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Solemn Novena 07-17-26

As we begin these days of solemn novena, I think the ending of this gospel is a good beginning for us.

We believe, we Catholics, we believe the Lord, our God, is Lord of everything, Lord of politics, Lord of economics, Lord of the harvests, Lord of civilization, Lord of culture, our Lord is Lord of everything. And we must prepare the way for him that he might enter into our reality and offer salvation eternally and life fully here in this world. He is our Lord.

We approach him in these days through his grandmother, Saint Ann, in order to intercede for ourselves and our needs and to intercede for our world. Father Jack and I hope to be helpful to you this week. We offer fervent prayers, and at the same time, we look again at the treasury of our tradition so that we learn, relearn the instruction of how to live in such difficult times and changing times.

What is the right way to live according to our deep and time-honored Catholic tradition? This is what we hope to offer you over the next 10 days, a reawakening of our understanding and our engagement in the ways of God in a world which at times is very godless. Our Lord says to us, I chose you. You didn't choose me.

And I appoint you, and that's you, and that's me. I appoint you in this world to produce fruit that will last. Wow.

We can barely survive in this world to produce fruit that will last. There are arts, the art of living, the art of opposing, the art of unifying, the art of dying and letting go, which are so

important to us at this time in our history. These arts are ours for the learning and for the embracing, and Father Jack and I will elaborate them over these days.

But we begin broadly. The signs of the times. What is what we are seeing and living telling us? And what we are learning and hearing, how are we discerning it so that what might be a disaster become rather a blessing? Jesus says, red sky at night, tomorrow's going to be beautiful, if there are no Canadian wildfires.

Red sky in the morning, be careful before you get on a boat. It's going to be a rough day. And similarly, he invites us to look at the red skies around us, which are the blessings of our age, the blessings that make us solid and confident in the word of God and in following closely his way, which is a way of life and joy and peace.

And he asks us also, look straight at the red clouds, which show there's a bad moon rising, that there's trouble, danger, death ahead for all of us if we're not very careful and if we don't learn and manage these things right. And so together these days, we begin to look at the arts, the deep spiritual arts of how we embrace the world of God amid the torments and difficulties of our own lives and in the torments and difficulties of the world around us because we are formed in the image of a triune God. This is God's desire, not me to be saved, but us to be saved.

This is God's desire that what's good for me must also be good for you. What's good for us is how we move ahead in a life-giving way. We are made in the image of Trinity, a togetherness, a community.

When our Lord came and saved us, he restored. He was the new Adam, the new one to be formed in the image of the Trinity in order to reconcile all difficulties. So let's look at some of the troubling signs because we need to address them over these days.

The blessings are great. We don't need any help with the blessings. The blessings are great, but the troubles are many.

Let's take a few. As we become so entranced, and this started at the time of the Industrial Revolution, as we become so entranced by what we can do as human beings as we build a new Tower of Babel, we forget the ways of God. We're so enthralled with GPS systems that get us through traffic anywhere.

We're so enthralled with artificial intelligence which can give us true advice that must be checked on almost everything. We're so enthralled with our abilities to connect with people at any instant all over the world. Why is this leading to alienation? Why is this leading to a sense of meaninglessness in life? We have never had higher rates of suicide in our country. We have never had so many young people who are lost and in distress and don't know how to relate anymore with a human being. Why is alienation the fruit of what could be a connection, a connectivity, a being together that could be fruitful for everyone? We have to address this. The sickness of meaninglessness in life.

Why do we, every conversation about anything difficult, why does it turn into rolling up the sleeves and postures of fighting, even at dinner tables and in church groups? Why are we so radicalized, so radicalized that we can't hear the opinion of another person without

physically attacking them or at least discrediting them and defaming them? How do we get to this, that we can't talk to each other about the concerns of the day? How did we get here? It's a bad sign. The art of war, that's a strong way of saying it. Just war, that's a strong way of saying it.

The kitchen table way of saying it is, how do we learn when we don't agree? How to still talk and learn from each other? How do we get back to that essential position? In so many ways, our humanity is being sacrificed for the greatness of our intellectual ability and our technology. Our humanity is being sacrificed. I heard even liberal arts education, which is an education to build up the whole person, Jesus said, I came for life, life fully, and life always.

Life fully, it means we shouldn't spend all day every day dodging bullets and looking for food and water like we do in Haiti. We should also be able to sit in leisure and enjoy and read a book and absorb thoughts from somebody who lived 700 years ago, who was really smart and has something to say to us. We should be able to enjoy music.

We should be able to study. We should be able to understand the stars and what they tell us. We should be able to read the mystics and know what they're saying to us.

Life fully, it means every dimension of living should be ours. Jesus came for that. Life, life fully, and life unto eternity.

So that when we know life fully, because religion is not a big self-help activity, although it certainly is good for self-help, but we are finally sent to produce fruit that will last. We are sent to the rest of us to share the fullness which we gain as we make our way along a gospel path. So we have so much to reflect on in these days.

We bring them in the way of beautiful intercession to the grandmother of Jesus, and we do so with full confidence in the beauty of the world which God has created, in the beauty of people whom God has created, and at the same time with a sober awareness that if we don't manage the changes of this world in the right way, then we pay to our detriment. If it's not you, if it's not me, then who? And if it's not now, then when? Let us bring our personal and our collective needs to the feet of St. Ann and beg for her intercession and help us in holy instruction and in worship over these holy days.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.