divinity or whether the tongue is going to be used for the agent of some other spirit. We all know that we really do have a choice between watching a baseball game and going down to a rest home where elderly people are alone and in need and isolated in pain and just being with them. The opportunities are a myriad. There is no end because the world is suffering.

44:18 So let me say it to you this way and see if it makes any sense this way. What I'm saying to you is human suffering according to Jesus is the most efficacious sacramental in the entire universe. Human suffering is a sacramental. It is a way that we can contact God. "Where did we see You?" "Whatever you did to the least, you did to Me?" (Mt 25:31-46). It is a direct contact with God. Identification with people's pain and suffering, identification with the victim, not with the victor, with the victim, in his pain and misery is as sure a way as there is on the face of the earth to encounter God, to become holy.

Now, as I may have mentioned, we all know how it is possible to ignore human misery and to justify our ignoring it. In the world in which we live, which is totally secular, it's justified. We live in an economy, basically capitalism, where the fundamental principle is 'Too much is not enough.' You are entitled to grab all you can get as long as it is within the law. But that's not the Gospel. The Gospel is the other way around. You are stewards of the God of mercy. Everything you have, from your tongue to your money to your whole person to every article you receive is meant to be an agent of mercy. When a person is hungry, I assure you, and you hand that person some food, when a person is lonely and in pain and you spend time with them, that person experiences mercy. As John

Paul II said in his encyclical that we read last conference, you are communicating and *revealing* the Father to him or her.

This is not about law and obligations. This is about becoming one thing, a merciful being, by participating in the life of God and choosing not to do that. Look at the amount of time, mind and money that you and I and our peers spend on entertainment, television entertainment, entertainment here. I don't mean going to the theater, maybe that. Constantly being entertained in one form or another. What I'm not saying is that there's anything wrong with entertainment, that there's anything wrong in itself with horseracing or soccer or anything wrong with having a Guinness. What I'm saying is in a world that is a furnace of agony and where people so desperately need to be responded to, there is a choice whether to go to the horses, have the Guinness, be entertained, or to do something for someone else, to be merciful.

The biblical scholar John L. McKenzie, that I've quoted so often here, says, "Mercy in the New Testament is God's saving will. Mercy initiates and consummates the process of salvation." Mercy initiates and consummates; it is the alpha and omega of the salvation process, mercy. That's what God asks us to come into, to be part of.

Abbé Pierre of the Emmaus Movement

48:48 There's a great French priest, still alive, by the name Abbé Pierre. At the end of the Second World War, he saw all the people devastated and people who would never come back from war, in the sense of a mental illness and everything that comes from war. And he began a whole movement called the Emmaus Movement, in which people spend their lives building community with the homeless and street people and refugees. In other words, they just don't feed them. They try to give them human companionship.

But Abbé Pierre's motto is, "The Christian takes care of the worst off first." The Christian takes care of the worst off first. There are plenty of people to take care of the rich. Rich can pay for anything they want. But who's going to worry about those who have nothing—the least; and yet, that's where Jesus says He is. "Whatever you do to the least, you do to me" (Mt 25:40). The Christian takes care of the worst off first, which is awfully close to Mother Teresa, "I give to the poor for nothing what only the rich can afford." That's mercy.

Again, we are not talking about a law. We are talking about, indeed, an asceticism. For it is a struggle. It is an effort. There is pain and redirecting mind, time and money from things I have grown used to into a merciful life. That is asceticism. But it's an asceticism that builds us into the reality of God. It's an asceticism through which we enter the being of God, which is mercy. The problem is I can't do it for you, you can't do it for me, and

God can't force us to do it. It's either freely done or it can't be done. And all the excuses are there. We know every one of them that will justify our not redirecting our mind, time and money into a life of mercy or at least redirecting our excess mind, time and money into a life of mercy, the mind, time and money we don't need to work and other things. We know all the excuses. The only question is are we going to listen to the excuses or are we going to listen to Jesus, the God of mercy incarnate, who says, "I want mercy," (Mt 9:13) who says, "Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy" (Mt 5:7).

I'm not asking you to be an ascetic monk. I'm not suggesting that at all. I'm not asking you to live an abnormal life. Stay right where you are. But what I'm saying to you is this culture, every culture, has dulled your sense of the suffering of humanity, has dulled your Christian commitment to the reality of mercy. Jesus tells us they should be shocked. We should see suffering and respond, as He did in Gethsemane and so many other places. It's always easy to look at, to miss it. It's always easy to bypass it and not see it. "I was hungry." "I didn't see you" (Mt 25: 31-46). But you know and I know that we do have the capacity to be merciful persons, to grow in the life of God. The only question is will we do it.

(Music)

[End of Audio]

11-The Trustworthy Lamb

The Lamb of God is Power But Not Worldly Power

We have to ask ourselves why it is, when we have the symbol of the Lamb in Holy Scripture, when it so permeates the Gospel in the form of the Suffering Servant and the Lamb of God, when the Lamb of God is central to the whole understanding of the Eucharist and indeed, here in Ireland at the shrine at Knock, [where] the Lamb is the central symbol, we have to ask ourselves why is it that people almost begin to shiver and become, if you will, cleverly dismissive when it is suggested that their task in life is to become little Christs, little Lambs of God. Again, I call to your attention St. Augustine's famous statement about communion: "We are to become what we consume." We consume the Lamb of God. This is the Lamb of God. This is what we consume. Therefore, we are to become Lambs of God. Yet people rebel against it. Christians rebel against it. The whole Church rebels against it.

Who looks at your general line of Catholic, Protestant or Orthodox churches and says, "There's a flock of Lambs"? Certainly not most people in the world today and not most people for the last 1700 years. The churches have been political powers. They have been military powers. They have been economic powers. But to think of the Church as the Lamb of God, that this is the way people experienced it who looked at the Church, well, that's something that simply hasn't happened since the first three centuries.

People rebel almost, Christians rebel almost at the thought of being like the Lamb of God. What's the problem? Well, we all know someplace deep inside of us what the problem is. The problem is the Lamb is a symbol of powerlessness, and we do not want to be powerless. Power is philosophically defined as the capacity to make things happen or the capacity to produce change. That's the definition of power: the capacity to make things happen or the capacity to produce change. There are many, many forms of power.

Violence is a power. Violence produces change. It makes things happen. Fear is a power. It produces change, makes things happen. Hate is a power. Enmity is a power. Practically every nation in the world keeps its unity by having enemies, economic, political, military. Presently, in the United States, since the end of the Cold War, as the society disintegrates, there's a desperate search to find another enemy. The United States came together as a society only at one moment since the end of the Cold War and that was in 1991 for 42 days when they were fighting Iraq. Political organizations hold themselves together by their enemies. People unite and have a bonding against their common enemy. Enmity is a power, in other words.

03:55 But there are other powers, other things in life that make things happen. For example, care is a power. When you care for someone, things happen both to you and to them. Every teacher knows that curiosity is a power. If you can develop curiosity in your students, you've won the ballgame as far as teaching. Love is a power. It makes things happen. Sacrifice on behalf of others, service on behalf of others are powers.

Our problem is that you and I and most people most of the time in most of the history of the world have identified power with one form of power only: the power of violence and fear, the power that runs states and governments and militaries. If you don't have that form of power, we think, you don't really have power. But that is precisely the form of power that is not embodied in the Lamb of God. There is nothing in the symbol of the Lamb that would suggest violence, homicide, fear, threat. There is nothing threatening in the Lamb. However, we feel, because this is the way we've been brought up, if you do not have the power to hurt, the power to cause fear that you may hurt, whether that's by the tongue or the gun—you can hurt by the tongue and threaten by the tongue just as easily as you can hurt by the gun—if we do not have that power, we have no power. And we don't want to walk around the world being powerless.

Remember in the Gospels, Jesus' temptation after His baptism. He's taken up to a high mountain, and He is shown all the kingdoms of the world. Satan offers Him the power and glory of all these kingdoms, power over all these kingdoms, and He refuses it. To say it straight out and without any complications: Jesus utterly rejects the use of political power for the attainment of the Kingdom of God. That's what's in the Gospel.

Or, as the biblical scholar John L. McKenzie, who I have been quoting says, "For Jesus, Rome is essentially trivial." The state is a trivial item. In other words, states and nations rely on the power of fear and violence and homicide. That's how they survive. That's how they live, 100 percent. Jesus relies on other powers. He relies, first of all, on the rejection of the powers of violence and fear and hurting people and instead, he relies on the power of God-like mercy and love to accomplish everything that has to be accomplished.

I suppose, in terms of the world, the everyday world, the common person, you and I and the everyday world, our feeling is to rely on the powers of mercy and love is to be without power. Yet I submit to you that it is mercy and love that are the power of God. Mercy and love are the power of God. They are real powers. They make things happen that we cannot imagine. And they protect.

Ronald Reagan or Mother Teresa

07:57 You think about all the people in the world, all the so-called public servants who travel hither and yon. Think about it. You probably don't remember the exact reality, but you remember the event. Several years ago, a decade ago or so, Ronald Reagan was shot. The instant he was shot, about 75 people came out of nowhere, armed to the teeth—bodyguards. So it is with all the great public servants. They are surrounded by men of violence carrying weapons of violence, the power to hurt, because, I suspect, they're so beloved.

But there is one person, world-renowned— world-renowned—that walks the face of the earth without any bodyguards. Everyone knows her. She has her opinions. She speaks. And she goes to places that not even the local police will go to at night. That's Mother Teresa. The reason is because the poor know that she is a genuine servant. She is not someone just putting the term public servant on herself in order to have the good life, the easy life, the prestigious life and the life where you can boss people around. She actually serves the poor. She is actually an agent of mercy and love towards them, and they know it, and they know it the world over. Hence, she's utterly protected, whether in the slums of Calcutta or the slums of New York City. No police, no bodyguards, nothing.

Mercy and love are powers. But in order for them to exist, we have to use them. Let me say this another way: There is no question in the Gospel that Jesus has no concern whatsoever about governmental politics, whether of the Jewish form or the Roman form, none. He is not interested in the kingdoms of the world. He is interested in the Kingdom of God. The average person perceives, if you're really going to get things done, get a hold of the levers of governmental power and force them to be done. Jesus, to use McKenzie's language, considered that trivial. That doesn't change anything.

The Power of the Resurrected Christ At Pentecost

10:46 But Jesus did come with a power. And He passed that power on to the Church. We see that power passed onto the Church on the birthday of the Church, Pentecost Sunday. It is the power of God. It is the power of God in the resurrected Christ. It is the power of God's Holy Spirit. It is a real power. And it's always mercy and love. Do you remember right after Pentecost Sunday? Peter and James are going up to the temple, and there's a man there for 38 years who's been begging, and who was lame. That's a hard, hard life. He's looking for a little money from Peter and James, a few shekels. He was trying to bum some spare change off them. Peter goes up to him, and says "Silver and gold I have none. But what I have I give you. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, arise and walk" (Ac 3:6). It says right there, in the Acts of the Apostles, immediately the man's muscles were restored. His legs were healed. And he jumped. It says he ran into the temple leaping for joy.

That's the power of God. And that was manifest—starting in Pentecost and on out. That's the power of the resurrected Christ. That's the power that was purchased on the cross. That's the power to heal. That's the power to save. That's the power to renew the face of the earth. That's power of love and mercy in Jesus.

The Church lived in that power for almost 300 years, lived by that power for almost 300 years. I gave you the history earlier in this conference. But approximately at the time of Constantine, the Church begins to rely on another kind of power in order to get its job done, the power of governmental politics, which is the power of fear and violence and the use of homicide. I gave you the history of that power a few conferences ago.

Power You Don't Use You Lose

13:11 But the point I want to make now is this: Power you don't use is power that you lose. Power that you use is power that you become adept at. But power that you don't use is power that you lose. Ever so gradually, as I pointed out, in 311 AD, you could not be a member of the fighting Roman army and be a Christian. In 416 AD, 105 years later, Emperor Theodosius II issued a decree that no one could be in the fighting Roman army unless they were a Christian. And so there's a total change in the kind of power that's being used now. And it continues on to this day.

We look at the Acts of the Apostles and we say, "Oh, that's power that was only for the Apostles. That's power that was only for the first generation." I'll tell you, there is not one word in Scripture that says that's power only for the first generation. That's an excuse because power that you do not use is power that atrophies, power that you lose. You can be a strong person. You can be able to pick 300 pounds up over your head. But if you stop exercising and lifting weights and so forth, time will pass and you won't be able to pick 50 pounds up because your muscles just weaken.

You probably heard of the Eskimos. For hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of years, the Eskimos in Alaska were living quite well, from father to son, mother to daughter. They were teaching your children how to live, how to make little spears, how to hunt the seals, how to fish. 100 years ago in Alaska the gold rush came people come looking for gold and oil and furs. They taught the Eskimos how to use a gun. It's quicker to kill seals with a gun than with making their own material. So they do kill the seals with the gun. They get many more seals killing the seals with the gun. But in two generations, they have forgotten how to kill seals, how to live without the gun. Now they're dependent on outsiders for guns, ammunition. And now they're wage slaves. Power that you do not use is power that you lose.

In the beginning, the power of Pentecost, the power of Jesus Christ was there. The power was manifest through the Lamb of God. The Lamb was understood to be an agent of power, not the power of violence and the power of enmity. Not the power of homicide and fear, but the power of God, the power of the Holy Spirit. People wanted to be the Lamb because it was understood, in imitation of the Lamb of God, God could work through you. And ever so gradually, starting about the time of Constantine, the power of Pentecost, was substituted by the power of governmental politics and violence and intrigue and lies and so forth.

It is as if, 2000 years ago, God the Father saw this earth of ours as a furnace of agony, people suffering unimaginably. So He sends His Son to put out that furnace of agony. And the Son, through His life and teachings and death and resurrections builds a tremendous hose between that infinite ocean of grace that is God and the earth, a tremendous hose. And the waters of Heaven begin to flow down on Pentecost Sunday and pour out upon the face of the earth and change it to let people know that God exists, God loves them and God is mercy. And it goes on for 300 years. Every Roman emperor tried to exterminate the Church in some form or another during that time with more or less energy. The Church is an outlaw church, and yet, the Church expands and grows until at the time of Constantine, it's the largest religion in the Empire. The power of God is working without any politics, without any violence. Things are changing.

And then the Church adopts the pagan ethic of justified war and violence and hurt and fear. And it's like, with the adoption of that, a knot is tied in the hose. Instead of that tremendous power of the grace of God flowing through, all we get now is an occasional trickle, a miracle here, an occasional miracle there. As time passes from the time of Constantine to today, fewer and fewer people even expect anything from the Church. Today, perhaps they don't even expect from the Church as much as politics can give them.

I remember the story told about Thomas Aquinas. Thomas Aquinas was standing on the steps of the Vatican with the Pope. They were looking at a caravan coming in from the east, a caravan of gold and silks and perfumes and art and treasures coming into the Vatican. And the Pope, who was the successor of Peter, quoting that passage I just quoted you from Acts of the Apostles, "Silver and gold I have none," because he's the successor of Peter, says to Thomas Aquinas, about himself, "No longer does Peter have to say, 'Silver and gold I have none.'" And Thomas Aquinas says, "And no longer *can* Peter say, 'Take up your pallet and walk'" (Ac 3:6).

Trust Has To Be Complete

19:38 Power that we do not use is power that we lose. If we want the power that Jesus has, then we've got to set aside the power that the world has, for they are incompatible. Fear and love. Greed and mercy. And so the great issue is this: We fear to trust Jesus. We fear to live with Jesus as our sole power. We want more power in this world than what Jesus had. We want more power in this world than Jesus. The issue is trust, simply and unequivocally. Christians do not trust in Jesus. Oh, they trust Him up to a point, but over and over and over again, you will hear Christians of all rank and places in the Church explain to you why, in this instance, they do not have to follow the teachings of Jesus; they can compromise them.

The problem is this: When it comes to trusting in God, you either trust in Him completely or you don't trust in Him at all because God is different from you and I. I can say to you, "Trust me." And you could say, "Oh, let me take a look at it. I'll trust you a little bit and see what happens." But if it's really God, the God who is love and omnipotent, then you either trust Him totally, or there is no trust. And Jesus tells us that. He is very, very explicit about it. In the sixth chapter of the Gospel of St. Matthew right in the heart of the Sermon of the Mount which John Paul II in his encyclical *Evangelium Vitae* calls the Magna Carta of the Christian life, Jesus tells us about the absolute necessity of trusting, that this is the way His disciples ought to live. He says,

No one can be a slave of two masters: he will either hate the one or love the other or treat the first with respect and the second with scorn. You cannot serve both God and money. This is why I am telling you not to worry about your life and what you ought to eat, nor about your body or how you are to clothe it. Surely life means more than food and the body more than clothing! Look at the birds of the air. They neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? Can any of you, for all your worrying, add a single cubit to his lifespan? And why worry about clothing? Think about the flowers growing in the field; they never have to work or spin; yet I assure you, Solomon in all his regalia was not robed like one of these. Now if this is how God clothes the grass in the fields which is here today and thrown into the furnace tomorrow, will He not much more look after you, O you people of little faith? So do not worry; do not say, 'What are we to eat? What are we to drink? How are we to be clothed?' It is the pagans who set their hearts on these things. Your heavenly Father knows you need them. Set your heart first on the Kingdom of God and its righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well (Mt 6:24-34).

23:41 The issue is trust. No one wants to follow the Lamb of God because they do not trust that Jesus, in fact, knew what He was talking about. They do not trust Jesus. It is one thing to say, “Jesus, I trust you.” It is another thing all together to actually trust Jesus. To actually trust Jesus means you employ His means in this moment. To actually trust Jesus means you commit, moment to moment to moment, you commit your life to living the life of the Lamb of God. You commit by living by those powers that Jesus lived by and rejecting those powers that Jesus rejected. That’s what it means to trust Jesus. And if you fail, you recognize the failure as sin and you simply say, “I have sinned. Forgive me,” and go on. You don’t simply say, “I will not live according to what Jesus said, and now I won’t even call it sin; I’ll call it good.” No. Trust in Jesus is essential to the carrying out of the mission that Jesus has committed to His Church, essential for everyone at every place in every ministry in the Church. It is not Jesus that creates the reality of trust that’s necessary. Trust is in the heart and soul of Holy Scripture. Trust is the heart and the soul of the Holy Scripture. Without trust, God does nothing in Holy Scripture.

Martin Buber, who I mentioned earlier, who is the premier Jewish theologian of the 20th century, writes that the root of Jewish faith is the relationship of trust in Yahweh. Without standing firm in trust, there is no Abraham, no Moses, no prophets. Standing firm in trusting God is the imperative of the imperatives of Hebrew Scripture. Buber says explicitly, and I quote, “Only if you stand firm in the fundamental relationship of your life, that is, the relationship of this person to the power in which his or her being originates, do you have an essential stability.” You must stand firm in trust with your Creator to have absolute essential stability, to be able to work properly in life and to be able to allow the Creator to work properly through you. This is not Christianity; this is Judaism. This is something that exists in Jesus’ core of His being that He would have known right from childhood on forward. Trust is everything. Without trust, nothing occurs.

Abraham’s Trust: God Will Provide

27:04 Who is called the Father of faith? Abraham, right? He’s the father of the Jewish faith, the Christian faith, the Muslim faith. He is the father of faith. Everything starts with Abraham. Now, think. Think about the situation. Abraham is 100; Sarah is 94. No children. Then the three angels come to the Oak of Mamre, and they tell Abraham that he’s going to have a child. Sarah just laughs at them. And a year later, of course, they do. They have Isaac. The word Isaac, by the way, in Hebrew means “God smiles.” Sarah laughs, God smiles. Now, they loved the child. It’s their only child. It’s what they’ve been hoping for. God has told Abraham that his descendants will number as the stars in the Heaven and the sands of the sea. Then Abraham gets a revelation. The revelation is that he’s supposed to sacrifice Isaac.

You remember the story. It's only one paragraph in the Old Testament. One paragraph! But it's probably the most commented on paragraph by Jewish scholars, this one paragraph—the journey of Abraham and Isaac to Mount Moriah (Gn 22:1-18) They walked to Mount Moriah. The Jewish religious leaders have concocted all kinds of stories to tell of the difficulty of that journey to Mount Moriah. Basically, it's an ordeal of trust. Are we going to continue to trust God who said, "Your descendants will number among the stars of the Heavens"? And here, you're about to kill your only descendant. How can that be? So the stories would go like this: Isaac saying, "Hey, run away from here. This old man doesn't know what he's doing. He's senile. Get out of here." Abraham saying, "I got my child. I got what I want. Hang on. Cling to it. Don't sacrifice." And so they walk on.

And now we get back into the Bible itself. You remember they're walking up Mount Moriah, and Isaac says to Abraham, "Where is the Lamb?" And Abraham says, "God will provide." Jewish writers say it is as if God gave Abraham a hot piece of coal and said, "Trust me. Put that under your armpit. It will not burn you," and Abraham trusted.

And, of course, we know what happened. The ram appears. Abraham gets a revelation that he's not supposed to engage in blood sacrifice. And *an entirely different strain of religion enters the world*. You see it was normal for people to kill their first child in those days, quite normal. There are whole walls in Iraq of temples from that time that contain vases of the first-born who were sacrificed to placate the gods. Human sacrifice of children is normal throughout history until relatively recently, and sacrifice to God still goes on today. Unless you have lived in a world where you have been terrorized by nature, it's hard to understand how people would do *anything* to be on the side of God. And they thought the best thing to do was to give God the best, the best of everything, the first fruits of everything, which was obviously the first son.

But here's the point: Abraham goes up the mountain, and God does provide. Think of your deepest religious principle, the one that you most fear breaking, the one you wouldn't dare break before God. That's what Abraham broke when he did not sacrifice Isaac. He received the revelation that God does not want human sacrifice, and he broke it [the previous principle]. He trusted the revelation of God, trusted it. Suppose Abraham had gone up the mountain and Isaac were to say, "Where's the lamb?" and Abraham thought to himself, "I'm not going to trust God on this one. I'm going to get a ram just in case I have to go too far with this." Suppose he didn't trust God, in other words. But he did trust God. Suppose he only trusted God 99 percent. It would be no good. It has to be 100 percent, and then God can work spectacularly into the future with you.

Moses' Trust: March On

32:06 Moses is the same way, isn't he? Remember, Moses finally gets the people out of Egypt. They're in the desert. Pharaoh has a change of mind, and he's coming after them now. They get the sea in front of them. They get Pharaoh's army behind them, coming after them to rape, rob, kill, murder. They have the beating sun up ahead over them. They're complaining against Moses. They're in rebellion. They're saying, "Why didn't you leave us back in Egypt? At least we could have our families." Moses goes up the mountain to talk to God. He explains the situation to God. Remember, he says, "God, this is what's happening. They're rebelling against me. Pharaoh's coming to destroy us. There's the sea in front of us. We're starving." And remember what God's answer was at that time to Moses? Two words. "March on" (Ex 14:15). He explained nothing. He just said, "March on." He didn't tell Moses what was going to happen. He said, "March on." Moses comes down from the mountain. He tells his people, "March on." And of course, the sea opens. They are saved. The Exodus is completed and world history changes.

But suppose Moses came down from the mountain. He says, "Yeah, God said, 'March on,' and I'll march on, but geez, I think I'm going to send a few people back to see if I can cut a deal with the Pharaoh, just in case." It doesn't work. There is no partial trust in God.

Mary's Trust: Her Child, The Savior

33:37 Suppose you and I lived 2000 years ago, and we wanted to change the world. Where would we go to change the world 2000 years ago? Well, thinking like we normally do, we would probably go to the Roman Senate, maybe, and take over the Senate or convince those people that these are the kinds of programs that should be structured. Or maybe we take over Caesar's job. Or take over the military to really get change, real change accomplished. Well, 2000 years ago, when God wanted to change the world, you know where He went. He went to a young girl on the side of a hill in Galilee, Mary. That's where He went. Now, no one would think of going there, but God did.

Then He came to her, and He asked her to trust in a way that is unbelievable. He asked her to become an unwed mother in a society where you were killed for this. And if you weren't killed, your life was destroyed. This is a society where every day the men pray thanking God they weren't women, in a society of grotesque patriarchy, where women were responsible for all the evils of sexuality and were so treated. If you can imagine a 14, 15 year old girl and the face of rough and tumble and righteous political and religious leaders, men, knowing what they're going to do and hearing the stories of how this thing was handled. [In that context] God asked her, Mary, to trust Him and to become the mother, the unwed mother, of the Child. She trusts. Few of us would like to ever be put in

that situation. She trusts. And God takes care of it. *But it's after she trusts.* And the consequences of her trust: the “Be it done unto me according to Your Word,” is of course that Jesus is born (Lk 1:38).

Trust. We mentioned Jesus in Gethsemane a few conferences ago. Jesus trusts that His understanding of God is correct and that God loves the armed servant of the high priest that has his ear cut off. Therefore, Jesus must trust Him and love Him. He must trust God enough to love this person even though it seems like it's going to cost Him His death. And He does trust. And it goes forward to Resurrection and Pentecost.

The point, of course, in all this is simply to suggest, very, very clearly, that what Jesus says is exactly as John L. McKenzie says, “The teachings of Jesus are simple to understand and simple to execute.” We know what we have to do. The issue is fear. It is not Jesus' unclarity that makes the teachings un-understandable. It's our lack of trust. But make no mistake about it. Jesus introduced something about trust and about God, totally different, into the world.

Jewish Scholar Joseph Klaussner's *Jesus of Nazareth*

37:25 Back in the early 1920s, a major Jewish scholar by the name of Joseph Klaussner wrote a book called *Jesus of Nazareth*. It really was a seminal work, in which, for the first time, using modern scholarship, someone investigated the reality that Jesus was Jewish and what that would mean. In other words, as you are Irish you live in a certain atmosphere; other people are German, they live in a different atmosphere. That atmosphere had to affect how He spoke, how He acted and so forth. So this man, Joseph Klaussner, who was a major Jewish scholar, wrote this book entitled *Jesus of Nazareth*, which is a very positive book on the person Jesus, as to who He was and how He lived in that world, that Jewish world of that time.

However, Klaussner points out some things that I think are important here in terms of trust, in terms of God, in terms of Jesus. Things that are taken for granted in Judaism but Christians ignore. Let me read you something from Klaussner's work. He says,

There was yet another element in Jesus' idea of God which Judaism could not accept. Jesus tells His disciples to love their enemies as well as their friends since their Father in heaven makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain upon the righteous and the unrighteous. With this, Jesus introduces something new into the idea of God. Love your enemies is the introduction of something new into the idea of God. But His teaching has not proved possible. Therefore, Jesus has left the course of ordinary life untouched—wicked, cruel, pagan, and His exalted ethical

idea has been relegated to a book or, at most, becomes the possession of monastics and recluses who live away from the paths of ordinary life. As a sole and sufficient national code of teaching, Judaism could by no means agree with Jesus. And such has also been the case with Christianity from the time of Constantine to this present day.

That's awfully strong, that Jesus introduced an entirely new idea into the notion of God: love of enemies. Judaism rejected it. And Christianity has rejected it since the time of Constantine. Klaussner goes on to say:

Jesus, with utmost insistence, preached repentance, good works and supposed that there was no necessity for political rebellion. If only the people of Galilee, Judea and beyond the Jordan would wholly repent and reach the highest level of moral conduct humanly possible so that a person should love his enemies, forgive his transgressors, associate with publicans and sinners and extend the cheek to be smite—then would God perform a miracle and the Kingdom would be restored. Jesus was, therefore, truly Jewish in everything. The only difference was that against the belief in a political Messiah, He supposed that only with the help of God, without the help of armed force, He should restore the kingdom of Israel to the Jews if they would only repent. Pharisaic Judaism was too mature. Its purpose is too fixed to change. Its leaders were fighting for their national existence and grappling with foreign oppressors and with semi-foreigners who sought to crush it and with a decadent idolatry that sought to absorb it. In such days of stress and affliction, they were themselves far removed—and would remove also their fellow Jews—from the dangerous fantasies of Jesus, an extremism which most of the race could not endure. They saw at the outset what the end would be of following Jesus. How could Judaism accede to such an ethical idea?" (p. 379 ff)

They saw, as we see, what the consequences are of following the Lamb of God. At least they *think* they saw, for they never saw Resurrection. They never saw Pentecost. And so we don't see Resurrection, and we don't see Pentecost. We've refused to trust in Jesus because, if you remember our little circle on the board, how much do we see? In our little 2 x 4 world, we don't see how it's going to work out, so we continue to rely on violence and fear and threat, political messiahship, when Jesus comes with something infinitely beyond that: Resurrection, Pentecost and the Kingdom of God.

And so, what I'm saying to you today is this: Don't confuse yourselves about thoughts that Jesus isn't clear in what He's saying. Don't confuse yourself with thoughts that the Lamb of God isn't a very clear symbol. We know what the Lamb of God is all about. It's suffering service to a suffering humanity. It's Christ-like love. It's the rejection of all those dark things: enmity, violence, homicide, hurt, gossip and all that. It's the giving of one's self over to a merciful God with a merciful life. It's vulnerability in order to serve, in order to love, in order to be merciful.

Co-Patroness of Missions, St. Thérèse of Lisieux's Trust: My Little Effort Will Help

43:46 I'm looking here in the back of our church. I'm looking at the picture of St. Thérèse of Lisieux. She has been called the most powerful saint of our time. She has probably brought more peace to more people than anyone in this century of Cain, of war and destruction. In 1927, two years after she was canonized, the Pope made her co-patroness of the missions. Now, here is this sister that never left Lisieux, died at 24 years old in a convent, in Lisieux, a nothing town and she's made co-patron of the missions. It doesn't make any sense. Francis Xavier is patron of the missions, the man, and that makes sense. He's the great missionary. But not Thérèse. *She never left Lisieux*. She had a tiny little life, a few little excursions, died at 24, unknown to anyone. How does she wind up co-patron of the missions?

(This paragraph is slightly edited.)

When Thérèse was dying, she wrote a letter that no one knew about until her beatification. She wrote to a friend that she was so sick that she could not even pray any longer, and we all know you can get like that. Since she couldn't pray and couldn't do anything, how could she love God? She says to the friend, "I have come across a way to love God, at least I'm going to try." Even though Thérèse would almost suffocate just by being moved as she had only a quarter of a lung at this point the sisters would bring Thérèse outside in a carriage so she could get some air. Thérèse told her friend "I have hit upon an idea. When they take me out in my carriage to get some air," she said, "I get out of the carriage, and I take a few steps. And I offer it up to Jesus in union with the sufferings of Jesus. And I say to Jesus, 'Will you take this little effort, and will you help that missionary out there who's worst off, the one who's about to go over the edge,' morally, physically, mentally, spiritually, and just use this to draw him back.

Her sisters knew nothing about this, that is, the other sisters in the convent. They saw her get up out of this little carriage, walk out four or five steps—took her about 20 minutes—turn around, come back and suffocate for two hours. They thought she was losing her mind. She told nobody. But that's what she did. Then she did it again and again. After three or four days, she couldn't do it anymore. So it was a short thing. After she died, before she is beatified, before she is canonized, all kinds of missionaries all over the

world report a Carmelite nun helping them. They read her little book and pray to her and get extraordinary results in their lives. And so, two years after she is canonized, the Pope says, “I have to make her co-patroness of the missions before the missionaries do it without me” because they had received such enormous help.

But you see the help came. The help came through a few little deeds of love that she performed. She allowed the power of God to work. She was thinking that all she wanted to help was the missionary that was worst off at the moment. But God could work through that in ways that she couldn’t imagine, through that little deed. But the big part there: She trusted. She trusted that her efforts, because she was baptized and in union with Christ, her efforts in union with Christ, if she tried to do the Christ-like thing, God could do something with it for others. She trusted the teachings of Jesus. She trusted Jesus by doing what Jesus would do in the situation, looking for a way to help even people that she did not know. Of course, what was produced was literally an avalanche of miracles that she could never foresee, nor could anyone else.

So what I’m saying to you today is this: The world cannot have peace until it trusts in the mercy of God revealed in Jesus. There is no other way. There are no negotiations. There are no arbitrations. There are no pacts and alliances. The world cannot have peace until it trusts in the mercy of God, revealed in Jesus. There is no peace if we will not trust in Jesus. It is the Church, it is you and I who are called to live that trust. Without that trust, we will not choose the path of the Lamb of God, the path of Jesus. We will find 1001 excuses to say why Jesus did not mean what He said He meant, when in reality, excuses are just manifestations of our lack of trust in Him as Messiah and God.

And so I leave you with this: When you are tempted, when you are tempted not—not—to do what Jesus would do in the moment, when you are tempted not to live like the powerless, vulnerable Lamb of God—powerless and vulnerable by the standards of this world—say over and over again, “Jesus, I trust you,” and do what you’re supposed to do. Live the Christ-like moment in your life. When you are tempted not to imitate Christ, tempted not to imitate the Lamb of God, just remember those words from the stories that I told you about Moses and Abraham, just two sentences. Whenever you’re tempted not to trust Jesus, just remember the sentences: “March on.” “God will provide.”

[End of Audio]

12-The Mystery of Oneness in the Lamb: Baptism

Who Do You Say I Am?

When we do not follow the Lamb of God, when we refuse to follow what Jesus says, more is at stake than simply if we were to refuse to follow what Aristotle said or what any human being said. When we refuse to follow what Jesus says, when it is clear and unambiguous—for example, like love of enemies, be merciful (Mt 5:44; Lk 6:27)—what we are doing is we are manifesting a disbelief in Him as the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of the Living God and nothing short of that.

The only question, again, is not what Jesus says, we know what He says, and it is clear, the question is whether he's right. Whether He's right depends upon only one thing and one thing only: How do you answer the question: "Who do you say I am" (Mt 16:13; Mk 8:29; Lk 9:20)? If we answer that question by saying, "Jesus, you're a holy man" "You're a prophet" "You're a smart man" "You're a man inspired by God" even, then we can criticize Jesus. We can take exceptions to His teaching. We can tell him he doesn't have it right. For then he is only like us, limited finite minds affected by concupiscence and sin.

But if we say, to the question "Why do you say I am?" "You are the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of the Living God. You are the Word of God Incarnate. You were there in the beginning with the Father. All things were made through You, and without You nothing would have been made. You became flesh. You are the self-revelation of God, the incarnation of God," then that means that Jesus has total and complete authority. He is the authority on good and evil. He *is* the authority on how to conquer evil. He is not just one among many authorities; He is *the* authority infinitely above all other people talking about it. He is the Messiah. The issue is: *Is He for us who the Gospel says He is?*

Purists

02:54 Let me give you an example of what the problem is here. Why, when we do not trust Jesus, we automatically question His authority? And when we question His authority, we question who He is. Just for an example to work with: Suppose you wanted to have a telephone put in your house. You've never had a telephone; you don't know much about them. So you go down to the telephone company, and you ask them to put the phone in. A few weeks later, they come around. The man knows a lot about telephones; he knows how they work. He knows how to set them up. He knows everything about them that there is to know. He comes in and he sets it up for you.

Then he says, "Look, anytime you want to call, all you have to do is you've got to look at the number, and you just dial the six or seven or eight numbers, whatever it is. Just dial them." And you say, "Okay, that's fine." So one day you decide to call your friend in another city. You have her telephone number and you say, "Well, I know the telephone man said I had to dial these numbers *exactly* as they're on the page. We don't have to be exact. We can get most of them." (*Laughter*) So we get seven out of eight right. Then we call, and we don't get our friend. So we want to call someone else, and we do the same thing again. It doesn't work.

So we go get the telephone company man. We say, "We're not getting our calls through." He said, "What are you doing? Are you dialing the numbers?" And you said, "Well, I'm getting most of them right." (*Laughter*) And he'd say, "Look, I'm the authority on telephones. I know telephones. You don't understand telephones. I can't explain to you why you have to get each number right, but believe me, you've got to get each number right to make the call." And you say, "Oh, go on. You're being purist." (*Laughter*) And so he says, "I'm telling you. You have to do it this way. I'm the authority. I understand telephones." So you go back, and again, you take it on your own. You say, "Oh, he couldn't have meant all of them." So you dial and you dial. You don't get anyone. It doesn't work for you. Right?

Well, this is what we're doing with Jesus. He tells us what is the will of God, and we begin to make all kinds of exceptions to it, exceptions, indeed, that run contradictory to it. What we're saying is, "You don't know what you're talking about. I'm setting my will, my ideas over yours."

Elie Wiesel: The Messiah Has Not Come

06:06 Who are the people that know about Messiah? The people that know about Messiah are Jewish people. Messiah is *exclusively* a Jewish concept. It originated in Judaism. The Chinese know nothing about Messiah. Hindus know nothing about Messiah. It's Jewish. As the Jewish people say, when the Messiah comes, if the Messiah says, "Hook up that wagon to that mosquito," you don't say, "Mosquitoes can't pull wagons." You do it. Why? Because the Messiah, when He comes, is the especially anointed of God who is entitled to that trust that is deserved by God alone. The Messiah is entitled to total trust because He is the anointed of God to tell us how to overcome evil, how to overcome death.

Elie Wiesel is a famous Jewish man. Some of you may know him. Perhaps most of you do. He's probably the most famous survivor of Auschwitz. He's a literary person. He wrote an extraordinary book called *Night*, N-i-g-h-t, a little book that is the most powerful piece ever written on the terrible reality known as Auschwitz. He lived through

it. None of his family did. Elie Wiesel, in 1986, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. At his Nobel Laureate address he's talking to the whole world now; he's got a world stage, "Of this I am sure: The Messiah has not come." He's being very, very clear that there is no way that Jesus could be the Messiah, from his understanding.

Remember what his understanding is. His understanding is the understanding of a person who was torn apart and had his whole family torn apart and who himself visually saw tens of thousands of others torn apart by an entirely Christian operation called Auschwitz. 95 percent of the people who ran Auschwitz were Christians, Catholic and Lutheran. Elie Wiesel is Jewish. He knows what the Messiah is, and this is not the Messiah's work.

Impediments to Christianity Flourishing

08:55 Don't we have to ask ourselves, seriously, as individuals and as a Church, regardless of where in the Church we are, how many people today and yesterday and for a thousand and ten thousand yesterdays before yesterday are not coming to Jesus Christ because *we* are modifying His teachings. We are constantly creating exceptions to the telephone number. Hence, people are looking at us as supposedly a group of people who believe that Jesus is the Messiah, and they're saying, "Jesus is believable. But this group is unbelievable." They don't believe Jesus is the Messiah. They don't follow Him. How could you not follow the Messiah if that is what you really believe?

Mind you, it is not that Christians want to follow Jesus, struggle to follow Jesus, fail to follow Jesus and then get up and try again. That process of wanting to follow, struggling to follow, failing and getting up again, that's perfectly legitimate. That's just sin, and God forgives sin and then we get on with our business. What we see going on, and what is such an impediment to people choosing Christianity is Christians who explicitly do what Jesus said not to do and call it consistent with Jesus—justify it as good. Then it becomes unbelievable. Only 18 percent of the world today is Christian—18 percent. And it's going down like a waterfall. 82 percent of the world, at this moment, explicitly, unequivocally rejects Jesus.

I think about 1985 or 86 there was a large study done on who was the most influential person in history. After using all kinds of standards and all kinds of criteria, the person that ran away with being the most influential person in history was Mohammed. While there were technically more Christians in the world than Muslims, Christians didn't follow what Jesus taught, and Muslims do follow what Mohammed taught. In fact, they follow it very, very rigorously.

So to use the language we just talked about in the last conference from the Jewish scholar Joseph Klaussner, the influence of Jesus is minimal because it has left the world

unaffected. Lest you think that's a Jewish person being harsh against Christianity, Jacques Maritain, who was the finest philosopher in the Catholic Church in the 20th century, the teacher of three popes, shortly before he died was asked, "Is the world today any better than it was at the time of Jesus?" And his answer was, "No." 2000 years of Christianity, and we are now in this century alone where more people have killed each other in war than all the centuries combined in human history. The group that has killed more than any other has been Christians. And that's just the start.

So Mohammed's followers live what he taught. The followers of Jesus, Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant, embarked 500 years ago at the time of the Reformation or 1,000 years ago at the time the Orthodox and Catholic Church split, embarked on a policy of not following Jesus while saying they were following Him, of rationalizing why they could do what Jesus said not to do. To use Klaussner's words, "left ordinary life unaffected."

(This paragraph is slightly edited.)

Jesus comes with very serious but very clear teachings. Do you really think what's going on in Yugoslavia is attractive to anyone in the world, anyone who is not a Christian, anyone of those 82 percent that is now not a Christian? Catholic Croats slaughtering Orthodox Serbs? The world becomes very, very conscious that this is not something that started in 1990. This is something that started five hundred years ago and has never stopped and has had priests and bishops and lay people on all sides supporting it almost 100 percent for four hundred to five hundred years. People look at that, and they say, "My heavens, if that's Christianity!"

Jewish people have the question, don't they, when they ask Christians. "If Christ is the Redeemer, why doesn't the world look more redeemed?" They know how the world is supposed to look when the Messiah comes. Everything is supposed to change. Why doesn't the world look more redeemed 2,000 years after Jesus? The answer, of course, that we glibly give, is some form of that famous answer by G. K. Chesterton. We just glibly say it. "It is not that Christianity has tried and failed; it's that Christianity has been found too difficult and therefore not tried," ha, ha, ha. That may sell on television. That may sell on a secular forum. But that doesn't sell to Jewish people because they know that you don't say the Messiah came and then you ignore His teachings, ha, ha, ha, or you found them too difficult, ha, ha, ha. That would be blasphemy in the extreme.

What I'm saying to you is that when Klaussner says, in his article:

Jesus left the course of ordinary life untouched—wicked, cruel, pagan, and His exalted ethical ideal has been relegated to books or at most becomes

the possession of monastics and recluses who live apart from the paths of ordinary life. As a code of teaching to Judaism, it could not be accepted. And such has also been the case with Christianity since Constantine's day to the present,

who is it that is responsible for showing that Jesus' teachings actually can be lived, that Jesus knew what He was talking about if it's not Christians, if it's not Christian churches?

Elie Wiesel's Prayer

16:47 I know we have been brought up, each and every one of us has been brought up, to ignore precisely the teachings of Jesus that run directly opposite to culture. Those are the ones we're told to ignore. We've been given all the rationalizations. And those are precisely the ones that the Jews in the first generation of Christianity rejected and that Klaussner rejects and that Elie Wiesel rejects. But who is it that is meant to show that they can be lived, if not you? If not the Church, the bishops, the priest, the pope, the patriarchs, the brothers, the sisters?

Elie Wiesel, last year, 1995, was the major speaker at the 50th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. In his address, which was carried on worldwide television, at least excerpts of it, the one excerpt that appeared every place was on the front page of the *New York Times*, front page of the Boston papers. This is what Elie Wiesel said at the 50th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz address when he knew that he had a world stage. Remember, he's speaking as a Jewish person that went through Auschwitz, which was a Christian operation. This is what he said that was carried on the front page of papers all over the world: "Merciful God, I plead with you *not* to have mercy on those who created this place." Merciful God, I plead with you not to have mercy on those who created this place.

For anyone who finds that prayer hard to swallow I submit to you, this man lived under the consequences of 1,700 years of merciless Christianity, Catholic, Orthodox and Protestants. Auschwitz was a culmination of it, but it didn't stop there. He does not believe that Jesus is the Messiah. He does believe in the Torah, "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." What he is saying, implicitly, is "These people don't believe in Jesus as Messiah. They don't believe in what Jesus said. So treat them according to the standards that they've employed."

How many other people who have come in contact with Christians over the centuries, who have come in contact with the churches, Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant, would make that same prayer? "Merciful God, I plead with you. Do not have mercy on these people because they are not a merciful people."

For the Christian True Worship Requires Imitation

20:04 We have reached a very, very serious point. The serious point is this: We are worshipping one that we will not follow. It's schizophrenic. Worship in the Catholic Church, as I mentioned before, is defined by the word "latria," and latria is that worship that's due to God alone. We worship Jesus. We worship Jesus in the Eucharist in the Lamb of God. How can you worship and not follow? How can you worship and modify the teachings? Where is the sense in it? It makes no sense.

This pushes us back one more step. Do you, personally, have a responsibility before God and before Jesus for acting like Christ in your moment in time and space? Why? Because every Christian, which includes you and me, not just the pope or the priest, every Christian is responsible for evangelizing in his time and space. There are people that God has out there that are waiting to be drawn to Christ through your words, and above all, through your example. Any time that you walk away from following Jesus, you put an impediment up for them seeing Jesus, every bit the impediment that the Christians at Auschwitz put up to Elie Wiesel.

82 percent of the world is not Christian, and the figure's falling [Speaker means rising]. Think about your baptism. Baptism is an extraordinary mystery. As I mentioned earlier, in the eastern churches, Catholic and Orthodox, we don't call it a sacrament. We call it a holy mystery. It is beyond human comprehension. The teaching is, which is true, as St. Paul says, "We are baptized into Christ" (Rom. 6:3-4). Christ is more in us than we are in Him. We are baptized into the Lamb of God. We are baptized, as we spent a few conferences ago laying out, into the Suffering Servant of the Old Testament.

Jesus Has Total Identity With the Christian, With the Community

22:31 Now, consider this strange passage from the New Testament, very, very strange. "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me" (Ac 9:4; 22:7; 26:4-16)? That's an extraordinary passage. That should just send shivers, not only through Christians but through all humanity. You remember the story when it happens. It's related three times in the New Testament, same story, three times. Paul is a murderous religious fanatic. He's going up to Damascus to get Christians to bring them back to Jerusalem, to do them in, imprison them, torture them, kill them. He was there at the stoning of St. Stephen. He's on his way to Damascus, and he's just outside Damascus when something happens, a light comes. He's knocked to the ground. He's blinded. And he hears this voice. It's related three times. "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" He doesn't know who the voice is. He says, "Who are you, lord?" And the voice says, "I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting" (Ac 9:4; 22:7; 26:14-16).

Note what the voice doesn't say. It does not say, "I am Jesus of Nazareth, whose community you are persecuting." It does not say, "I am Jesus of Nazareth, whose friends you are persecuting." It says, "I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting." How can that be? Paul never saw the risen Jesus before this moment. He never was in contact with Jesus during his earthly life. He never touched Jesus. How can Jesus say he's persecuting him? Paul has done quite a job on the community, but he hasn't bothered Jesus. He never saw Jesus in his life, never saw Jesus in his life.

So how can Jesus say, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting *me*?" Unless, unless the post-resurrection reality, as it takes place in baptism, is that there is some kind of union between the Christian and Jesus that is so close that Jesus has total identity with the Christian and what's done to the Christian is done to Jesus. You may say, "But Jesus is God;" and Jesus is God. And God is beyond all suffering. Jesus is also human. There are several Fathers of the Church who have written such lines as, "Christ remains nailed to the cross until the last tear is wiped away." What they are saying is this: "Jesus as God loves everybody because God is Love. Jesus' union with His people, those whom He calls, is total."

You know, and I know, if you have a child or a mother or father or a friend, and they're suffering from diphtheria, from a broken leg, from cancer, you suffer with them. When someone you love suffers, you suffer. It may not be the same suffering. It can even be worse suffering. But you suffer. A person who loves someone cannot but suffer if the one they love suffers. Jesus loves His community. God loves His people. When Jesus says to Saul on the road, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" He is saying, in some very real way, He is being persecuted. Persecuted means suffering. If that union between Jesus and those who are His followers, Christians, baptized Christians, is so close that Jesus says, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" what is it that every Christian does who attacks another Christian? They attack Jesus. What is it that every Christian does who hurts another Christian? They hurt Jesus.

That sentence, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" breaks all categories we have for understanding reality. That is way beyond what human imagination could ever figure out or ever know. Yet it is said. An attack on a Christian is an attack on Jesus somehow. How that works, we don't know. It's mystical. Mystical is just the Greek word for hidden. That's what the New Testament says, and it opens up to us a whole understanding that reality is different. Post-resurrection reality is different than we could ever imagine.

Implications: Whatever You Do To the Least You Do To Christ

28:02 Therefore, in the Mystery of Baptism somehow, Christ lives in us in a way that is real, not just metaphorical or analogical. The Council of Narbonne in 1045 [speaker meant

1054] wrote, “To spill the blood of another Christian is to spill the blood of Christ.” To spill the blood of another Christian is to spill the blood of Christ. That’s “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” Something new has entered the universe with the resurrection, with Pentecost, with baptism. It is not just an initiation rite. We are somehow incorporated into Christ in such a way that Jesus Himself says to Saul He’s being persecuted, that the Council of Narbonne says, “To spill the blood of another Christian is to spill the blood of Christ.”

Is that what the Germans and the Italians thought when they were killing in the Second World War the French and the English Christians? Did anyone ever teach Italian and German children or American and British children from the cradle that to spill the blood of another Christian was to spill the blood of Christ? No, they were taught that there were exceptions and exceptions and exceptions. No child was taught the implications of “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” And so, if we do not build in the Church a consciousness that when we hurt another Christian, whether by tongue or by gun, we are hurting Christ, if we don’t build that from the cradle, if we don’t build that in catechesis, how can it possibly be that people could even know it was happening any more than Saul knew it was happening on the road to Damascus?

There’s a bright side to this, of course, an extraordinary bright side to it. The bright side is whatever you do to a fellow Christian, whatever you do that helps them, you do to Christ. Those poor souls living in places like Haiti who have nothing; the woman down the street in the rest home who’s alone; and all the billions of other possibilities that exist for us, somehow, when we respond to the sufferings of another Christian, we respond to the sufferings of Christ. Whatever you do to the least, you do to me. The other side of “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” would be “Saul, Saul, thank you for being kind to me,” because when you love someone, when someone else is kind to them in their need, you benefit also.

Eileen Egan’s Struggle Healed By Mother Teresa’s Insight

31:20 (This paragraph has been edited.)

Many years ago, 1955, before Mother Teresa was the Mother Teresa we know, a friend of mine, Eileen Egan, went to visit Mother Teresa in Calcutta when she was working in the leprosarium there. Eileen publicly tells the story that when she got to the place where Mother Teresa worked with the lepers, she says she was overwhelmed with the smell. The people that Mother Teresa had picked up off the streets were just in terrible conditions, in different stages of dying from this terrible disease. She [Eileen] tells, with a certain amount of openness but shame, but also honesty, that this man just pulled his arm up off of the bed, the cot, and wanted Eileen to hold his hand. She said she was terrified of holding his hand because of the disease. She couldn’t do it.

When she came to herself, she said to Mother Teresa, “How can you possibly put yourself in the middle of all this disease, this stench? How could you endure it?” Because Mother Teresa just wasn’t holding hands; she was taking care, and this had been going on for years by this time. She said Mother Teresa gave her a simple, one-sentence answer, “The suffering person is Jesus in disguise.” The suffering person is Jesus in disguise.

Now, imagine if the last 1,700 years from the cradle, Christian children, Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant, had been nurtured in that consciousness, had been nurtured in the consciousness that to spill the blood of another Christian is to spill the blood of Christ, had been nurtured that they are Messiah children, and therefore, they’re called to follow the teachings of Jesus without exception, without making excuses. Imagine what the world would be today through the power of the Church being faithful to Jesus in the disguise of suffering people.

We Pray As Children In Jesus’ Name To Carry On His Mission

33:45 When we are baptized, we become, the technical theology is, we become by adoption, what Jesus is by nature. We become sons of the Father. We are incorporated into Christ. Hence, every time we say the Our Father, we say the Our Father with Jesus just like the apostles did. He is with us. This, for all practical purposes in prayer life means: Christians always approach prayer as children. It’s always to the Father that all prayers are directed. Therefore, the stance of the Christian before God is the stance of a child before the Father. For God is our Father. God is our Creator. But it a stance with and in Jesus all the time for we are baptized.

And like children, Jesus tells us that we are supposed to pray perseveringly and perseveringly. In fact, He says, “Whatever you ask the Father in my name, it will be granted (Jn 14:13).” That’s another one we don’t want to look at too closely. How many times have we prayed and it has not been granted? But that’s not what Jesus says. He says, “Whatever you ask the Father in my name will be granted.” Is that a lie? Or are we misunderstanding something?

What does it mean to pray in the name of Jesus? Well, what does it mean to collect money in the name of the right to life movement, the anti-abortion movement? It means that you are collecting money because you somehow are connected with this movement in what it’s doing and what it’s about. That’s what it means to collect money in the name of a movement. Or if you go out and get signatures on a paper for a politician to run for office; it’s because you share something with this person. You are collecting in his name. It would be totally wrong, wouldn’t it, to go out and collect money for the right to life movement and then take the money and use it for abortion. It would be just wrong

because you're collecting in the name of the movement. The money should be used for the movement.

Well, so also when we pray in the name of Jesus. We are asking for something in the name of Jesus, but we are asking, why? We are asking so we can carry on His mission. That's why we're asking. Whatever we're asking for, health or money or this or that, we are not asking because of the thing itself. We are asking in the name of Jesus so we can carry on His mission.

I think of the famous story of one of the two miracles for St. Thérèse's canonization: Abby Anne. Abby (Charles) Anne was dying in the hospital in 1906. He was in the advance stages of tuberculosis, emaciated and dying of tuberculosis. He was so bad that that night the sister who was taking care of him said to him that he should sacrifice his life, offer it to God as a sacrifice. He had a little relic of St. Thérèse. And he said, "No." These are his exact words. He said, "Little Thérèse, you're in Heaven. But I'm here on earth, and there's God's work to be done. You must heal me." (*Snaps*) And like that, he was healed. Like that, he was healed. But you see, he wanted the healing not simply to survive but to do the mission of Jesus. That's why he wanted it. He wanted it in the name of Jesus in other words, not just for himself. To do something in the name of Jesus always means to do something to carry on the name of Jesus.

We mentioned Elie Wiesel regarding the 50th anniversary of Auschwitz in 1995. When Elie Wiesel says, "Merciful God, I plead with you not to have mercy on those who created this place," he is saying just the opposite of what Jesus said because Jesus said on Calvary: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Lk 23:34). But Elie Wiesel wasn't given the gift of faith. So he prays out of his own truth. But for Christians who were given the gift of faith in Jesus as Messiah, their prayer should be one of, "Give me the power to forgive, to love my enemies and so forth."

When was the last time in church, at Mass, outside of what we are doing here with the Byzantine liturgy, you heard, if ever, the explicit prayer that the congregation and the people in it have the power to love their enemies? There is power; Jesus has power to offer, just like He has a mission. But we don't even pray for that power. When was the last time that you prayed for the power to forgive, the last time you prayed for the power to love your enemies? When was the last time you prayed for the power to live the new commandment, to love as Jesus loved?

In the 15th chapter, the 7th verse of John, it says, "If you abide in me, I will abide in you. Then ask what you will, and I will give it to you" (Jn 15:7). How do we abide in Christ?

We Abide In Christ

40:10 Well, we abide in Christ first and foremost in the beginning by our baptism. We are adopted sons of God. So we abide by baptism. But that's just one way of abiding. Abiding means union.

We also abide by love. Don't we abide with people by love? Don't we get united to people by love, and we're with them in a deeper and deeper way? They're more part of our lives, and we're more part of theirs. So we abide by love of Christ. Jesus Himself says "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments." And He gives us His commandments: Love your enemies. Do good to those who hate you." Be the Lamb of God. "If you love Me, keep My commandments." We abide by keeping His commandments in love.

We also abide by imitation, don't we? When we imitate people, we're united to them. Jesus says, "Love one another as I have loved you." We abide by the imitation of Christ.

So we abide in Jesus by baptism, by loving Him—by keeping his commandments. "For if you love Me, you will keep My commandments." We abide by imitation. "Love one another as I have loved you." Jesus is even so good that we abide by repentance. We sin. When we sin, we don't abide in God, in Jesus. However, Jesus sets up forgiveness for salvation, and Jesus Himself teaches it is the person who is forgiven much who loves much. Remember? Therefore, even the worst sinner, if he returns to Jesus, the whole thing can be turned upside down, and his very sin can be used as a mechanism for deeply abiding in Jesus by love. The one who is forgiven much loves much. And we abide in Jesus by going to communion. "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood, I live in him, and he lives in Me."

All these are ways that we abide in Jesus, that we deepen our life in Christ, our union with Him. It's kind of like you can have marriage, but whether the marriage is going to grow in unity and deepen in unity and the abiding is going to be deeper depends upon what the people do after the ceremony. They are married, but then there's more in terms of will and life.

Finally, we abide in Jesus by mercy. "Whatever you do to the least, you do to Me." We reach out and we see that the suffering person, as Mother Teresa says, is Jesus in disguise. We see that the Christian who is hurt is Jesus being persecuted. We all know when someone has helped us when we've been in pain, it has deepened our relationship with them.

So, we abide in these six different ways: by baptism, by love in keeping Jesus' commandments, by imitation, by repentance, by holy communion and by mercy. Now, If we abide in those ways, if we work at those ways and then we pray for something in Jesus' name because we want it in order to do Jesus' work, now we're talking about prayer that's effective. But if we are praying for health, and the reason we're praying for health is because we want to go out and we want to do unchristian things; we want to be indifferent to human suffering; we want to have a good time and not care about where people are; we want to ignore the suffering Christ; we don't want to love our enemies; well, then it's a different story altogether because then we're asking for whatever we're asking for not in Jesus name, not to do His mission.

Pray! Ask For the Grace to Live What Jesus Taught

44:32 I believe it's in the epistle of St. James where St. James says "You ask and you do not receive because you ask wrongly to support your own passions" (Jm 4:3). 'In the name of Jesus' means you're asking so you can do what Jesus wants you to do. That's how Abby Anne prayed.

So what I am suggesting to you this evening is this. It is important for you and for me to ask Jesus for the grace to live the life that the Messiah taught us to live when He walked the face of the earth. Admittedly, just like Klaussner says, it has proved impossible, this Christian life, for people. But how much of it proving impossible is the consequence because people don't, on a daily basis, ask for the grace to live what Jesus taught that they were supposed to live? Make no mistake about it, at the Great Commission, when Jesus says to go and baptize, His words are, "Go ye, therefore, and baptize all nations in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, amen. And teach them to obey all that I have commanded you" (Mt 28:19). There is no question Jesus wishes us to follow what He taught.

The first step in that is to pray. Pray. Pray an abiding prayer. Pray a prayer that's the product of trying in those six different ways to abide more deeply in Jesus, to pray for the grace to live the messianic life. St. John Chrysostom said the test of the validity of our prayer is how much we are willing to labor for it. The test of the validity of our labor is how much we're willing to pray for it. How much are we willing to pray for the power to live what the Messiah taught us to live? It's almost non-existent in the Church. We pray, basically, to be decent cultural people, not messianic people.

So, we pray to the Lamb of God to become the Lamb of God. But we have to ask ourselves, if we do not pray to the Lamb of God to become Christ-like, why not? Why not? Don't we want to live the Christian life?

Elie Wiesel, when he says in his Nobel Laureate address “Of this I am sure: The Messiah has not come,” we can wave fingers at him. We can attack him. We can think badly of him. But I submit to you, he doesn’t know because we have put up such a terrible impediment to his knowing. And not only his, but the vast majority of the world. The only way to dissolve that impediment is to commit to living the messianic life as it was taught by Jesus. And for the Church. that means you and I, popes, bishops, patriarchs, priests, brothers, sisters, to begin to seriously pray, making intense efforts to abide in Christ in those six ways and then pray for the grace to live the messianic life as taught by Jesus. For without the prayer, the desire is feeble. But with the prayer, the messianic life is possible. Christ is risen in order for us to ask Him for help to live the life that He wants us to live, in order to be part of the process of saving the world.

If Elie Wiesel can’t see, that’s not a judgment on Elie Wiesel. If Elie Wiesel does not want forgiveness for those who created Auschwitz, that’s not a judgment on Elie Wiesel. That’s a terrible, terrible judgment on those of us who are Christian and have been Christian, that we’ve made it so impossible for people to see and to accept Jesus. A test of the sincerity of our life is: Are we willing to pray to live the messianic life. Start tomorrow praying for the grace to love your enemies, to do good to those who hate you, to hurt no one, to be merciful. And you will become one of the great evangelists in the Church, in your own place and time, without ever knowing it.

[End of Audio]

13-The Lambs Lamb: Mary

We Are Creatures of History

Human beings are creatures of history. We are perhaps more made than we make ourselves. From the first moments of existence we begin to imitate those around us. We imitate their patterns, their movements. In fact that's how we learn language. We begin to imitate our mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters and the sounds that point to this or that or the other thing. We begin to enjoy food that's in our particular culture and so forth.

We are creatures of history and not just immediate history. We're creatures of a longer history that those who are parents, grandparents, those who live in the same geographical area have gone through. Therefore, for example, while both Eskimos and Pygmies are human beings, they have gone through an entirely different history. One lives in the Arctic Zone, one in the Torrid Zone, etc., etc.

We are always creatures of history. We cannot be separated from the historical reality out of which we come. We see this on the negative side with those terrible, terrible statistics, about 85 percent of the children who are abused sexually, abuse sexually. We don't know precisely what that is, but the reality is that something has occurred in their past history that's affecting the future in some terrible way.

We Are Creatures of Memory

01:46 We are creatures of history. We are also creatures of memory. We remember. First we remember, personally, things from the past and secondly, we have a collective memory in the society of things that have happened from the past. We don't remember everything in our own past and we don't remember everything from the whole past. We are creatures of selective memory. One question is, why do we remember this and do not remember this? Why do we choose to write this down and not write that down if both occurred in the past? The reason in some general way has to be we remember this and we write this because this for some reason has a meaning to us, has a value to us that this does not have. But history and memory in some ways are the same. History also is a selective remembrance. It is not the remembrance of everything. It's only the remembrance of a few things.

Yet all of history affects. For example, a child may not know he was abused, but that doesn't mean he's not suffering the consequences of it. A human being may not know that his mother was drinking heavily while she was pregnant, and therefore radically

affected his nervous system in a negative way, but he still suffers the consequences of it. So history, all history affects even though we only remember a piece of it.

But history is more than just our selective memory. All history is more than just the accumulation of events that have occurred. From the Christian point of view, from the Judeo-Christian point of view, history is salvation history. History is about persons and events that God, through his activity, affects in order to lead humanity to an eternal graced union with Him.

God's Only Goal is the Eternal Salvation of His People

04:30 God's purpose in history is to bring people to eternal salvation. The God of Judeo-Christian tradition is a God who works in history, who works through the persons and through the events of history. Abraham, Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, these are all persons of the Jewish community. God works through persons. The God of the Judeo-Christian tradition is a God who works through the persons of history and the events of history to bring people in history to eternal salvation.

There is one dimension of history, and God's working in it however, that many Christians—Protestant, but also many, many Catholics—tend to want to ignore, tend to want to set aside, tend to want to make believe it is not there when it is there in a powerful way. It's there for us to reflect upon, and put there by God. That dimension of salvation history that Christians so often do not want to see is the historical reality of the historical person, Mary the Mother of Jesus, or Miriam as was her Jewish name.

Hostility Towards the Historical Person—Mary, Mother of Jesus

06:20 It almost has become a point that instantly separates Catholics and Protestants the minute you mention Mary. It's become like an ideological flashpoint. I have met Christians, Protestants, who think that what Catholics are about with Mary is idolatry. They are wrong, of course, but that's the impression that they get. They themselves have no particular use or care [for Mary]. In fact, they are hostile to Mary. I have met many, many Catholics over the last 20 years, Catholics now, not Protestants, who are exactly the same way. They are hostile in the extreme to the Mother of Jesus and so we have to, as we must in everything, when people disagree with us, try to understand why they are disagreeing. Not just get mad at them and wave fingers at them and say, "The heck with you." There's no possibility of reconciliation or peace or advancement in Truth down that path. We have to understand why people feel this way.

I think that in all fairness we have to admit that there have been some terrible abuses of the Blessed Mother that have gone on in the Church. Terrible abuses, for example: using Mary the Mother of Jesus as an intercessor to seek victory in war, actually claiming she is

responsible for the slaughter of so many people who are the enemy. This has gone on in both Catholic and Orthodox life for well over 1,000 years.

Pre-eminence of the Gospels

08:25 The more contemporary reality is this. Protestants say, and you can see the point, that Mary gives Catholics a Christianity without Jesus. Instead of reading Holy Scripture, instead of reading the Gospels in the New Testament Christians absorb all their time reading private revelation messages from Mary. Therefore Christians wind up being able to do things because they have a pious cult of Mary that are totally contradictory to the Gospel because they're not reading the Gospel. They're spending their time on private revelation messages. Now we know that that is not so. We know that the Catholic Church absolutely, positively, unequivocally says, to quote you very, very specifically the Second Vatican Council, "It is common knowledge that among all the Scriptures, even those of the New Testament, the Gospels have a special pre-eminence, and rightly so, for they are the principal witness of the life and of the teaching" of Jesus (*Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation* V. 18).

We all know and no one would ever suggest in the slightest that the Gospels are secondary to private revelation messages. No Catholic believes that. Or Second Vatican Council: "Holy Mother the Church has firmly and with absolute consistency held, and continues to hold, that the four Gospels whose historical character the Church unhesitatingly asserts, faithfully hand on what Jesus Christ, while living among people really did and taught for their eternal salvation" (*Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation* V. 19).

We know that no message of private revelation is even needed for eternal salvation. Secondly, we know every message of private revelation that is in any way inconsistent with the New Testament, the teaching of Jesus, is absolutely wrong, regardless of how stupendous the manifestations of the abnormal around it might be. Catholics do not set private revelation over and against the Gospel. But the perception from the outside is that this is what's happening as people see Catholic men and women, quite frankly, using up 10, 20, 30, 40, 50 percent more time reading private revelation messages than reading the teachings of Jesus.

Remember what we're doing here. We're trying to understand why people cannot see Mary. There's the terrible abuse that has gone on in Latin and South America and some other parts of the world, and in our own Western Europe in times past. And that is that Mary has become a political tool of certain political wings of government in order to organize people against other people. After all that is said and done however, and after we can admit all that, and after we can say that those things do occur and we can also say

they're wrong, that still doesn't change the reality. Everything that's good is open to abuse. We cannot control how other people use their free will. Food is good, right? But people can overindulge in food. Jesus himself can be misused. We cannot control other people's wills. But because people misuse things doesn't mean that they are wrong or that they are not very, very good.

The Mother Chosen By God: The Real Mary of the Gospels

13:10 So this morning I would like to spend a few moments reflecting on what Catholics and Protestants and Orthodox can agree about Mary, reflecting on the good and the good that we all can agree on now. What we have in common, Catholics, Protestant and Orthodox, [is] we have the Gospels. I have just read to you that the Catholic Church in the Second Vatican Council says that the Gospels have pre-eminence even over the other text of the New Testament. We give reverence and ultimate regard to the Gospels, as do the Protestant brothers and sisters, and the Orthodox.

So let's look at the Gospels and let's look at Mary. The first thing to come in contact with is this: Mary is not a myth. She is a real person. She is as real as Abraham, Moses, as real as Isaiah, as real as Peter, John, Mary Magdalene. She is a real historical person who actually lived like you and I live, had to make her decisions, had to walk her path, had to live her life. But after that is said and done, and that should in and of itself just mean something that's important because she is a real historical person as in scripture, there clearly is something different about Mary. Because whatever else you want to say, neither you nor I nor anyone else was chosen to be the Mother of Jesus, the Mother of God. She was chosen for that purpose.

If Jesus is who the Church says he is, Catholic or Orthodox and Protestant, the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of the living God, if God is who the Christian churches say he is, not a God who is whimsical, but who makes choices for the salvation of humanity, then God chose Mary. And that is extraordinary—who God chose to be the Mother of the Savior of the world. That's no minor role. That's a major role and that's what Scripture tells us. God chose Mary. This is not legend. This is not tradition. This is what is in Scripture. God chose Mary and just that fact alone should give us all, Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox, a sense of the mystery of the person that we're dealing with. Just that fact alone, that she's God's choice to be the Mother of the Savior of the world. That we all can agree on. Now let's look at what else we can agree on. We all can agree that what we see of Mary in the Gospels, the preeminent documents of Christianity, which we all agree the Gospels are, what we see of Mary is the Truth.

The Annunciation: Mary Models Fidelity (Lk 1:26-38)

16:45 What's the first thing that we see about Mary? The first thing that we see about Mary is the Annunciation; it's the first visible moment of Mary. As I said in an earlier conference, the first thing we see about Mary is that God is making upon her a demand for radical trust. He is asking her to go through an ordeal that none of us would ever wish to touch—being an unwed mother in a grotesque patriarchal society where women were crushed for having children outside wedlock, crushed for a lifetime. He asked this of Mary and Mary responds with a yes. Mary responds with a yes.

You know, the Fathers of the Eastern churches write about this moment when the angel came to Mary and was waiting for her fiat, waiting for her yes. Between the time the angel made the presentation to her and the time Mary said, "Be it done unto me according to your word," between those two moments when the request was made by God and the yes came, the Fathers write "All heaven held its breath," because what was at stake was an essential step in the salvation process of the world.

Mary in trust had to agree to be the Mother of Jesus and had to agree without any conditions. She did not know why it had to be this way. It was not her place to question God and God didn't explain anything. He said, "This is what I want from you. Will you do it?" Just in that little bit of the Annunciation alone, how much better this world would be today if for the last 1,700 years Catholics, Protestants and Orthodox had been like Mary and when God said to do something, they did it. Didn't ask why. Didn't play games. Just simply and straightforwardly said, "Yes."

So just at the annunciation Mary is a model of what fidelity means and what trust means. She is a model of what it means to be a person whose life is centered on God. And she's the model of someone who resists the temptation to distrust God.

The Visitation: Another Revelation of Mary's Exalted Place (Lk 1:39-56)

19:50 After the Annunciation you remember the next place we find Mary? Remember, we're talking about all those things the Catholics, Protestants and Orthodox can agree. Those things that are found in Scripture about Mary who was a real historical person and whose unique place in salvation history, the Mother of the Savior, cannot be denied. After the Annunciation, Mary goes to see Elizabeth. Now I ask you this. Scripture scholars argue about the passage I'm going to read to you. It's the Magnificat. Mary goes to see Elizabeth right after the Annunciation. Mary comes in to Elizabeth and Elizabeth says that the babe in her womb leapt and "how should it be that the mother of my Lord should come and visit me?" (Lk 1:43). Those are incredible words.

Scripture scholars say that there is a high probability that those words never occurred as they're actually recorded; but that's not what's relevant. The Gospel was written at the time of Mary, the Apostles, it's written in the Apostolic generation. The Gospel isn't just a communication of memory; it's a communication of memory plus what people now see after the resurrection, [after it was known what] the event was all about. So the fact that the Gospel writer puts this in here, right in the first generation is testament that in the first generation of Christianity Mary had this exalted place in the community. That's what's at stake. Protestants and Catholics can agree to that.

Who in the Gospel, who in the entire Gospel outside of Jesus himself, has a piece of poetry to recite that is as extraordinary as when Mary says this to Elizabeth:

My soul doth magnify the Lord.
My spirit rejoices in God my Savior;
because He has looked upon his lowly handmaiden.
Yes, from this day forward all generations will call me blessed,
for the Almighty has done great things for me.
Holy is His name,
and His mercy reaches from age to age for those who are in awe of Him.
He has shown power of his arm,
He has routed the proud of heart.
He has pulled down princes from their thrones and exalted the lowly.
The hungry He has filled with good things, the rich He has sent away
empty.
He has come to the help of Israel, His servant, mindful of His mercy—
—according to the promise He made to our ancestors—
of His mercy to Abraham and to His descendants forever (Lk 1:46-55).

Now you can take that passage from the very first sentence “My soul does magnify the Lord” to the very last sentence and you can go down that passage and you can say the first line comes from Isaiah 61:10. The second line comes from 1 Samuel 2:1. The third line comes from Habakkuk 3:18. The fourth line from 1 Samuel 1:11; and you can say it's all made up.

But I say to you this, even if you say that, it is made up by the generation that knew Mary, the generation that was in touch with Mary, the generation that knew Jesus. And it's a presentation of the Gospel and the one who makes it is Mary. No one the New Testament outside of Jesus himself has this kind of language. No one.

This is an extraordinary piece of writing and it's Mary who either said it or they attribute it to her. Catholics, Orthodox and Protestants universally agree how extraordinary this piece of writing is. But it's Mary that speaks it and it is Mary down through the ages that it comes to us through. And indeed in a strange way it says, "Yes from this day forward all generations will call me Blessed" (Lk 1:48). To this very day people refer to Mary as the Blessed Mother. But this passage was written 2,000 years ago before any of that was going on.

Do you see what I'm saying? This is not something that's made up by people who are zealots or for the Marian Cult. This is something in original Christianity that Catholics, Orthodox and Protestants have to agree to because it's there in Scripture. An extraordinary piece of poetry that Mary either speaks or it's put in her mouth by the very people who knew her and knew Jesus. That says something about the place of Mary in the history of salvation.

The Birth: Mary, Faithful in Difficult Circumstances (Lk 2:1-20)

25:35 Then remember the next time we see Mary she is on her way to Bethlehem. She is a mother. She is pregnant. I once tried to figure out the distance driving from Nazareth to Bethlehem. It seems to me that it's something like 84 miles or something like that according to the way I did it. You're up and down hills, then you go through desert and this is being done on foot and donkey.

Now you know a woman late in pregnancy, just because she's a woman, just because she's pregnant, she bonds with the child long before the child is born. And this is a hard ride, but that's what we hear. Mary is doing this and she's carrying Jesus with all that that means. Then she gets to Bethlehem and like any mother she wants her child to be born well and safe and healthy. But there's no place for them. So the birth has to take place in a stable under very difficult circumstances. No one would want to have a child under those circumstances. But for reasons that Mary does not know she goes through it. And this, Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox can agree on because this is in Scripture.

She does that so that the Savior of the world can be born. She doesn't know why that's important. But we know why it's important—2,000 years later. We see the importance of Bethlehem 2,000 years later. We know if we look at Scripture that in Hebrew the word Bethlehem means House of Bread. Bethlehem, House of Bread. We know that Jesus is the bread of life that comes into the world. The importance of Bethlehem deepens and deepens as time goes on. Mary makes the trip and goes through that for Jesus.

The Presentation: For Mary the Mystery Deepens: Who Is This Child? (Lk2:22-38)

27:54 Then the next thing we see is Mary and Joseph taking Jesus up for the Presentation in the Temple. And Simeon is there. Look at what the first generation of Christians record that cannot be denied by Catholics whether they like Mary or don't like Mary, Protestants or Orthodox. Look what is recorded in the Gospels about Mary at that point!

As the child's father and mother stood there wondering at the things that were being said about him, Simeon blessed them and said to Mary His mother, 'You see this child, he is destined for the fall and the rise of many in Israel. Destined to be is a sign that is to be rejected—and a sword will pierce your own soul too—so that the secret thoughts of many may be laid bare.' (Lk 2:33-35)

What does that mean? How can that be so easily dismissed as not part of a plan of God in salvation history? Obviously the original Christians, the ones who put this together in the Apostolic generation thought that was terribly important.

So how can our Catholic brothers and sisters simply dismiss Mary, the Blessed Mother, as not relevant or for that matter our Protestant brothers and sisters just dismiss what is being said here. Something awesome is being said. It is said "And a sword will pierce your soul so that the secret thoughts of many may be laid bare." Mary just takes these things in. We don't know what she did with them. She just pondered them in her heart. But this is what we can agree on. This is what's happening in the foundation document, the Gospels.

Mary: A Refugee (Mt 2:13-23)

29:52 Then we go and we remember the situation where they're coming to destroy children because of political craziness, the worry that Jesus is going to be a king of this world. We have all the death of the Holy Innocence and Mary becomes a refugee for Jesus.

I work in a Catholic Church back in the United States where there's a lot of refugees from the Middle East for one reason or another. A lot of refugees. Refugee state is a terrible and difficult state. It's not like a tour. It's not like when you're going to another country to go to school or to work. It's going into a world you never intended to go to and don't want to go to but for some reason you have to go. You don't know the streets. You don't know the language. You don't know the people. Everything is unfamiliar. And that's what Mary did so Jesus could live. She became a refugee.

Mary: Lovingly Living the Details of Motherhood (Lk 2:39-40, 51-52)

30:52 Then back in Nazareth years later, always walking, always the donkey. This is not taking Aer Lingus from Boston to Dublin. This is slow, one step after another, so that Jesus

could return to Nazareth. Then in Nazareth all we know is that Mary raised Jesus like a mother raises a child and all the bonding between mother and child that would take place takes place. She had to teach Jesus how to eat, how to speak. She had to wash his clothes and wash him. She had to play with him and tell him to do this and tell him to do that. Everything that a mother has to do that creates bonding and closeness, Mary had to do with Jesus. And we know like any other child, a child follows the mother around almost to the point of driving her crazy perhaps. Always with her, always going here and there. But that's just growing. That's how children learn. That's fine. And that's what Jesus did with Mary and that's how Mary used up her life's time—to nurture, to build, to take care of Jesus.

Mary: The Sorrow of the Lost Child (Lk 2:41-50)

32:15 The next time we hear of Mary in Scripture is when Jesus is 12 and they go down to Temple. We all remember the scene. It says they went down there for the Passover. The Passover is finished and they leave in a caravan with all the other relatives and friends going back up to Galilee in the north. Low and behold! After a day's journey absolute terror strikes when they realize that their 12-year-old child isn't in the caravan. Why do I say terror strikes? Because that's what it says in the Gospel. It says they return and searched sorrowfully. Mary is not a Hindu Yogi, disinterested in the suffering of the world. She is someone with a child that she loves and when she thinks the child is lost, either to kidnapers or to other terrible events, she searches sorrowfully. We can imagine what those days were if we've ever had those kinds of days with children where something has gone wrong and how anguished the heart is. What will become of them? What has happened to them? Have I failed? I wasn't attentive enough. Thousands of things go through the mind. But she suffered. She searched sorrowfully. And then, back they came to Nazareth and Jesus, as it says, grew in wisdom and age there with Mary and Joseph.

Mary's First Intercession Brings Unimaginable Relief in Cana (Jn 2:1-10)

33:52 Remember, this is Mary in the history of salvation. This is not something that a local Marian group has put together. This is Gospel truth. The next time we see Mary is at Cana. At Cana, what do we see? At Cana we see Mary making intercession for someone, the first intercession to Jesus for anything. Is that an accident of history, that what God leaves us in the primary documents of Christianity, the four Gospels, that what God leaves us is Mary as the original intercessor with Jesus? And look what she intercedes for, just something that people need! Something ordinary. Not grandiose things. Just something to alleviate people's anxiety and worry and hurt. "They ran out of wine. They need wine. Will you help them?" And of course, what is left to us in the Gospels, that Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox agree to is, Jesus did respond positively. Is that an accident? It can't be an accident if you believe the Gospels are the premier revelatory

documents of Christianity. This is part of God revealing salvation and the process of salvation. Both.

Now let's take a moment and think about Cana. It's an extraordinary story. Remember the story. They're having a wedding and they run out of wine. Anyone who has been at a wedding where there's alcohol drinking knows that it's better never to have started drinking then to run out in the middle of it. Not only do people become cantankerous, but it's embarrassing. So Mary goes to Jesus and she says, "They've run out of wine." And he says, "What would you have me do?" (Jn 2:4). Now note, she doesn't argue with him. She doesn't say another word. She just goes to the porters and says the last word she ever says in the Gospel, "Do whatever He tells you" (Jn 2:6). And what does He tell them? Now remember they've run out of wine; it's a worrisome and embarrassing thing. What does Jesus say? Does He say, "Geez, I know a guy that owns a vineyard down the road. Run down, tell him I said to give you some." He says nothing reasonable. Jesus says, with no wine in the house, He says "Fill up those stone jars with water" (Jn 2:7). Can you imagine what the porters must have thought at that moment? They must have thought this is bizarre, we're out of wine and he's telling us to fill these jars up with water.

But they remember what Mary said. "Do whatever he tells you." So they go and they fill the jars up. Then He says—now get this, they know they've just put the water in and then He says, "Take a ladle of it out, and give it to the chief steward." Now if you were one of the porters, what would you think at that point? You've got four jars, five jars of water, someone is telling you to take a ladle out and give it to the boss to taste. What does the boss want to taste water for? This doesn't make any sense at all. But you remember Mary's instructions "Do whatever He tells you." And so you say, "Okay." You take the ladle out and we know the story. The chief steward tastes it and it's the most magnificent wine he's ever tasted and there is a superabundance of it for the banquet.

Mary's Exclusive Guidance: "Do Whatever Jesus Tells You" (Jn 2:1-12)

38:04 But here's the point. The last words that Mary ever speaks in the Gospel, the last words that God places in Mary's mouth in the revelatory documents of the Gospel, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are words that point directly to doing what Jesus says even if you don't understand. The common Protestant complaint is that the Marian Cult as a form of Christianity without Jesus. Whether that's so or not, in reality Mary points exclusively and totally to Jesus and tells everyone, *everyone* who is devoted to her, "Do whatever He tells you regardless of what you think of the matter." And what does Jesus tell us? He tells us "Love your enemies. Do good to those who hate you. Pray for those who persecute you. Love one another as I have loved you. Be merciful. Be the Lamb of God." That's what He tells us. Those things are as much out of common sense as filling the

stone jars with water. Yet that's what Mary leaves us as her last words "Do whatever He tells you."

After that we go on. We see one time in the Gospels where someone says, "Blessed is the womb that bore you" (Lk 11:27). Mary is there and Jesus responds, "Blessed instead are the ones who hear the word of God and keep it" (Lk 11:28). But that's exactly what Mary is doing isn't she? Right from the Annunciation forward. God asked, she trusts, and she does.

Mary: Faithfully Trusting During the Passion and Death (Jn 18-19)

40:00 We come to the end, Calvary. On Calvary we have Mary back with Jesus. She's there at the end as she was in the beginning. She has walked the whole way. Remember this is biblically [speaking]. This is not pious fantasy. This is Gospel. She has walked the whole way, the entire life from conception to entombment and lived with the joys and the pains and the sorrows. As has been said on Calvary there were two altars. There was Jesus on the cross. We can only imagine what it must have been as Mary looked over the 33 years or so of life, right from the moment of the Annunciation, the mystery of that, to the mystery of this terrible, terrible moment, watching her son naked on the cross, flesh torn apart, suffocating to death. What it must have been to her, the anguish of heart. She couldn't do anything, but like anyone who loves anyone who is suffering, even though they can't do anything, the love requires that they be there in terms of presence. And so even though the presence was anguishing she was there with Jesus in the end.

Is that an accident that it took place in history that way? Is that an accident that in the documents that the Catholic and Protestant and Orthodox Church call the premier revelatory documents in existence, the four Gospels, that that's what's left to us? How could it possibly be? It will be said by some "We will agree with all that. But so what?" I submit to you this, in the last conference I said the key that Jesus lays out to effective prayer is "One who abides in Me I will abide in Him and He can ask what He wants and I will give it"(Jn 14:13, 15:7) Who possibly could abide more deeply in the heart of Christ, that is the heart of God, then Mary—the one who from the Annunciation to Calvary, because of her love for Jesus paid such a tremendous price. She abides deeply in the heart of Jesus and hence, deeply in the heart of God. If that is the case, why can't she ask her son, who is God, why can't she make intercession for human beings?

As Mary Lives, She Intercedes For Us

43:05 Karl Rahner says of people who have problems with Mary, "their real problem is not Mary, but what becomes of the community of the dead." It's not Mary. It's what happens to people when they have died, that's the real issue. If the risen Christ doesn't save his mother, we are all lost. If after all that Mary went through, from the Annunciation to

Calvary, if she is not with Jesus then it's hopeless for any of us, whether we're Catholic, Protestant or Orthodox. But the fact of the matter is Jesus does save Mary. Mary does live with Jesus and therefore she lives with him in love. Jesus does honor the life that was given so he could do what he had to do in this world. He does honor it.

And therefore, Mary is in a position to do what she did at Cana, to intercede, to ask. And that's all we ever do; we say, "Pray with us." "Pray for us" to Jesus. If she's not in a position to intercede, no one is saved, absolutely no one. We know that.

But God leaves us this document, the Gospels, with this incredible history of Mary with Jesus as the first intercessor and with Jesus positively responding, and with the clear statement that effective prayer is intimately tied to abiding in Jesus. And who abides more in Jesus? Therefore all we do is we recognize that we are part of the community of Jesus with Mary. And we say with Mary, as we would say with someone else who's right next to us, "Will you pray with me for this?" We are all people who ask for help at different times. We all need help. We all have to ask for help. And as we would say to someone here on earth, "Will you pray with me and for me?" so we say with Mary.

It seems to me it's disingenuous for our fellow Catholics and Protestants to be so rapidly and totally dismissive of the Blessed Mother. I don't think it can be done without doing terrible, terrible violence to the truth of the Gospels. I know it can't be done. I realize as I said in the beginning and laid them out—all the abuses that have occurred in the Church—that these have made Mary invisible in a hostile reality to so many people. But everything can be used improperly. But if we go back to the source that we all agree on, [we will find that] God has given us a spectacular and wonderful help in the salvation process. Mary is an extraordinary minister in the history of salvation.

I know what people say. We all do. That somehow Catholics have made Mary into a demigod. That's not so and we know it. We just say "Pray with us sinners now and at the hour . . ." "Pray with us." But it's even more. It's different than that. You and I know it's different than that. Perhaps we messed it up in the communication. But we know when we're talking about Mary we're talking about Jesus. It's that simple. We know when we're talking about Mary, we're talking about the mystery of the Incarnation, the divine becoming human in one person, and the one person being both divine and human. Great mysteries that have been put out there by scholars and how the divine mixes with the human in one person, Jesus.

"Lovely Lady Dressed In Blue" A Poem of Great Theological Depth

47:21 Everyone here, probably from birth, as I've known from birth, have known this incredible little poem about the mystery of the Incarnation, the mixture of the divine in the human

and how God chose Mary, a very, very human being like ourselves to be the minister of that to us so we could understand it. We know it. It goes like this:

Lovely lady dressed in blue—
 Teach me how to pray!
God was just your little Boy.
 Tell me what to say!
Did you lift Him up, sometimes,
 Gently on your knee?
Did you ever sing to Him the way,
 Mother did to me?
Did you hold His hand at night?
 Did You ever try?
Tell Him stories of the world!
 O! did He cry?
Do you think He really cares
 If I tell Him things—
Little things that happen? And
 Do the angels' wings
Make a noise? And can He hear
 Me now if I speak low?
Does He understand me now?
 Tell me—for you know?
Lovely lady dressed in blue,
 Teach me how to pray.
For God was just your little boy
 And you know the way.

That's a nice poem. It's a nice poem for children. But it contains the great theological truth of Christianity that God was totally divine in Jesus, but totally human. And it contains the great truth about Mary. That she took care of this totally human God-man just the way any mother would.

We all know the poem and it's simple. It's gentle. It's straightforward. And it really sums things up. Forget the abuses and just think about the real Mary, the extraordinary Mary that's presented in the history of salvation in the primary document of Christianity, the Gospels. And then think about the little poem. God was just your little boy. Did you hold His hand? Did He ever cry? Did you tell Him stories? And then the divine, did the angels' wings make noise. A beautiful mixture of the divine and the human that Mary was caring for and that God in His infinite providence and wisdom chose her to do. This

cannot be dismissed as irrelevant, as an accident. Especially in light of the fact that in the end Mary says to all of us, she proclaims exactly what all of us are supposed to say to ourselves and to the world, “Do whatever He tells you.”

Jesus, the Lamb of God, in Isaiah is called the unblemished Lamb, the clean Lamb, the pure Lamb. Christ has risen. Mary went with him from conception to Calvary and she is with Jesus now as she was in the beginning at the first moment of conception. Therefore she abides with Jesus and therefore can ask as she did at Cana for us and for the Church. The little poem “Mary had a little lamb whose fleece was white as snow. And everywhere that Mary went the lamb was sure to go,” is true about Mary and Jesus in time from the moment of conception and for all eternity.

We go to the Nonviolent Jesus, the Lamb of God, but if we wish we can go with the help of the Nonviolent, gentle, kind Mary.

[End of Audio]

14-The Lamb of Forgiving Love

New Testament Love

This conference is the only conference in the series of conferences that is actually a two-part conference. It's this plus the next one. What it is about and what the next conference is about is the notion in the New Testament of love, a much-used word, a much-discussed word. What I hope to do is to lay out during these next two conferences the meaning of love in the New Testament.

Why is this so important? Well, let me begin first of all by reminding you what we said in a conference earlier. To quote the Biblical scholar John L. McKenzie, "Love is not the center of the Christian ethic. Love is the center, the circumference, and everything in between. What is not an act of love is morally worthless in the universe." Love is the center, the circumference, and everything in between of the Christian ethic. We said he was just paraphrasing St. Paul in his famous hymn 1 Corinthians 13 when Paul says,

If I have all the eloquence of men and women and angels, but speak without love, I am nothing but a gong booming or a cymbal clashing. If I have faith to move mountains, but am without love it will do me no good whatsoever. If I give away all that I have piece by piece to the poor, and even if I let them take my body to burn, but am without love, I am nothing at all.

Therefore we said that if those things, martyrdom, religious oratory, faith and social service in the extreme without love do not save, then a cup of tea without love doesn't save. Remember?

You see what we were pointing at was, that what we do in the Christian life—giving someone a cup of tea—what we do carries spirit, carries spirit. Everything we do carries spirit. I can hand a person a cup of tea in a way that they would rather die of thirst than take it. But I can also hand the person a cup of tea in a way that communicates care and concern and genuine love. So it is not the handing of the cup of tea. It's not the social work as such. It's not the martyrdom as such, the faith as such, the religious oratory as such. It's the *love* that motivates it or doesn't motivate it that's the great issue.

We all know that it's possible to feign love, to make believe you're loving someone, but your real motivation is you want to manipulate them for some purpose. But of course that's not what we're talking about. St. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 13 'Without love—nothing.' So we want to focus in on this concept, this notion of love in the New

Testament because it is so, so important. It is what we're supposed to be about practically on a daily basis.

St. John of the Cross on Love

- 03:36 St. John of the Cross, a co-founder of the Discalced Carmelites, one of the great doctors of the Church, a great mystic, writes this, "An instant of pure love is more precious to God and to the soul and more profitable to the Church than all other good works together, though it may seem as if nothing were done." Extraordinary, utterly extraordinary, but totally consistent with St. Paul. An instant of pure love is more precious to God and to the soul and more profitable to the Church than all other good works together though it may seem as if nothing were done. That's what we've been saying here. That's almost a summary statement of our conference.

Fr. John L McKenzie on Love

- 04:53 The communication is that the Christ-like deed of love is everything. To use another sentence from John L. McKenzie: "The peak experience of the Christian life is the deed of love," meaning Christ-like love. You can't go any higher than that. It makes no difference if you have visions in this and that and euphorias. The peak experience of the Christian life is the deed of Christ-like love.

So we're going to spend this conference and the next conference taking a look at this New Testament notion because it's so, so central to what we must be about as Christians. It is *the* central notion. An act of Christ-like love in the grocery store is of infinite significance to the Church and to the soul and to the world, once again not because of us, but because of our union with God, because it allows God to work through us. Or said another way, we've been celebrating the liturgy of St. John Chrysostom every day, the Byzantine liturgy that both Catholics and Orthodox in the East use. The first sentence in our Liturgy book that the priest uses on the altar, the first sentence at the beginning of the book says, "God is love. Not in that love comes from God. Love *is* God."

We are participating in the reality of God when we participate in the reality of love. God is love, not in that love comes from God. Love is God. The mystery, the incomprehensible mystery of the divinity is somehow in the reality of that simple deed in the grocery store of Christ-like love. That's why St. John of the Cross says, "One instance of Christ-like love is more profitable to the soul and to the Church and more precious to God than all other works put together." That's incredible.

So we're going to spend these two conferences on love, this one and the next one, and yet we don't want to forget. We don't want to forget the simplicity of what we're talking about. We're going to try to make things more understandable. We're going to try to

come at it from different angles, especially scripturally. But in the end we want to be very, very clear: this is simple. This is simple. It's like walking, you know. When you walk it's a simple process, but you try to explain it and try to write about it it gets awfully complicated. So maybe we're going to complicate things just to try to give people a little motivation, give them a little insight, give them a little energy to do this. But it really is a simple task.

St. Thérèse of Lisieux on Love

08:08 As I again look back to the back of the Church here at the picture of St. Thérèse of Lisieux, I think how simple it is. Because remember what we said, the New Commandment, the only commandment that's unique to Jesus in the whole Gospel is the commandment that defines love. When He says, "I give you a New Commandment, love one another as I have loved you" (Jn 13:34). *He* is the definition of love and so all we're called to do moment to moment to moment is to ask what would Jesus do here, and then do it. "Oh" you say. "That's too simple." I said that before and I heard it, but it's too simple. I look back at St. Thérèse and I will assure you that the famous Little Way that St. Thérèse talks about, the famous Little Way is nothing but the New Commandment: to love as Jesus would love in the moment.

Let me read you a few sentences from her famous autobiography *The Story of a Soul*, the most read book in the Catholic world in the 20th Century. St. Thérèse says,

Among the countless graces I have received this year, perhaps the greatest has been that of being able to grasp in all its fullness the meaning of love . . . I had striven above all to love God, and in loving Him I discovered the secret of those other words: 'Not everyone who says to me: Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father.' Jesus made me understand what this will was by the words He used at the Last Supper when He gave His 'New Commandment' and told His apostles 'to love one another as He had loved them' . . . When God, under the old law, told His people to love their neighbors as themselves, He had not yet come down to earth. As God knew how much we love ourselves, He could not ask us to do more. But when Jesus gave His apostles a 'New Commandment,' His own commandment, He did not ask only that we should love our neighbor as ourselves but that we should love them as He loves them and as He will love them to the end of time. O Jesus, I know You command nothing that is impossible. . . O Jesus, ever since its gentle flame has consumed my heart, I have run with delight along the way of your 'New Commandment' (Beavers edition, p. 121 ff.).

Now we have all heard about St. Thérèse's Little Way for so many years, all our lives, but did you ever associate it explicitly with the New Commandment to love one another as I have loved you? Because that is explicitly what it is.

Now remember St. Thérèse was a Carmelite, Discalced Carmelite, and St. Thérèse was several hundred years after the founders, St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross. Therefore she would have read at some point exactly what I read to you a few minutes ago. Somehow it all clicked to her: "an instant of pure love is more precious to God and the soul and more profitable to the Church than all other good works together though it may seem as if nothing." Isn't that her life! It seems like nothing, her life seems like nothing on the surface when she dies on September 30, 1897 of TB (tuberculosis) at 24 in a Carmelite convent. But the power that went out from it, because once she saw the New Commandment was the Way, then she lived it.

So above all else in these two lectures, while the lectures are two lectures what they are about is something very, very straightforward and transparent. To simply ask the question in the moment: what would Jesus do here and do it. To commit each day's life to moment to moment being Jesus in the moment.

Eros: Reciprocal Love

12:55 Now with that said, I would like to begin this discussion of love in the New Testament by mentioning just a fact. The New Testament is written in Greek, all 27 books, a form of Greek called Koine Greek. In Greek the common word for love is eros. Eros means love. In Plato's dialogues eros is used hundreds and hundreds of times. It doesn't just mean as we think of it today in English, you know erotic love, sexual love. It does mean that kind of love, love between a man and a woman sexually, but it means far more than that. It's basically, if you will, it is the love of mutual reciprocation. So indeed you could say about your husband or wife or girlfriend or boyfriend "I love you" and you use eros. But you also use eros when you say I love God. I pray to God. God hears my prayers. God answers me. I pray to God and we have this mutual relationship. You'd use eros. But you could also use it analogically. For example in English you'd say, "I love a McDonald's hamburger," eros would be the word. It's the common ordinary word that's used, without exception, in Greek for love.

In the New Testament the word love, L O V E occurs 338 times. Of the 338 times in the New Testament that love appears, remember the New Testament is written in Greek, eros never appears. Eros does not appear on a single occasion in the New Testament. This is extraordinary. There is no way that eros could not appear unless those people doing the writing over a period of anywhere from 20 to 80 years after Jesus were totally conscious

that this word did not describe the love that was salvific. It has to be intentionally kept out in order not to appear because it would be the normal pattern of speech.

The word that does occur is agape, 318 times of the 338 times that the word love appears in the New Testament, the word that appears is agape. The other 20 times the word that's there is philia, which means brotherly or sisterly love, like Philadelphia. Philia, a brotherly/sisterly kind of affection. Agape is the word in all the great sayings that we know of Jesus about love starting with "Love the Lord, your God, whole heart, whole soul, whole mind, whole strength. Love your neighbor as yourself" (Mt 23:37-40; Lk 10:27). The word is agape. Love of enemies, the word is agape. Paul's great hymn that I just quoted, "If I have all the eloquence of men and of angels but am without love I am nothing at all, etc." 1 Corinthians 13, every time the word love is used it's agape. Every time it's agape.

Eros Lasts Only As Long As the Reciprocation

16:52 So what does agape mean? Agape means unconditional care or love. Unconditional care or love. So we see the difference immediately between eros and between agape. Immediately. Eros is a love of mutual reciprocation. In erotic love there is always something I am getting back and that something has to be there or else I can't even use the word. So for example, you have a boyfriend or a girlfriend and let's say your girlfriend. You're in love with this girl and you're calling her up on the phone and you're on the phone talking to her and you want to go out with her, seven nights a week! Every time the phone rings—"is that her?" Because the good feeling that comes when she calls and everything else. Then when the feeling leaves and the phone rings and someone picks it up but before they grab the phone you say "Geez, tell her I'm not here. Tell her I'm not here." You can't even use the word eros here; there's not mutual reciprocation [any longer.] [While this is no longer eros it certainly is not agape!] That's what the eros is.

You love God. You pray to God. God answers your prayers. Everything goes well. Then all of a sudden you pray to God, God doesn't answer your prayers. As a matter of fact things go terrible. Then all of a sudden you don't know if God exists. You don't pray to God. It meant the love was erotic and you were in a situation of mutual reciprocation. It's love, but it is eros. The problem with eros is that it never appears once in the New Testament. Just to use this little thing when we say we love a hamburger. You know we love a McDonald's hamburger, something like that. Well fine, we love a McDonald's hamburger. We really say it, "Gee I'd love a hamburger, you know. Every time I pass the golden arches I've got to get a hamburger. I just love those hamburgers." I get something; I like the taste of it, really feels nice. Then after 385 Big Macs, I hate the hamburger, can't stand the taste of it. Without the mutual reciprocation I can't even use the word love.

Whereas the word agape means there's no concern for reciprocation. The only concern is there's a need there. Period. Nothing more than that there's a need there. It doesn't mean the reciprocation has to be bad. That's puritanical that the only thing in the Christian life that's good is when you feel bad. That's puritanical. What it means is you love on the basis of the need, not on the basis of what you're getting back. You love not because you're going to convert someone to Catholicism. You love because the person is hurting. It's that simple.

Now just follow this a little bit: you see how you could never "Love your enemies—eros." Eros could never be the word because the enemy is the one that gives you negative reciprocation. Love your enemies can only be used, you'd have to use agape because it's unconditional love. The enemy is a human being. The enemy is in need and therefore you love him or her.

Now if to this moment in time in your life no one has ever told you that the English language translates three, actually four Greek words by the word love, L O V E, can you imagine the chaos that results in people's minds when they don't know the distinction? The chaos is that they read the New Testament and all this talk about love and they read it in terms of eros. They read it in terms of eros. I mean I'm sure that any one of the priests here and possibly some of the sisters and possibly yourself have met people because you come across this sort of thing continually. Someone is involved in an illicit romantic sexual affair of some kind, and they come in and talk to you about it and they quote St. Augustine. St. Augustine said "Love and do as you will." Well, yeah, love and do as you will if it's agape. Love and do as you will when it's eros and you've got total destruction on your hands; you got chaos going. So if you haven't thought to this moment in your spiritual life about the distinction in these words it certainly is something to, from here on out, just to reflect upon.

What is the symbol for eros that we use universally? The symbol for eros is that little chubby cherub with the bow and arrow, remember? He shoots the arrow into someone's heart and as they say the person is smitten or something like that. They're in love. But you know the only problem with that little myth is that little myth contains the warning that the point of the arrow only has a finite amount of that liquid that causes that feeling. So when the liquid wears off all of a sudden you don't love any more. Eros is fundamentally based in the emotions.

Agape: The Cross

23:24 Now what's the symbol for agape? The symbol for agape of course is the cross. There is nothing that could be worse emotionally, nothing could be more negative and repulsive

emotionally in terms of loving then being crucified and then loving by praying for those who are destroying you. You see agape does not reside in the emotion. It resides in the faculty of will. I choose to love as Christ loved whether I get back positive or negative emotional response. I am sure when Jesus performed changing the water into wine at Cana there was positive emotional feedback. Someone needed help, he did it and they were grateful. They probably came and said thank you. But on Calvary no one said thank you.

To use St. John of the Cross's language, it's as if nothing had happened. He said, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do" (Lk 23:34). Who heard it? Who knew about it? It was just another minor event in history and yet it was more precious to God and more profitable to the soul and the Church than everything else that was going on.

God is love. The Greek is *Ho Theos Agape Estin*. Agape, God is love, agape. God is unconditional love and care. It's when we live in that spirit that we live in God. How many of us condition our love, condition our love on getting what we want, or use our love to make conditions on other people's lives? If you love me you will do this. That's not God. God loves. God forgives. God doesn't manipulate. God loves just because there's a need for love.

Now this really does represent a critical difference in terms of what we mean by love. To love as Christ loved—the New Commandment—is the essence of St. Thérèse of Lisieux's Little Way. That's what she did moment to moment. But when you read the *Story of a Soul* and still more, when you read the different biographies about her that have been written, it is very, very clear, in the convent to love, to use her phrase "cost her much." Cost her much. It wasn't a matter of a positive emotional response coming back. It was a matter of will. This was the will of God and I conform my will to the will of God. It's that simple, even though a lot of times what comes is a negative reality.

So we are confronted here with something new, perhaps, something new that we really have to think about because this is really different. I assure you there is no way in the world that the term agape could wind up exclusively in the New Testament as what Jesus is talking about and eros be totally missing. I think in all of Plato's dialogues, I'm not quite sure of this, but I think Plato uses the word love approximately, 400 times and he only uses the word agape twice. It's a non-used word. It means something that was somewhat foolish.

As [St.] Paul says "The cross is a scandal to Jews and foolish to the Greeks" (1 Cor 1:23). It doesn't fit. To love just because there's need without worrying about . . . But this is our God. *Ho Theos Agape Estin*, this is our God. Wouldn't it be a terrible, terrible universe if

it were Ho Theos Eros? Because then God's love for us would depend upon—ourselves! How we were responding, were we making him happy or something like that. That is in fact the way people most of the time perceive God over the whole history of the world. They cringe in terror. Jesus comes along and says, “No, God is Father, Abba”. Ho Theos Agape Estin.

You're a parent. You know darn right well that just because a child goes bad, just because he goes on drugs, just because she goes out doing things that you find just terrible, that you don't agree with the things—you don't tell them they're right, you tell them they're wrong—but as you see the pain that the child is going through you don't love the child any less. In fact you may love the child even more because they are trapped and caught in something terrible. So also with the Father who does not withdraw love, but who loves unconditionally.

So this is the beginning of trying to understand what it means to love as Christ loved. Of course once again if you have never thought of the difference between the two words and you've just been interjecting the English L O V E thinking of eros and never thinking of agape, then you've got spiritual chaos on your hands. St. John of the Cross was a scripture scholar. He knew what was going on. He could read the Greek.

As a way of beginning then, our discussion of love, first we look at this. Next I want to talk about what are those two dimensions of agape that exist in the New Testament that absolutely everyone agrees are there, of which there is no agape without them. Other people add other dimensions. In fact I would even add one myself, but these two dimensions everyone universally agrees are there in the New Testament as the manifestations of agape, Christ-like love.

Two Facets of Agape

30:46 The two dimensions of agape that are incontestably there, if you will, two facets of agape that are incontestably there in the New Testament, in the Gospels, are first of all: agape means the willingness to serve without the desire for reciprocation. This is summed up in the New Testament in the theme of the Suffering Servant.

The second dimension of agape that's there is the willingness to suffer without the desire for retaliation. This is summed up in the theme of Forgiveness 70 times 7 times (Mt 18:22). The willingness to serve without the desire for reciprocation, the willingness to suffer without the desire for retaliation. It is by participating in these dynamics that we create reconciliation between ourselves and others, reconciliation between ourselves and God and hence peace.

What I would like to do now for the remainder of our conference, the few minutes we have left is I'd like to examine the first of these, the willingness to suffer without the desire for retaliation. In our second conference I will examine the second of these as being practical ways of living—practical. The Biblical scholar John L. McKenzie says, "Jesus Christ is the only person who has come to earth that has taught us a practical way to peace." The only person who has come to earth who has taught us a practical way to peace. Most people when they think of Jesus, his Sermon on the Mount and his teaching, they say it's impractical. McKenzie says he's the only one that has taught us a practical way to peace.

(I will parenthetically mention here, it may not be of any interest to you, I'll just mention it. The most discussed intellectual in the world in the last quarter of the 20th Century is a Frenchman by the name of Rene Girard. Rene Girard. In 1972 he wrote a book called *Violence and the Sacred*. When they reviewed the book in *Le Monde*, the reviewer said that there should be an asterisk placed next to 1972 in the history of humanities. Girard's book changed everything, a whole new way of looking. Girard has gone on to write several other books. He is professor of French Literature and Culture at Stanford University, holds the Chair there. He's a Catholic man about 70 years old.

[Sentences in this paragraph have been slightly edited.]

Now remember what I said, at the upper echelons of world scholarship, this is the most discussed person in the world in the last 25 years. I assure you of that. What he has said has tremendous implications for anthropology, sociology, psychology, religion, economics. It's not my purpose here to discuss Girard. It's only to say something. The thesis of Rene Girard writings is: the only way that secular society can prevent itself from literally destroying itself, emotionally, psychologically, politically, and economically is to take seriously—he uses the word—the teachings of the *Nonviolent* Jesus who teaches a *Nonviolent* God. This is not faith he is talking about. This is examining the Gospels, not as a faith issue, but as a statement of Truth verified by human existence.)

Let's go back to McKenzie. Jesus is the only person that came to earth with a practical plan for achieving peace. That's what I'd like to talk about now, that practical plan for achieving peace.

The Willingness to Suffer Without the Desire For Retaliation

35:55 [Speakers points to the board where he has a diagram showing evil catalyzing evil catalyzing evil. Later he points to a second diagram showing evil as a catalyst for its own destruction.]

1. X → Y
2. X ← Y
3. X → Y
4. X ← Y
5. X → Y

The normal process, the willingness to suffer without the desire for retaliation. You know what the normal process is. [1-5 in the diagram above.] Y and X get in a conflict. Y does something evil to X and X says “Oh, I’m not going to put up with that. Not me.” So X returns the evil to Y. You know like Gandhi said, every human being starts a conflict not really sure that he or she’s morally right, but once someone returns evil for evil, now they’re absolutely sure the other guy is no good and they were right starting it. So Y says here, “Oh no, I’m not going to let him get away with that.” So he returns evil for X and X returns evil to Y. And then Y back to X and so we have the basic eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth, arm for an arm, leg for a leg, tongue for a tongue, ear for an ear, hand for a hand until we have two people who are blind, toothless, legless, armless, speechless and one of them is in so much pain and agony that he screeches for the other to stop hurting him and that’s what the world calls peace by victory. There is never, never, never peace through victory. There is humiliation and all the dark ripples that go out from it. Whether that’s in the family or whether that’s in the nation. No peace through victory. Victory just means you can hurt better in the moment and therefore you can quell something.

Do Something! Overcome Evil With Good

37:48 So what does Jesus teach? Does Jesus teach that when Y does something evil to X, if X is the Christian, that X should do nothing because he’s a Christian? No. Absolutely, positively not. The teaching of Jesus is not that a person should do nothing in the face of evil. That is not Jesus’ teaching. Jesus’ whole life is a combat against evil. His whole life is a resistance to evil. It’s how we resist it that’s the critical question and Jesus’ teachings are very clear by word and by deed. When evil is done to you, your task is not to do nothing, your task is to return good for evil. You are to return good for evil.

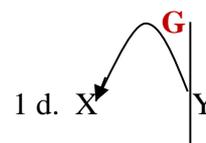
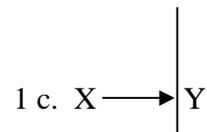
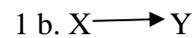
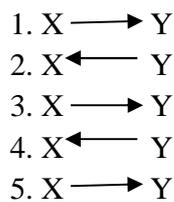
St. Paul says it very, very clearly, “Overcome evil with good” (Rm 12:21). Jesus models it in the extreme on Calvary when he prays for those who are destroying him, “Father forgive them” (Lk 23:34). You see no human being could possibly live in this world in the situation of being constantly bombarded by evil and doing nothing in the face of it. They would psychologically, emotionally collapse.

You all heard the saying “power tends to corrupt and absolute power tends to corrupt absolutely,” meaning the power of violence. But psychologically it’s equally true. Powerlessness corrupts and absolute powerlessness corrupts absolutely.

Jesus renounces the power of the world. He does not renounce the power of God, which is what? The power of love. He uses the power of love. He returns good for evil, love for evil and he teaches that. That is a position of powerfulness, not powerlessness. It’s not the power as the world defines power, but it’s genuine power. In fact it’s the only power that could conquer evil. Therefore Jesus’ teachings are simple, overcome evil with good. That’s the response here.

The Practical Solution: Consciously Putting Good In Place of An Evil

40:19 Now the practicality of it is this. First of all if X doesn’t return evil here, you know Y does something to X, X doesn’t return the evil, that stops all this. [Speaker points to board with the catalyzing of evil between X and Y.]



This [1-5] all stops, just it’s practical. Secondly, when you start doing good to people it gets harder and harder for them to do bad to you. [1 b through 1 d. G means good deed.] In the end there may be a possibility that you may die, people may die. But that’s not the issue here. The issue is St. John of the Cross: “One act of Christ-like love is more precious to God, more profitable to the soul and the Church than all other things together.” The issue is being Christ-like in the moment.

But there is genuine practicality to being Christ-like. First of all this whole terrible thing [pointing to chart 1-5] doesn’t go on, back and forth, eye for eye, tooth for a tooth, with all the humiliation and the anger and so forth that sends out ripples over years or generations. But secondly, practically, real love is being done. Look, Jesus is the Word who was here before the beginning of time, through whom all things were created. He is

the Word become [flesh]. He knows how to conquer evil and He says the way to conquer evil is to “Follow me,” return good for evil, love for evil, even to the enemy. But the teaching is universal, Jesus knows evil and He says in the face of evil—do love. That’s what He’s saying and that’s all evil. I just say this parenthetically, even those evils that you don’t know their source, the task is to use them as a catalyst to do love.

Do you see the issue here? The way life usually works in this world is this fellow or group starts evil. Evil catalyzes evil, catalyzes evil, catalyzes evil. In other words evil is a catalyst for itself. The practicality of Jesus’ teachings is that by us, the Christian, using the faculty of free will, which they have, evil becomes a catalyst for doing good. I will. I will return good for evil. Evil now becomes the catalyst for its own self-destruction. That’s the practicality of what’s being said. Instead of evil being what it has been throughout all history, the catalyst that catalyzes itself, that catalyzes itself, evil catalyzes evil catalyzes evil. Jesus first steps in and says, “I will make evil the catalyst for good. “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do” (Lk 23:34) and on from there. It is practical. It’s practical in the family. It’s practical in any place.

The Desire for Retaliation Replaced By the Desire to Imitate Christ

43:28 We look at agape in this form, the willingness to suffer without the desire for retaliation and the important word here is *without the desire*. Many people suffer and don’t retaliate, but wish they could. That’s not what we’re talking about here. That’s not what we’re talking about at all. What we’re talking about is, there is no desire to retaliate because I’ve got it very clear in my mind that my life is to be moment to moment acts of Christ-like love because I understand that it’s the act of Christ-like love that is the most precious thing in the world, precious to God, precious to the soul and profitable to the Church and the world beyond all other acts put together. That’s why I don’t have the desire because I have replaced this desire with the desire to imitate Christ.

Blizzard Example of Raw Evil

44:30 And now just let me focus one final moment on the practicality of returning good for evil, of following Jesus in the face of evil being done to you. I mentioned before there are those evils that we cannot put our finger on, yet we suffer. When they hit us we can’t say they’re not evils. Yet Jesus’ teaching remains the same, use evil as a catalyst for its own destruction. Return good for evil. Create good out of evil. Let me give you an example. Back where I live, several years ago there was a major blizzard, two-day blizzard unlike anything we had in a 100 years. In a city not too far from my town in the first afternoon of the blizzard a 10 year old child went out to play; night came and the child hadn’t come home. The parents got worried and they went out and looked for him and couldn’t find him. They looked all that night. They called the fire department and the neighbors and everyone is looking for them. They can’t find him. They couldn’t find him the next day.

They searched for two or three more days looking for him and finally they gave up. They assumed he was dead some place or kidnapped. He was gone for sure. This 10-year-old little boy. You can imagine the anguish of their hearts, just like Mary and Joseph looking for Jesus at the Temple when he was 12.

That's the way it stayed for almost two weeks. He was missing. He was gone. They didn't know where he was, assumed dead, maybe kidnapped, being tortured, whatever. He was missing. The last memory they had was when he walked out into the snowstorm to play. Two weeks after it was all over, the snowstorm stopped. Two weeks after they found him. He was dead. He was ten feet from the back door. An avalanche had come off the roof of the house and knocked him down and he suffocated, ten feet from the door. If he had gotten just another ten feet he'd be alive and well, but he didn't make it, and those parents were just crushed with evil. They were overwhelmed. You can't tell people like that in that situation "Oh, it's God's will!" Say "God doesn't want the death of anyone. God is life. God is love." Why these things happen we don't know. Evil, as I said earlier, is a mystery only one inch shorter than the mystery of God. They are overwhelmed and they are crushed.

The Solution: Bring About Good That Would Not Have Been Done

47:18 In the United States 85 percent of the families that have a death of a pre-puberty child wind up in divorce. I've seen it twice. It is a terrible reality to have a child die on you, and yet I know what has to be done. I know what the truth of the matter is. What they have to do, what they did do, they have got to do good in this world that never would have been done but for their responding to the evil that they are suffering, the death of their child. That's precisely what they did. They set up programs for homeless children, children that run away and are out in the streets, programs that help children, programs that never would have been set up. Children were helped who never would have been helped but for this death. They drew good out of evil by will. The suffering is real, but they chose to overcome evil with good.

That is what we all must do. That's how evil is overcome. The normal process is the death of the pre-puberty child produces chaos in the family. Evil produces evil produces evil. Jesus says "You do good that never would have been done in this situation. Do it because you're following me. Do it because this is what your life is in good times and bad. Do it because this is the most precious act there is to God. Do it because this is what it means to be baptized with me and to follow me. In the face of any kind of evil don't respond in kind, choose like I did on Calvary to do good."

Literature is loaded, loaded, with millions of examples of people who were destroyed like Jesus and who finished their days cursing those who were destroying them, calling down

curses, calling for revenge, saying that they will not forgive. Indeed, even asking God not to forgive those who are destroying them or those they love. But Jesus goes the other way. In the face of evil he chooses by will to do what God wants done to people, not what he [the one who has reason to retaliate] wants done. And what God wants done is the act of love, the act of love, the act of love. This is the Christian life. This is agape. This is the love of the New Testament. This is loving as Christ loved, the New Commandment. And this is that precious act, the act that St. John of the Cross says “More precious to God than all other acts and more profitable to the soul and to the church than all other acts put together.” There is a real choice here. Jesus calls us to something wonderful, divine, and extremely practical.

[End of Audio]

15-The Lamb of Serving Love

Agape—New Testament Love is Inextricably Connected to Willingness

We continue this evening with this conference, the second half of our discussion of agape, New Testament love. In a prior conference we raised the issue of the difference between eros and agape. We also said that agape represents the willingness to serve without the desire for reciprocation and the willingness to suffer without the desire for retaliation.

At the last conference we covered in detail the willingness to suffer without the desire for retaliation. In this conference we will cover the second half of that dimension of agape, which is found in the Gospel, the willingness to serve without the desire for reciprocation.

The first thing to note about the definition, in fact in both sides, both dimensions of agape is *willingness*. Willingness. As we said earlier it is a matter of will. It is a matter of choosing to do something. It's a matter of using the faculty that's given by God of freedom to choose to do this rather than that.

The Willingness to Serve Without the Desire for Reciprocation

01:28 The second thing to notice is the willingness to serve *without the desire for reciprocation*. Now many, many people serve and are not reciprocated, but they desire to be reciprocated. They desire to get something back. That's not what we're talking about. We're talking about the willingness to serve just because the need is there.

Earlier in this conference I mentioned the famous story in the middle of *Brothers Karamazov* by Dostoevsky, the story of 'The Lady of Little Faith' who thought she was dying. Remember? Part of that story that we did not mention at the time is that this lady had a daughter and that she went to this priest, Zossima, who was the holiest man in Russia, when she thought everything was well. She went to him and she told him that she wanted to become a missionary in India. He asked her why and she said because there's all the suffering and the pain in India. And he said to her, but don't you have a daughter at home who's an invalid? She said, yes, but I've got money and I can have her taken care of and then I can go to India and take care of people and more people will be helped. So the conversation went on between Zossima and this lady and finally it comes out what the problem is. The problem is that this woman has used up all of her youth taking care of this invalid girl and the girl has never once said thank you. You see the reciprocation she was looking for was not money, but it was thanks.

Without that reciprocation she just didn't want to go on. But the starets, Fr. Zossima, the holy monk says to her, but don't you see that if you make reciprocation, gratitude in this case, if you make gratitude the condition for giving your love, if you make gratitude a condition for you caring, then those people that don't have the ability to show gratitude will be left uncared for. Why people can't show gratitude we don't know. But that this is the case is for certain. And yet those are people who are loved by God as much as anyone else, and they need help because they're in pain. But if we put the condition that someone has to thank us, then those are the people that don't get served.

And so it is with every other condition of reciprocation. Once we place a condition on our service then we are doing the service in order to get that reciprocation. We are not doing it just because the person is in need. Agape is the willingness to serve without the desire for reciprocation, the willingness to serve just because the need is there. And again from the teaching and from the example of Jesus in Gethsemane when he heals the armed servant of the high priest, that includes service to the enemy just because a need is there.

The US Constitution Opposes New Testament Love

05:24 In the Constitution of the United States, the American Constitution, which is more or less the same as most constitutions of Western democracies, (we talking about the Constitution, not all the laws) there is mention of only one crime in that entire Constitution, the fundamental document. A similar reality exists in most constitutions. The one crime is treason. It says in the Constitution that anyone who gives aid and comfort to the enemy is guilty of treason. But that's just the opposite of what Jesus says, isn't it? He says we are supposed to give aid and comfort even if a person *is* an enemy. Why? Because the enemy of the state is not the enemy of God. For the Christian, the enemy of the state is a child of God to be loved as Christ God loved him or her.

Our approach, regardless of where people live on the earth, regardless of whether a state defines them as an enemy or not, our approach to them is with the question, what would Jesus do here. Our approach is to be Christ-like.

So you have on the one hand a document, the fundamental document of a society saying that if you give aid and comfort to an enemy it's treason, it's a capital offense. You could be killed for it. And on the other hand you have the Gospel saying, "Love your enemies. Do good to those who persecute you. Pray for those . . . etc., etc" (Mt 5:44ff; Lk 6:27ff).

All that I'm saying here is this: agape, unconditional care or love means that you are a person of compassion, that that's what you choose to be. Compassion is a break down of the words common passion. When someone is suffering and you have a common passion with them then their suffering enters you and you go forward and help them just because

they're suffering, just because they have the need. That's all. Not because they're black, white, men, women, Jews, Christians, Hindus, it makes no difference. The only issue is they're suffering and we are supposed to be agents of the God of Mercy, therefore we bring mercy. We serve just because mercy is needed. That's all. It may be something as simple as a cup of tea. It may be a smile. It may be a kind word. It may just be anticipating something that someone needs or that may be things far greater than this, far larger than this.

But the point is we don't serve because of what we're going to get out of it. We serve only because the person has a need and this is what we have committed our life to in Christ, to being incarnations, enfleshments of mercy as He was.

Suffering Servant of Isaiah

08:48 So let us go back to agape. The willingness to serve without the desire for reciprocation. I say this theme is summed up in the New Testament under the theme of the Suffering Servant. As we mentioned earlier, the Suffering Servant is that mysterious character out of Isaiah who suffers, suffers innocently, suffers terribly, but suffers in a way that somehow the sufferings of others are relieved. That's the Suffering Servant.

We said earlier that when Jesus is baptized the words that he hears out of heaven "This is my beloved Son with whom I'm well pleased" are the opening lines of the hymn of the Suffering Servant (Mt 3:17; Is 42:1). The Suffering Servant is the one who suffers and gets absolutely nothing back, in fact gets negative back. But there is a need there. In fact in order for the Suffering Servant to serve he has to suffer. He has to suffer.

Cesar Chavez: An Example of Christ-like Love

09:58 Many years ago in the United States a man tried to do some work, give some help in terms of a terrible problem that exists there, which is the migrant farm workers. Disgraceful problem. Human beings, mostly Mexican, are brought over the border and they and their families are forced to live in moving shacks with no water, no electricity, none of the amenities of life. [They live in] filthy dirty situations in order to do the harvesting and the planting for these massive plantation owners in California. Plantation owners make literally tens upon tens of millions of dollars off this slave labor. The migrants are paid dirt wages. Their children are without medical care, hardly any education; they're the bottom of the barrel in everything. Well, a Mexican American man, Catholic man by the name of Cesar Chavez, about 30 years ago tried to work with these people and tried to organize them so that they could have a better living in the context of doing what they were doing. And someone once asked him why you're doing this and his answer was "To be a man is to be willing to suffer for others." To be a man is

to be willing to suffer for others; to be a person is to be willing to suffer for others. Suffer in order to serve, not because suffering in and of itself has any value. It does not.

I quoted the biblical scholar John L. McKenzie. He says, “Mere animal pain does not save. Identification with Jesus’ suffering is identification with Jesus’ loving.” In the real world of evil in order to love you have to suffer because evil will not let love exist. It will try to stop it. It will try to destroy it. So in order to serve real human beings in the real atmosphere in which we live, which is an atmosphere that’s heavy with evil around us, sometimes it’s necessary to suffer. Sometimes a lot. To be a man, says Cesar Chavez, is to be willing to suffer for others.

One Sentence Summary of Jesus’ Ministry: I’ve Come to Serve

12:40 There is only one sentence in the New Testament in which Jesus sums up his ministry. That one sentence occurs when the sons of Zebedee in one Gospel, and their mother in the other, ask Jesus for the place next to him in his reign. They think he’s going to be a political messiah. They think he’s going to save Israel by military might and he’s going to be the new king of Israel and he’s going to have a lot of stuff to hand out to his friends, money, positions, prestige and power. So they ask for the two places next to him and Jesus says He can’t give them those. Then He says can they drink of the cup and be baptized in the baptism that he is going to be baptized. They say yes. But the sentence is this that sums up Jesus’ whole ministry, according to biblical scholars: “Just so the Son of man came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mt 20:28; Mk 10:45). Jesus came to serve and therefore if we are disciples of Jesus that’s what we’re here to do also.

If Christ is in us and we are in Christ and our mission is the same mission as Christ then our way has to be the same way, which is not that we come to be served, but we come to serve. We use life’s energy up to serve regardless of who the person is, regardless of what the situation is, but this is real love.

Here’s the point that’s so important. Remember we read extensively, several conferences ago, from John Paul II’s encyclical *Dives in Misericordia*; in that we read several times a particular little paragraph. I made a point of reading it several times so you would remember it at this point. That paragraph was something approximately like this: Mercy, delivering, giving mercy was not a mere obligation that Jesus was teaching, but was essential for communicating, for revealing—was John Paul II’s word—for revealing the Father and his mercy to humanity. Remember that? Living a life of mercy he said and following Jesus was an essential step in revealing the Father as mercy to the world.

So we serve, even at the point of suffering, not just because there's a person in need, but also because the world is in desperate need of seeing active mercy and because there is something mysterious about the fact when we act mercifully towards people something of God is revealed because we are participating in the reality of God. This is what the Suffering Servant is, the one who suffers in order to serve and people are saved through that action.

Now I know at this moment this sounds a little complicated, this sounds a little obtuse, this sounds almost like it's not real. But I assure you it is. When the Pope says that active mercy done by you and me reveals of the Father of Mercy to others, he knows what he is talking about. It does, and it does so all the more at the point when we are merciful or we serve where no one expects service, where we're dealing for example with the enemy or under terrible crises situations where justice could never demand that we serve. The more difficult the situation that we bring mercy to, the more the Father is revealed.

André Schwarz-Bart's *The Last of the Just* Summary

17:38 The very best example I know of an explanation, a description, a presentation of the theme of the Suffering Servant outside of the New Testament is found in a novel entitled *The Last of the Just* by a man by the name of André Schwarz-Bart. André Schwarz-Bart was a survivor of four years in the concentration camps. This novel is one of the most powerful pieces ever to come out of that experience. The title *The Last of the Just* comes from the fact that there is a Jewish spiritual tradition based on the Isaiah Suffering Servant that says at every moment there lives in the world 36 Suffering Servants, 36 people who suffer innocently. Through their innocent suffering, by the mysterious work of God, they manage to serve and bring mercy to the world just enough so that the world will not collapse under its own evil, so the world will continue to exist until the Messiah comes.

So there exists 36 Suffering Servants at all times and these Suffering Servants are in Jewish spiritual tradition, Just Men. Just does not mean justice; it means righteous. Thirty-six righteous men, thirty-six Suffering Servants are the pillars on which the world stands until the Messiah comes and they are the pillars because they absorb the evil of the world and somehow serve through mercy while absorbing that evil.

The story of *The Last of the Just* is about a man by the name of Ernie Levy. He's a cosmopolitan Jew in Germany in the 1930s. He's got his business. He's doing quite well. He's about to get married to Golda. There's stuff going on with the Nazis and with Hitler and National Socialism. But their feeling on it is it's nothing. It's going to pass. Politics goes up and goes down. We just go on, don't worry about it. Well, it doesn't work out that way. Things keep getting worse and worse. There's a couple of old rabbis at different

times [in Ernie's life]; Ernie Levy's mother and father are told by some that Ernie Levy is one of the 36 Just Men. Ernie Levy passes it off. He says that's superstition. That's not real. I have to worry about my business. I have to worry about my wedding.

Well, things get worse and worse under the Nazis and one night as happened over and over and over again, truckloads of German military came in, truckloads of Nazis, Gestapo, whatever it was at the time that was being ordered around and they were doing their jobs obediently, and rounded up the whole city, put them in the trucks, brought the trucks to the railroad station and then loaded the people on those little boxcars each containing 80 or 100 people. All they could do would be to stand, couldn't sit, no toilet facilities, heat, cold, made no difference; they were loaded on. They take Ernie. Ernie and Golda are separated. All Ernie's wealth is gone and they take him to one of the concentration camps. Ernie, over the next several years in the concentration camp manages to stay alive by all kinds of little efforts, tricks. But he sees all kinds of things. He sees, for example, his own people being raped and murdered, beaten. He sees all. Everything he sees destroys his faith in God. Everything he sees absolutely destroys his belief in God, as he sees men and women and children beaten and slaughtered and tortured and tormented.

His life deteriorates and deteriorates, his internal emotional life, psychological life, mental life just collapses and he becomes a Nihilist, meaning he believes there is nothing in the universe that's worthwhile and all he wants to do is die like a bug. But he doesn't have the courage even to kill himself. He's at the grave and they're machine gunning his fellow Jews and his job, along with a few others is as they machine gun 20, he would throw the dirt on top of them, and they'd machine gun 20 more and he'd throw the dirt on top of them and this was his world for several weeks.

After several years of this he became too sick to work himself. When you became too sick to work in a concentration camp, then you went to the extermination camp. So he was put on the boxcar to be shipped to the extermination camp. He's sick, he's feverish, he's nauseous, and there's no meaning in life. He just wants to die. And in the boxcar with these 80 or 100 other sick people, some already dead, everyone feverish, no place to sit, no toilet facilities, all of a sudden he looks down and sees lying on the floor, Golda, who he was going to marry and she's absolutely torn apart. She's just a wretch of a person at this point, mentally and physically destroyed. Crazy.

You see he and Golda could have gotten out. So on top of all the other misery he has, there is that strange misery of 'it might have been'; it could have been different, and he's just crushed by it because it didn't have to be this way. He had his chance to get out. So they move him into Auschwitz on the train. Those that could work a little more were put

to the right. Those that couldn't do anything were moved to the left. He's sent to the left; he can do nothing. He's too sick. He's too emaciated. He doesn't care. He just wants to die. He knows what's going to happen. All the people around him are talking as if they're going to a shower and finally they're going to be clean, and finally they're going to get rid of the lice and the dirt, and finally they're going to get some food. And of course that was the propaganda the Germans gave them to keep them in order till they were actually gassed.

Ernie doesn't believe it at all. He knows exactly what's going to happen to him. He doesn't care. He just wants to die. They're all brought into a place and as the Germans did, all their hair was shaved because the Germans saved the hair of all the people that they exterminated in order to make carpets and so forth out of it. More than half of the 100 or so people he's standing with are little children. Children are as unproductive as sick people, little children, 4, 5, 6, 8 [years of age]; they can't work, so they're exterminated. They're all standing there naked and all talking that they're going into a shower and so they're all pushed into this little room, a tiny room and they see the shower nozzles up above and they're all talking about finally they're going to be clean. They're all pushed into this concrete room and remember Schwarz-Bart was there; he knew. He was there for four years. And then the iron door of the shower room is slammed shut against the concrete and with the bang of the iron on the concrete the illusion is broken.

They know what's going to happen. Because with the bang and the clang comes total darkness and all of a sudden people go mad, screaming and yelling, trying to get out, banging at the door in the total darkness. The gas is turned on. It is absolute madness. If you've ever been to Auschwitz you see these rooms, these shower rooms where they exterminated people and they're concrete, but on the ceilings people have actually with their fingers peeled off the concrete trying to get out. It's absolute terror. Small space, dark, in a world you don't know, naked, in a hostile world. And they're screeching and yelling and again remember, Schwarz-Bart went through this for four years. He saw stuff like this.

The children are out of their mind in terror. If you can imagine a little 4 or 5 or 6 year old in a black world with adults going crazy; they are out of their mind with terror. And one of the children, to try to relieve himself of terror, begins to yell out, "Daddy, Daddy, I'm sorry, I won't do it again. Please forgive me. I promise I'll be a good boy. I'll never do it again." He thinks he's being punished for something he did in the past by his father and he's pleading with the father to help him, let him out and he'll be a good boy.

Remember Schwarz-Bart was there. Then a second child hears it. A second child gets it in his mind that that's what's really going on here, he's being punished by his father and

so he starts screeching, “Father, Father, I’m sorry. I’ll be a good boy. I promise I’ll be a good boy. I’ll never take the bicycle again,” etc., etc. And then a third and then a fourth. The gas is on. They are all screeching for their father to forgive them and have mercy on them, to help them and take them out of here. They are absolutely terrorized out of their minds.

Ernie Levy hears it. It just drives him into the ground. It makes life all the worse from what it was before. He just wants to die. The gas is on. There’s only two minutes, three minutes to live anyway, but he listens. He listens. They’re all Jewish and he says, “Children, children, children, listen to me, listen to me, listen to me. Stop yelling. Stop yelling. Don’t worry about it. We’re all going to the Messianic banquet.” He doesn’t believe a word of it. He thinks he’s going to be annihilated, but the children are Jewish. The minute they hear the word Messianic banquet, they know the Messianic banquet because that’s Passover. That’s the meal. And he says, “We’re all going to the Messianic banquet” and he starts describing the things that are used for the Passover meal, the tablecloth, the food, the herbs that they all know. He says, “Now it’s out there and the table’s out” and it has this on it and that on it. And they begin to listen a little bit. “Don’t worry. Don’t worry, it’s only going to be three minutes before we get there.” And he starts describing the Messianic meal and one of the children yells out “Is Aunt Sophie there?” And he says “Sophie’s there, Sophie’s there. She’s doing this.” He describes something that’s done in preparation for the Passover meal.

Another child yells out “Is my Daddy there?” And he says, “Yes, he’s putting his clothes on” this way and that way, which the child would know. All the time he’s telling them to take a deep, deep breath and they’ll get there faster because if you breathe the Zyklon B gas in quickly, you just expire. But if you don’t, if you struggle against it you strangle to death. He can’t breathe it in deeply because he’s talking and talking hard. So finally they quiet down. He keeps telling them the story, which reminds him of his youth, which is all gone and will never be again and everything that’s lost and he continues to describe the Messianic banquet. And they die, and he strangles. But *they* die in peace.

God Works Through Our Perceptual Courage, the Courage to See Pain

31:28 Here’s the point, if Ernie Levy did not accept the task of serving those children under those horrible conditions, of listening to their pain and doing something in response to it then when they called out to the Father for mercy, there would have been no one there to give it. But because he was faithful, because he did not close his mind down to the suffering of others, even though the situation was terrible for him, those children, when they cried out: “Father, Father help me, have mercy on me, I’m sorry,” their real Father, their Father in heaven answered with Ernie Levy who brought them peace instead of terror in the last two minutes of their life. But in order for him to do that he himself had

to suffer. Not just the mere strangulation, which was terrible, but he had to suffer all the pain that it meant to let that suffering of the children in as well as the pain of the lost past.

You see the key to serving suffering humanity as Jesus served them is you have to be willing to let the pain of others into your existence. If you do not let the pain in, you will never have the urgency, nor the creativity to respond. Never. Impossible. But if you let the pain of suffering people into your presence at least you have a chance of having urgency and creativity to do something as Ernie did. Never, never, never in justice, never in justice could anyone demand under those circumstances that Ernie Levy let the pain of those children in. He was in the middle of his own misery. He was in the last minutes of his own life. He was sick. He was feverish. Justice could not possibly demand that Ernie Levy do anything. But compassion did. He had a common passion because a human being—children—were screeching and yelling in terror and therefore he did not cut their pain out as he could have. He let it in and in some mysterious way the idea hit him how to calm them. They only had a minute or two minutes left to life, but that wasn't the issue. The issue was they were living in terror.

Matthew 25, the famous Last Judgment passage, you remember how it goes: “I was hungry, you gave me to eat, thirsty you gave me to drink,” and they all say, “Lord where did we see you? Where did we see you?” The point is it takes perceptual courage to serve. You've got to be willing to have the courage to see the hurt person in front of you and the more you see the hurt person in front of you the less you'll attack and the more you will look for a way to serve. But if you don't see the pain and the wounds of others then attack becomes easy. It becomes simple. It could have been very, very easy for Ernie Levy in that gas chamber to add to the problem. While in his own misery and confusion and anxiety and torment he hears the children yelling, he could have pushed them away and said, shut up, be quiet. But that's not the way it came to him. It came to him as pain.

The problem with letting pain of others in is the minute we let the pain of others into our lives, the minute we let the suffering of others into our lives, we suffer. It's far easier to worry about the baseball game and the soccer match and the politics and the fashion and the entertainment or the television or the news or whatever it is. But if we were to stop and think of the loneliness, for example, the agony in some instances, the fear and the hopelessness of elderly people in a rest home, the minute we allow it into our presence it almost forces us, because we're human beings, to start thinking about how to respond. The same is true any place anywhere with any human being. I guarantee, if we do not allow the pain of others into our presence, if we refuse to see the wounds of others, there will be no response. None whatsoever. It's a guaranteed way *not* to serve.

But that's not what Jesus did. That's not what the Suffering Servant is about. We said the task of the Christian is to be an artist of agape, an artist of love. It's not meeting a legal requirement. It's revealing the Father as mercy and that's precisely what Ernie Levy did in that gas chamber. That's precisely what Schwarz-Bart does through the novel. That's precisely what Jesus does in the Gospel. Those children received mercy, but they received it at the cost of suffering by someone else. Without that price in this real world of evil, they would have been left to die in utter terror instead of in peace.

Agape Has No Conditions

37:54 When in *Dives in Misericordia* John Paul II says that Christ demands that his followers be merciful—be merciful as your Heavenly Father is merciful; “I want mercy and not sacrifice” (Mt 9:13)—he says that's not an obligation in the sense of a normal obligation, that's a condition for revealing the Father as mercy. I submit to you that's true and we never know when we're doing it. Take the little example that we're using here, the lonely, suffering, isolated person whose life is gone and who is lying in a rest home. Who knows what one act of going there, trying to talk, just holding her hand or holding his hand, just trying to do mercy, who knows what that's going to reveal to the person. Because mercy is the life of God.

What is absolutely for certain is if I don't go there they will remain isolated, lonely, dejected, depressed or whatever it is in a merciless world. For me to get there though, the first step has to be the willingness to let their suffering into my presence because without that nothing happens. There's no desire to get up and to leave the soccer match and go down there.

So agape—the New Testament word for love, unconditional love and care. Ernie Levy could have made it a condition that people have at least some life to live more than two minutes before I help them. What difference does two minutes make? The condition there would have been that they had a long life to live. There was no condition on time. It was just that the need was there at the moment. How many people do we not help because we ever so subtly make conditions and we don't even realize it? Oh, it's, “They're not worth it,” or, “It's only a small thing,” or it's this, you know.

Agape, unconditional love. No reciprocation desired like in eros. Agape is the way to peace. As we said earlier when we were talking about the willingness to suffer without the desire for retaliation, victory never leads to peace, it just leads to more hurt, more retaliation. An eye for an eye always leads to a tooth for a tooth and on out. Victory never leads to peace. It just leads to humiliation and the desire to get the foot off your neck so you can get back.

Agape is the Road to Reconciliation

41:02 The only thing that leads to peace is reconciliation and reconciliation comes first in terms of forgiving those who have damaged us or hurt us, more than forgiving—doing them good. That’s the road to union and secondly, reconciliation by just serving people in need. How can there be any peace if you’re walking by people who are suffering, crying out for help maybe in silence, and you just walk by. Where’s the peace? That’s the peace of the Disneyland surrounded by a global ghetto, misery on all sides but a little personal Disneyland, a little personal isle of tranquility. That’s not the peace of the Gospel, the peace of Christ. Agape is *the* road to reconciliation and reconciliation is the only road to peace.

And so we conclude this presentation on New Testament love by saying once again, all that we’re talking about is just what we said when we started it, the recognition with St. Paul of the Truth of what John of the Cross said, “The smallest deed of Christ-like love is more precious to God and more profitable to the soul and to the Church and to the world than all other things put together.” There is a real choice about what to do with life, moment to moment. This *is* a real choice. There are those who say the Lamb of God, that’s a wimpy way to live. You’ll just be a doormat. You’ll just try to find the easy way out. You just don’t want to be bothered with the hard stuff of the world following the Nonviolent Jesus and his way of mercy. I say to you, I say to them, just try to commit one day, one day, to doing it the way Jesus says do it and you’ll find fire. Fire. A death to self that you have never known before, but a good fire. A fire of God. A fire that cleanses.

So we are confronted with the simple fact. Jesus says to his disciples, “Love one another as I have loved you” (Jn 13:34). We know how He loves. He loves agapaistically. He loves enemies. He loves friends. He allows the suffering into this presence in order to respond to it just like he did in Gethsemane when he healed the armed servant of the high priest. We know how Jesus loved and the more we ponder the Gospel, the more we’ll know. The only issue is, are we going to commit ourselves each morning to a day in, day out, moment to moment where love is agapaistic love, Christ-like love, is to be our God? Or are we going to commit ourselves moment to moment to something else being our God? Jesus comes and tells us “God is Father, God is love.”

If that’s the case, a commitment to Christ-like love in the moment is a commitment to God. Commitment to anything else moment to moment is a commitment to an idol. How much of the violence, destruction, enmity and so forth that we find the Christians have done over the centuries has been done 100 percent because the commitment was something other than simply loving as Christ loved moment to moment. I submit to you, you were given your gift of faith, your baptism for no other reason than to love as Christ loved in this moment right now and in the next and to get up every morning with that

commitment. But you were given that because you have a part to play, a part every bit as serious as the part Ernie Levy had to play in the gas chamber. Each of us will not know it until eternity, but in eternity we will know who we were supposed to reveal the Father of Mercy to, who we revealed it to and who we didn't because we refused to be merciful in that moment.

We are co-redeemers with Christ, the God of Love and Mercy Incarnate. Our task is clear.

[End of Audio]

16-The Resurrected Lamb

Missing the Obvious

They say if you're a good retreat director or a good public speaker you have to tell a joke, you know. So I haven't told a joke here and we've been here all these days, 16 conferences. So it's about time.

Once upon a time there were three theologians, a Catholic theologian, a Protestant theologian, and an Orthodox theologian and they were going to this big ecumenical conference. So they decided to drive together in the same car that day. So they went to the conference and they talked at the ecumenical conference the way theologians do and enjoyed themselves. After the conference was over they came back to the car and they went to open the door of the car and the door was locked. They looked through the window and lo and behold, there were the keys in the ignition. So they try the other door. That was locked. There's the keys and they're looking through the window at the keys. So they start talking about how are they going to get the keys? How can they get the keys?

So the Catholic theologian says, "Well maybe what we can do" he says "is that we can just try to call a locksmith some place and he can come and the locksmith can fix or break the lock in some way or get through it and then we can get our keys." Well they start arguing about that and they say, "No, a locksmith's no good. It's going to take too much time. Going to take too much time, a locksmith is going to take too much time. We can't do it that way." And then the Catholic theologian keeps insisting, "Yeah, the locksmith is the way to do it."

Well, then the Protestant theologian says, "No, no, no, no, no." He says, "What we have to do here is just break the window. That's the easiest thing to do. Just break the window. We'll reach in then through the broken window and we'll get the keys." And so the other two start arguing about that "Oh no, no, no, no. That's destructive. That's destructive. That's not the way to do it." And they're fighting back and forth.

Well, the Orthodox theologian comes along and he says, "What we have to do here" he says "we have to get a little kind of coat hanger and try to slip it around or in the window or under the window or something and try to get the lock open." And they ask him, "Well do you know how to do that?" He says, "No, I don't know how to do it but we can figure it out." And then they're arguing, "Well by the time we figure it out we could go home and get the keys." And the other one is saying "No let's bust the window and get it over

with.” And so the argument goes on and on and on and everyone’s becoming rather defensive and they’re defending their own position.

Finally one of them looks up in the sky and he says, “I don’t know how we’re going to get those keys, but I know we have to make a decision very, very quickly because look at that sky. It’s about to start to rain and the roof is down on this car.”

I quoted the biblical scholar John L. McKenzie earlier saying that “If we cannot know from the New Testament that Jesus rejected violence we can know nothing of His personal message.” It’s the clearest of teachings.

Christian Hope Corresponds to the Hopes of the Human Heart

03:45 Our task today, the task of the Church, your task, my task is to again see clearly what was once seen clearly. To see the obvious. It’s so, so important because this modified, diluted form of Christianity that we have in all the Churches, a Christianity that is a compromise, right, left, and middle on what Jesus said is not imparting hope to people. It is not imparting hope to people. The Christian vocation is to hope. We say in the Mass “We wait in joyful hope.” Christian vocation is one of hope and to work for the impossible. Mere human hope is not enough. Hope has to do with seeing possibilities in the future that are good. That’s what hope is, seeing possibilities in the future that are good.

We are taught by the world, and maybe unfortunately by the Church, to keep our hopes reasonable. Well, the hopes of the human heart aren’t reasonable. The hopes of that woman, remember I read her little anniversary poem about her dead son, Richard Tevlin, that’s not a reasonable hope when she says “Until then.” She’s thinking about the unreasonable. She’s thinking about the totally impossible, that she and her son, who is dead, long dead, will be united again.

Reasonable hopes are no hopes. The only hopes that are really important are the ones that the human heart longs for and they are totally unreasonable: The hope that death can be conquered, evil can be overcome, people who love can once again be together, and not just for a time, but for all eternity, and that God will be known face to face. Those are impossible hopes on the human scale. Those are impossible hopes for reason. But those are the hopes that every human heart has regardless of whether the person is Christian or Muslim or Jew or Atheist or Hindu or what have you. But from the human perspective they are impossible hopes. They are futures that we see no way of ever bringing about, yet we know that the word *impossible* is not in the Christian dictionary for nothing is impossible with God.

In fact we know that Jesus Christ explicitly comes to respond to the hopes and the anguishes when those hopes aren't fulfilled, of the centuries of the people who lived millennia and millennium before us and of ours and of those who will come after us. No government, no philosophy, no journalist, no politician, no entertainer, no one addresses the real longings of the human heart but Jesus. No one.

Hope of Christianity and in Christianity is not a reasonable hope. At the end of our Divine Liturgy, every day, we bow to the icon of Jesus and we say as you remember "Glory to You, Christ God our hope. Glory to You." The only hope, the only hope is in Jesus. Jesus comes to save the world. You and I have been chosen by him in some way for His purposes to be co-redeemers. Somehow we play a part in union with Him of bringing those great hopes that rest in the human heart to fruition. Somehow we play a part or are at least asked to play a part with Jesus in conquering evil and death and giving Richard Tevlin and his mother a chance to be with each other again.

You may go home and you may leave here and you may say "I'm not interested in being a co-redeemer. I've got my own problems." But you are interested because you know the deepest longings of your own heart to again see mother and father and friends, grandparents, wife, husband, to be free from pain, to be unable to be touched by evil, and to see God. You know those are the longings of every heart of every person that walks the face of the earth. They are not just yours. You know within yourself that as you want those things to occur you know other people do and you know within yourself, indeed, if you thought you could help them occur you'd like to do that. Well, you can help them occur. You can help them occur just as we said—by making the choice to use your life moment to moment doing the one thing that can bring that moment about that all people long for. The one thing is moment to moment choosing to do that Christ-like act of love and not abandoning it just because it may make the moment or the time difficult.

You and I, chosen by Jesus play some part in making the great hope that resides indelibly in every human heart, in every human heart that beats in every apartment house, and every condominium, and every flat, and every farm house, and every hut, and every tent—making that hope come true.

The Diabolical Divides

11:28 The Lamb of God then is a symbol of hope of universal salvation, salvation for all. Jesus comes to save all people, all people. He tells us very, very clearly that the Father is the Father of all. The word diabolical comes from the root word that means to divide. What is evil, what is diabolical, divides. The word holy and whole are the same word. What is holy makes whole. What divides is diabolical, because there is only one God who is the Father of all. The hopes, the ultimate hopes of every human being when they are alone in

their room at three in the morning, whether that room be in Tehran, Iran, Sarajevo, Berlin, Tokyo, Dublin, they're all the same: peace, freedom from evil, freedom from all that evil produces in terms of pain, being one with those that they love again for love requires presence, seeing God face to face.

Every time we go about the business of dividing people against people, Christian against Christian, Christian group against Christian group, religion against religion, every time we go about the business of dividing we are doing the work of diabolos. We are not doing the work of the Father who was One. We are not doing the work of the Father at all. How much time and religion goes into trivia, literally trivia. My group does this, your group does that. I don't like your group for doing that. I like it my way. Your leaders dress like this. My leaders dress like that. Your leaders are funny, but my leaders are normal. And on it goes except never does anything touch, does anything even approach touching, responding to those deepest longings of the human heart that everyone has for peace, freedom from evil and all the suffering it causes, union again, being in the presence again of those that they love, and seeing God face to face.

There's a little ditty I'm sure you all know it in some way that goes, I won't sing it but it's a little ditty that goes like this, "Jesus loves all the Irish. Loves them all with all His might. Green and orange, black and white, they are precious in His sight. Jesus loves all the Irish day and night." And that's true. That's a fact. That is just a fact of the Gospel. What is also a fact of the Gospel is Jesus expects all the Irish to love each other day and night. That just comes naturally and organically. It is a pseudo and a false Christianity regardless of whether it's being practiced by Catholics or by Protestants, that divides people. It's pseudo, it's false. And not only does Jesus love all the Irish, He loves all people, Muslims and Jews and Hindus, whatever they may be. For there is but one Father who is Love and loves all. When we divide people and when we set ourselves over against people and when we say "They're not one of us" that is not the work of the Father, of Jesus, the Lamb of God, or the Holy Spirit. That's the work of the one who divides. The hope of Christianity in other words is Catholic. It is universal and nothing less than that.

The Loss of the Consciousness of the Presence of God

16:00 St. Teresa of Avila, as I quoted earlier, says that "all sin begins in the loss of the consciousness of the presence of God." She does not mean by that that we should think that God is constantly looking at us, waiting for us to make a mistake and He'll crush if we do. What she is talking about is that God is our Father, God is love. When we lose this sense that we are loved by God, that God loves us and that we're secure, and that God loves everyone, when we lose the sense of the reality of the true God of love, then we go looking for escapes in all kinds of ways. The escapes are sin, of course. But as long as we

keep the Father in front of us then we go about a whole different kind of life. We don't need the escapes.

Jesus, the Gospel, respond to the deepest longings of the human heart whether the person be Christian or not. No one responds to those longings as concretely, accurately, precisely and totally as Jesus.

The Torment of the Death of Jesus

17:30 So let's get to the heart of the matter. When was the first moment in history when the full Gospel was proclaimed to the world? Did you ever think about that? I mean Jesus says this and He says that you know. They're all pieces; He tells this parable, he does this healing. But when is the first moment when the full Gospel and all its power and glory, the Good News, comes into history, totally and completely and unambiguously?

Think of how it must have been after Jesus died. It had to be a horror show taking this beaten, destroyed body down, pulling the nails out of the cross, bleeding and dirty, for the few people who were there who loved him, Mary, his mother, Mary Magdalene, John the Evangelist. You know when a person just dies that we love it's a difficult thing; but what must it have been to have to go through the process of taking a body off the cross of someone you love and see the marks of all the agony and torment and what had happened to the person. It had to be a terrible, terrible ordeal. And what were the thoughts of Mary and Mary Magdalene and John and perhaps Joseph of Arimathaea as they walked from Calvary to the tomb with the body? What was their heart like? What was their psyche, their emotions? It had to be dark, dark moments that they were going through.

Imagine the questions, the feelings about why, why does it happen? He was a good man. Mary Magdalene in the Gospel has a very, very special place, very, very special place in the Gospel. It is very, very clear Jesus saves her and out of that saving comes a deep love. She loves Jesus and despite the Roman soldiers and the threat of being hurt and mocked and God knows what, she stays on Calvary at the cross until the end. What must have been the consciousness as they carried the body the short distance to the tomb, as they laid the body in the tomb and walked away after rolling the stone? What must have been the consciousness as they walked back to the little rooms they lived in in Jerusalem or Bethany? They must have been walking like they were on Jupiter, dragging themselves, utterly, utterly chaos of the mind and confusion, nothing made any sense. Absolutely, positively nothing. And yet they knew crucifixion was a normal event. Jesus was just one of tens of thousands of people that died by crucifixion in that part of the world by the Romans. Indeed death itself put an end to everything. The heart must have been not just broken, it must have been tormented in an anguish, confused and exhausted.

Perhaps the night was spent just wailing, crying hard or perhaps everyone was just too mentally broken even to cry and just looked blankly. But whatever it was it had to be a terrible ordeal for those who love Jesus after the death was over.

Unusual Circumstances of the Day After the Sabbath (Jn 20:11-18)

21:47 Then we know the story as it is in the Gospel. Three days later, approximately, on the first day of the week, Sunday, the day after the Sabbath, Mary Magdalene who loved Jesus makes her way back up to the tomb. She is going to do the one last thing she can do for someone that she loves. She's going to anoint the body. We all know what that is. We've all been through that. Someone dies, there's no more we can do but we make a gesture. We wash their face or we put a little flower on them or something, we make a gesture. Everyone knows that's what's done in love because human love made up of body and soul expresses itself in terms of matter or body.

So Mary Magdalene goes back to the tomb on that Easter Sunday morning, but it's a nothing day. It's just a first day of the week. It's like Monday here in Dublin. It's nothing; it's just a day people go back to work. She drags herself up there worried about how she's going to get in to anoint the body, the rock and all that business. And then, remember the story. She gets there, she gets to the tomb, and she walks in the tomb. There's no body. There is no body and immediately there's another pain on top of everything else, a pain that only could be the product of love. She thinks they've stolen the body so on top of everything else she can't even anoint it. On top of all the other mutilation and humiliation of Jesus, they've now stolen the body of the one that she loves.

The Life-changing Call

23:51 She looks out and she sees a gardener out there and she says to the gardener just what you and I would say if the same thing happened and it was the body of someone we loved. She says, "They have taken His body. Tell me where they've taken it and I'll go get it." A dead body is a dead body. It doesn't have any feeling, but not to the person who loves. Those are the words of love speaking. "Tell me where it is and I'll go get it." That's an anguished statement. What must have been the confusion and the pain and the torment of those moments! At that point she says to the gardener "They have taken his body. Tell me where it is. I'll go get it." At that darkest of moments, where life is just a whirlwind of anguish and suffering and evil, the Gospel is proclaimed for the first time.

For when she says, "They have taken the body. Tell me where it is and I'll go get it" the gardener turns to her and says, "Mary." Not Mary like an abstract name, not Mary just like someone's name but "*Mary*" as only one person had said Mary to Mary Magdalene—Jesus. She heard her name being pronounced the way that the person she

loved pronounced it when he was living. She heard his voice. She heard the voice of the one that she loved and indeed the one that loved her saying “Mary”.

Resurrection Experience

26:02 In a split second, a split second, less than a second she was raised from the depths of misery to the heights of joy and bliss for Jesus was alive! For she knew now that everything He said was true. Evil could be conquered. Evil did not have the last word. What He taught was correct. Eternal life and joy and happiness were possible!

It says in the Gospel that she screeched out “Rabboni,” which would be the name that they used for teacher or master, which people called Jesus. Rabboni! Can you imagine what that moment would have been as this woman who only seconds ago was dragging herself to the tomb, everything lost, and in a split second hope beyond all reason, hope beyond any possible expectation, hope beyond imagination becomes reality in the person of the risen Jesus. And He doesn’t say, “I am risen.” He doesn’t say, “Look, I’m here.” He doesn’t just appear. The way he does it is He goes right to the heart of the person and satisfies everything by using her own personal name with the very sound she knows, the sounds of love telling her that love endures forever. This is the Good News in its entirety! This is what Jesus came to proclaim—can be. This is what He began.

Mary Magdalene didn’t make this statement, but she experienced this reality that I am going to say to you right now. Her experience is the experience of what everyone wants to know with absolute certainty—that God is stronger than evil. Her experience is that Good Friday, suffering, evil and death running rampant, that Good Friday must give away to Easter Sunday. Her experience is that indeed the good and the holy triumph.

The Forgiven Sinner

28:52 Mary Magdalene as you know is the first witness to the resurrection in all the Gospels and Mary Magdalene as you know, it is in Church tradition, the person who was a sinner, the forgiven sinner. Jesus could have first appeared to his mother, sinless, spotless, Virgin Mary. He could have appeared to Peter the first Pope. He could have appeared to Pilate or Herod to let him know how wrong they were; but that’s not how He appeared. The first full proclamation of the Good News is to someone who sinned terribly, who loved much, who was forgiven and who tried and who seemingly was crushed by it all, but that’s not the way it turned out.

That one word, Mary, that one word responds to the longing of every human heart of every person that every lived. You remember Richard Tevlin’s mother’s little poem that she wrote in the newspaper on the tenth anniversary of his death when she said “For those of you who have a son, cherish him with care for you will never know what agony is until

he is no longer there. Until then. Love Ma.” Well the ‘until then’ was when Jesus said, “Mary.” It’s a statement to Mrs. Tevlin that it is possible, it can happen. There is a legitimate hope, as impossible as it may seem, in this 2 x 4 world in which we close ourselves in. There is a legitimate hope, a possibility, a reality that Mrs. Tevlin will hear Richard say, “Ma.” And when Richard says “Ma” it’s the same thing as when Jesus said “Mary”. It’s not just Ma, it’s the voice of one that you loved and that loved you, free of evil, free of suffering, free of pain, at peace in the presence of God forever. That is what the human heart longs for regardless of where the human heart lives, whether it is in Berlin or Tehran, Tokyo or Shanghai and that’s the Good News and that is what Jesus comes to proclaim.

We Have the Solution: Christ-like Love Moment to Moment

31:48 I say this to you. You have a choice and I have a choice what to do with our existence. Before we had a choice though, Jesus made a choice of us. He chose us. We didn’t choose him. He chose us to be with Him and in Him and to be part of the process that brings Richard Tevlin and his mother to that moment when Mrs. Tevlin hears “Ma.” It’s a magnificent vocation. It’s a noble vocation. It’s a vocation beyond belief and it’s a vocation that we can live by simply choosing intentionally that our life is going to be a life of Christ-like, Lamb-like deeds, moment to moment to moment. Deeds of Christ-like love for we remember what John of the Cross said, “The deed of Christ-like love is the most precious deed in the sight of God and the most profitable deed to the soul and to the Church. So precious and so profitable that it is more profitable than all the other deeds put together, he says.

That’s all that’s asked for us to be part of that wonderful process of bringing Richard Tevlin and his mother back together in that joyful reunion that Mary Magdalene and Jesus experienced at the empty tomb on the first Easter Sunday.

So when you are tempted to modify the teaching of Jesus, when you are tempted to follow some other path rather than Jesus’ path, when you are tempted to engage in something other than Christ-like love because it seems effective and it seems like it will work, I ask you seriously to ask yourself this question: is the choice you are making not to follow Jesus? Is the choice you are making to go down some other way but not The Way, His Way, the Lamb’s Way of Nonviolent Love friends and enemies? Is the choice you are making going to lead you or anyone else to an empty tomb? Is it going to help anyone arrive at that day when they hear the voice of the one they love say to them “Ma,” “Pa,” “John,” “Mary.” If it isn’t, why go down that road? Why make a choice for that way?

The empty tomb is the ultimate proof that the way of the Nonviolent Lamb of God is the way of life, is the way to conquer evil and death, is the way to see God face to face.

You know Christianity is a faith, based on a high improbability and beyond that it's based on an extreme impossibility. Christianity is a religion based on the high improbability that someone has died and risen from the dead. We have all buried people and no one expects to go home this evening and see Aunt Bridget who we buried ten years ago sitting on the couch waiting for us. That's highly improbable that someone has risen from the dead. Beyond that, Christianity is a faith, a religion based on an extreme impossibility that God, the Creator and sustainer of the universe, of the galaxies and stars that number beyond comprehension, of the plants and the animals and the atoms and the molecules, that that God became human in the person of Jesus. But look, if we accept the high improbability that Christ has risen from the dead, and if we accept the impossibility that God became human in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, isn't it a little late in the game by that time to say, "Well his teachings are impractical. I know better." That's foolish especially when one realizes all that's at stake, which is not just mere salvation in the sense of life after death, that what's at stake is Mary Magdalene hearing "Mary", Mrs. Tevlin hearing "Ma."

The task of the Church, the task of each Christian, our task is to again see clearly what was once seen clearly. The Apostolic Church, the Church of the New Testament, indeed the Church before the New Testament, proclaimed the Nonviolent Lamb of God and proclaimed that Jesus was the Nonviolent Suffering Servant, and proclaimed that Jesus' Way of Nonviolent Love of friends and enemies was the way to salvation. That is incontestable. That's the truth. To quote you again, the Biblical scholar John L. McKenzie, "If we cannot know from the New Testament that Jesus rejected violence, we can know nothing of this person or message." It's the clearest of teachings.

The time has come for you and for the Church—but if the Church does not do it, the time has come for you—to return to the obvious. The roof is down on the car. Let's get in and start the engine. The tomb is empty. The empty tomb is the proof absolute that the Nonviolent Lamb of God, Jesus and His Way of Nonviolent Love of friends and enemies is the Power and the Wisdom of God.

Our Lamb has conquered. Him let us follow. Amen.

[End of Audio]

Scripture Citations

- Mt 2:13-23 Mary as Refugee 13.9
 Mt 3:17 This is my Son 15.3
 Mt 5:7 Blessed are the merciful 9.12; 10.13
 Mt 5:44 Love your enemies 7.7,8,13; 8.7;
 11.10; 12.10-13; 13.10; 14.6; 15.2
 Mt 6:24 No one can serve two masters 11.6
 Mt 7:21-23 Not everyone who says 'Lord,
 Lord' 1.11
 Mt 9:13 I want mercy 9.11, 10:13, 15.10
 Mt 10:39 Whoever wants to save their life
 5.3
 Mt 16:13 Who do people say I am? 12.1
 Mt 16:25 Whoever wants to save their life
 5.3; 7.1,6-7,11
 Mt 20:28 Son of Man came not to be
 served 15.4
 Mt 23:37 You who kill the prophets 14.5
 Mt 25:31-46 Whatever you do for the
 least/Sheep and the goats 10.2-3,13
 Mt 26:39 May this cup pass 9.10
 Mt 26:51 Companion strikes the servant's
 ear 9.10
 Mt 26:52 Put your sword away 9.10
 Mt 28:19 Go and teach all nations all
 12.12
- Mk 8:29 Who do you say I am? 12.1
 Mk 8:35 Whoever loses his life for my sake
 6.14
 Mk 10:45 Son of Man came not to be
 served, 15.4
- Lk 1:26-38 Annunciation 13.5
 Lk 1:39-56 Visitation 13.5-7
 Lk 2:1-20 Birth of Jesus 13.7
 Lk 2:22-38 Presentation in Temple 13.8
 Lk 2:39-40 Hidden life of Mary 13.8-9
- Lk 2:41-50 Jesus lost in Temple 13.9
 Lk 6:27 Love your enemies 15.2;
 throughout NT 7.13, 8.7;
 11.10; 12.10-13, 13.10, 14.6;
 Lk 9:20 Who do people say I am? 12.1
 Lk 9:24 Whoever wants to save their life
 5.3, 7.1,6-7,11
 Lk 10:25-28 What must I do to inherit
 eternal life 6:11; 10:6
 Lk 10:29-37 Good Samaritan 10.6
 Lk 10:27 Love the Lord your God with all
 your heart 14.5
 Lk 11:27-28 Blessed the womb that bore
 you 13.11
 Lk 17:33 Whoever wants to save their life
 5.3; 7.1,6-7,11
 Lk 22:42 May this cup pass 9.9
 Lk 23:34 Father forgive them 12.10, 14.7,
 10, 14.12
 Lk 23:43 This day you'll be with me in
 paradise 9.11
- Jn 1:1-3 In the beginning 6:10
 Jn 2:1-10 Wedding at Cana 13.9-10
 Jn 11:25 I am the Resurrection 7.7
 Jn 13:34-35 Love one another as I have
 loved you 7.5, 15.11
 Jn 15:7 Abide in me and ask what you will
 12:10, 13.11
 Jn 18-19 Jesus' Passion with Mary 13.11
 Jn 18:10 Peter cuts off the ear of the armed
 servant 9.10
 Jn 18:11 Put up your sword 9.10
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