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Solemn Novena July, 21 2026

We have been referring to some of the virtues that we're placing before you as essential in our journey as the art of living, but the fact is, they're words from our Lord and Savior, and they are the instructions for His way.

What is the way of the Lord? The Lord's way was to come to us and walk our way with us. This was a scandal for when He came. The people were expecting a great and powerful Messiah who would come to break the teeth of the oppressors, who would come in through the high and mighty golden gate of Jerusalem.

They never expected somebody who would be born in a bale of hay, way out in the countryside at an ungodly hour after midnight. A scandal. And His words, while He's among us? Ridiculous.

What do you mean, the last will be first? What do you mean, less is more? What do you mean, pay attention to the syrophenician? What do you mean, throwing all these stories of Samaritans in our face? What do you mean, love your enemy? Are you crazy? And then imagine, on Good Friday, God is dead. God is dead. What kind of Savior is this? But we know, and for 20 centuries people like you and I know, that our Lord did break teeth, when He rose from the dead, He broke the teeth of sin and death.

And we don't need to be slaves of sin and death unless we choose by our own free will to be in their shackles. And the fact that our Lord walked our way and suffered our sufferings and rose from the dead, it means many things to us who are on our own individual paths. It means, for example, the young boy Father Jack spoke about the other day, whose legs were broken by polio, smashed by polio, that through the grace of the risen Lord, he finds ways and he becomes phenomenal among us because he found God.

God's way is our way. Our way is not God's. Our way is not to walk the way of Jesus. You have to walk your way, your life. It's unique. Only you have all the ancestors you have. Only you have all the experiences you've had up to today. Only you, your way is unique. My way is unique.

Our Lord joins us on our way. But what we're supposed to do on our way is imitate how He tread His path and to turn often toward Him. And when we turn often toward Him, especially when things are really bad for us, then we have the chance of divine life entering into our ordinary path and strengthening us and raising us up until the end.

It really brings us to the discussion of vocation. Virtues are our abilities and strengths, but vocation is what are you living for? What did God put in the very center of your heart that leads you to make the decisions you make, choose the profession you choose, choose your friends? Your vocation is how you live out your life in all sincerity, turning to God. I'll give an example of my vocation.

Father Jack was tuning us into tremendous opportunities on the Internet of where we can find out how to lose weight without ever getting up off the couch. Of how we can make a million dollars without lifting a finger. And sometimes I look at those sites.

I'm going to be 73 years old next month and over these long years I've lost two inches of my height and I want them back. And so I was looking, is there any way, as silly as it sounds, is there any way to get taller without expensive back surgery and dangerous back surgery? And I saw that if you hang for a few minutes every day by pull-up bar, you hang by pull-up bars every day for a few minutes, you get taller. Well, I don't want to shrink while I'm here, so every day in the afternoon I go to a playground right nearby and I hang for three minutes from the pull-up bar.

So the other day when I went there was a woman sitting on the bleachers and I could see right away she wasn't there to enjoy nature or the sun. She was lost in herself. Her posture showed it.

As I hung on the bar, I watched her. I could see her thinking, talking to herself, shaking her head, no, no, putting her head in her hands. And I started feeling bonded to her.

What does the scripture say today? Who are my mother, my brothers, and my sisters? Anyone who needs me is mother, brother, and sister to me. And so when my three minutes were up, and by the way, it's not three straight minutes, I don't think Charles Atlas could do that. You know, it's three broken minutes.

When I finished, I figured I would walk by her the long way and maybe see if I would dare to sit down and talk with her. Why dare? Because like Father Jack said, we make ourselves vulnerable when we're going to be real. If you're real, if you're real, you're vulnerable.

So I went over. Now she could think, for example, who is this pervert? Maybe I should call 911, because I don't hang in these robes, so she doesn't know I'm here.

I would look like a bat if I hung in these robes. But I took the chance. Hello, hello.

How are you doing? I'm fine, thank you. Oh, okay, I'm glad you're fine because you don't look fine. And I'm glad you're fine.

I feel better knowing you're fine because you don't look fine. And she said, well, I'm fine more or less. And I said, what's the less part? She said it's something terrible that happened.

So I said to her, is it something that can be fixed? Is it something that can be recuperated or is it lost? And she said it's lost. The rest of the discussion with her doesn't matter, although it was very beautiful and very important. But it doesn't matter because her problem is not the point of the story.

The point of the story is it's in my nature. It's why I became a priest and a doctor. It's in my nature to make somebody else's sorrow or problem my business if they want.

And if I had just left there a little bit longer and a little bit stronger and did not stop to talk with her, that would have been an offense against my vocation as I have to live it out. It would have been a sin of omission. And I think probably these wind up being the worst sins of our life, the sins of omission.

We have to be so vigilant to what is our calling, not our profession. We have to be vigilant to what are the urges and promptings of the spirit within us. Some time ago, it wasn't too recently, it was at a time when you only found tattoos on sailors or on Auschwitz survivors.

I was on an airplane and there was an older woman next to me. And often the airplanes are cold when you first get on and then they warm up. And as we were going, she took off her sweater and I couldn't help but notice a brand on her arm.

And she noticed that I noticed the brand on her arm and she took her sweater and covered her arm and then she minded her business and I minded mine. But after a little while, she said to me, and she showed it to me again. If you know what this is, I'll explain it to you. I said, sadly, I know what it is.

The A is for Auschwitz. You were in Auschwitz. And the number was your identity in Auschwitz.

She said, yes, that's right. And she started to tell me how. She saw her mother, her father, her brothers and sisters perish in those ovens.

How they must have scared her because she was strong for work. A chilling story. But then she started telling me where she was going, to her grandson's graduation.

And she was so happy and so thrilled for him. And she had, you know, your carry-on, which is near your hands. She pulled her carry-on out and she showed me the gift she was bringing to him.

And she was so thrilled with it. And then she started to tell me about all her children and what happened once the Red Cross and the American Army freed them and how grateful she was that where they went, to which bases had wound up in the states and how her children did. It was phenomenal.

So here was somebody else, like Father Jack mentioned. Here's somebody whose legs were crushed right out beneath her. Everything to stand on, gone.

Her whole ancestry going backwards, gone. And yet she found wings in the new generations. Her children and her grandchildren, and so happy.

And just like the Syrophoenician woman who wasn't Jewish, she is Jewish and not Catholic. But any more than Jesus would say to the woman, you're on the wrong path. In fact, he said, your faith saved you, and I haven't seen this faith in our pews.

And in the same way, looking at her, I could only say, thank God she is on the golden path. Thank God she found the golden path. May we all find the golden path.

So when we're making through life, making our way through life with our vocation, many things happen that are damaging to us, and it's easy for us to lose our way. It's easy for us to become enormously angry at God and pull ourselves away from God. We know some of the things.

A daughter, a son, a brother, a sister, a friend who takes their life. Mother of God, how difficult to live with such a thing. A fast and devastating illness gone in a minute.

A terrible accident gone in a minute. We know the things that happen to us that totally leave us lost. But these are the moments when we most need to turn toward God, not away.

These are the moments where we imitate how our Lord walked his walk. That's your cross. I'm telling you, it's a suffering, but you must pick it up and carry it.

I will make your burden light. You can do this. I am with you.

I now am Simon of Sarin. I will help you. When we become in danger of losing our way, of our vocation for all of these things that happen, we have to be more fervent in turning to God.

I'll tell you another story. About 16 years ago, at our orphanage, we had bandits come in to rob. Where they were robbing, full of vulnerable children, they were beating the staff to find the money, and in particular, they were beating a volunteer from another country.

And our gardener heard the noise. He was a friend of mine since we went there in 1987, a friend of 25 years. He went in and very bravely, against all odds, saved her.

But he was brutally killed, and I mean brutally. So I was called right away. I was in town.

I went charging up there with the police in order to make the reports. It turned out it was somebody who we raised in that place who had gone bad and in with other gangs who came in to do this. Majolo was my friend.

I saw him on the floor like he was. I couldn't believe it. I picked him up myself in my own arms.

Myself and my team, we brought him to our hospital. We knew he was dead. But we weren't going to leave him like that.

We were going to sew him back together again. Everything that was out, we were going to push it back in. We were going to sew him together again.

And I'll tell you, that was a lot of sewing. But the way he was was not going to stand. We were going to put him back together and honor his body.

Pretty strong. Now, after that, I found out who the killers were. And by hook and by crook, and I'm telling you honestly, it was mostly by crook, I put them in prison.

But when they were in prison in such a country, especially the main one, their families are lost. And so his wife would approach me. I have no money for the children.

I can't put them in school. Can you help? And I always helped. But ten years later, God put me in a God-awful situation.

We had had a hurricane in the east of the country in Jeremy. I had paid barges, and we were barging like Noah's Ark. A third of the barge, construction stuff for rebuilding.

A third of the barge, trees to replant, seeds to replant, and cows, goats, and pigs. A third of the barge was food for the people. Way out in those waters, and a barge is like an iron football field, and you're in these tropical waters, which are hot as blazes, but in those areas, there are no signals, so this doesn't work.

And suddenly, while I'm on the barge, I hear, Hey, how did that happen? And I look at my phone, and I'm getting an SOS message from that killer, through somebody else to me, saying that he was dying of cholera in the prison, and would I help him? The prison wasn't going to help him. They'd rather see him die of cholera. And there I was standing there, and I was thinking, this is poetic justice for him to die in his own filth.

For me, this is poetic justice. This is what's supposed to happen to somebody like him. And I thought to myself, when I go back to Port-au-Prince and people tell me he's dead, and they try to contact me, then I'll say, What a pity.

You know, there are no signals out there. I didn't even know. And I thought to myself, Not bad.

And then I thought, when I was quick to say no one will know, I was quick to realize that God will always know, and that I will always know. And if there are two opinions that should be important to me in the whole course of my life, it's those two that should be the most important. I knew it was right to help him no matter what I felt, and I helped him, and he lived.

And there's a big lesson in that for us, and there are other parables that back it up. You don't have to feel like doing the right thing to get the credit. In fact, there's often more credit for doing the right thing when you don't feel like doing it at all.

God is not as concerned about how you feel as he is concerned about did you do the right thing or didn't you. The wrong thing would be terrible, and nothing would be an omission. An omission, do you do the right thing or don't you do the right thing? I think by these examples you are reminded how life-giving is the proper way through life, how life-giving it is, and also we're realistic.

We know we get thrown off the path. I forgot to mention that in the time of my hatred when he was first caught, and I would lift up the host in the Eucharistic prayer, and I would think to myself, I'm a hypocrite. I have murder in my heart, and I have the audacity to raise up this holy bread.

And I even asked a priest friend, do you think I should take a leave of absence from the priesthood until I have this hatred out of my heart? And he said, you'll never have that hatred out of your heart if you don't lift it up to God. You're doing just the right thing. Do you see how important it is that we have good and wise people in our lives as well? But the point is this, works of mercy and good deeds have to go beyond those who are good to us.

They have to go to the unknown, the undeserving, and the enemy hands down. We do the right thing no matter what we feel about it. We do the right thing, and this counts for everything.

So like the sunflowers turn to the sun, we ask St. Ann to keep us, each of us in our individual vocational story and life, we ask the Lord to keep us turning toward the Lord in sunshine and in the most difficult moments of rain and storm.

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