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Father Jack told us that beautiful story about how prisoners training horses for the use of disabled children became a blessing to themselves, which is how grace works when we're generous and merciful. We used to also, before we had bandits, we used to, five, six, seven years ago, put our own disabled children on horses in Haiti and train them. And in fact, over the years, they have won special Olympics in Fort Lauderdale and in Germany.

Great pride for them. But also, the horse, the majestic horse, is good for their core strength development, it's good for their coordination, and it's good for their balance. And of course, their engagement with the horse was also beautiful.

I'm mentioning because it's not just good for young people. Horses are also good for you and me, who are a little bit older than that, if we're gentle on them. In fact, I'm so convinced that horses are good for you that I've ordered 150 of them, and they're out the door, and if you like, you'll go home on horseback this afternoon.

We've been talking all this week about the Golden Road, how we live in the best way, life in God, nourished by the sacraments, imitating our Lord's words and behavior, so that we might learn to produce for our world and for God's glory, fruit that will last. We're invited along the Golden Road to an ever-widening circle of concern. When we think of love, we think of all the emotion that's involved with love, especially when it's sweet.

Your girlfriend or your boyfriend or Mother's Day, your own birthday. But love is more about will than it is about emotion, although emotion is totally involved. St. Thomas Aquinas says, love is the will for the good of other people.

Your wanting things to be good for other people is your love for them. We could even say, what I'm looking for in the ever-widening circles around us is what is good for both of us. What's good for all of us is how we go forward.

The emotions that are tied to love of beauty and pleasure, those emotions are labeled erotic. Unfortunately, the English word erotic gives a bad sense of the word, but it means we're naturally inclined to what is beautiful and pleasurable. And so with this kind of love, we seek people to be close to us in intimacy so that together we can create a family, a profession, something important together.

That's a real tight love. When it is fake, you're seeking your pleasure and the enjoyment of beauty, but you don't will the good of the other person. You're using them for your own carnal satisfaction.

When that happens, then, as Fr. Jack was saying, you don't have character. You're not authentic.

You don't have integrity. You can make mistakes along the line. You're human, but you have to understand you can't justify your mistakes because you're human.

You're cheating. You're not tying the attraction to what is good and beautiful to the will of what is good for the other person. That's our first sphere.

Then we go to the next sphere, which is called philos, Philadelphia, philos, love, Philadelphia, brotherly love, philos. This means that aside from your wife, your husband, your children, and your intimates, there's a whole other range of people in your life with whom you have close interaction. Philos, the desire for that, the desire for extended family and friends is a beautiful desire.

It's a desire for companionship. When philos is false, you get close to other people, say, in a family business, and you cheat, and you can get away with it because there's a closeness. When we get close to other people in this sphere of philos and we cheat, we take advantage of them for our own purpose.

It's no longer that we love philos, we love companionship, so that what's good for you and what's good for me is what goes forward. It's wrong. It's missing authenticity.

It's missing character. It's missing integrity. It's wrong.

And then the next sphere that we go into is what is called storge. You don't have to remember these words. There's no test at the door in order to get out and on your horse.

Storge means the whole collection of people, some of whom we know as acquaintances, acquaintances but most of whom we don't know at all, we can show goodness, we can hold the door for them, we can give them \$20 when they're down and out, we can say hello to them, we can pick them up when they fall down, and on wider levels in finances and politics, you're supposed to do a lot more than that for the storge. But if you're looking for your own good by abusing the storge, then we get the kind of things that Father Jack was talking about yesterday. Insincere politics, snowballing people instead of telling the truth.

In other words, you're looking for your advantage in popularity. You're not using your ability to be popular in order to help the masses of the people. And when you do it right, that your feeling and your integrity match, then this satisfies our yearning to belong.

And then there's a final circle of love. It's to the people who are undeserving of our love in our judgment. It's to the people who are bad to us.

And this kind of love is called agape. This was the love of Jesus. You take all the bad from those people because you're so convinced in the word of God and the love of God, you want what's good for them no matter what.

Whether they want it or not, you want what's good for them. And you don't have good feelings about it. You're suffering because of what you're doing, but you stay at it because your life is marked by agape.

Four beautiful loves. How do we go into the circles? It's very easy. You're in yourself.

You extend the circle, the embrace of your life and your concern to those close to you. Then you extend it farther, and then you extend it to the farthest. This is the pattern of growth which our Lord asks us to follow.

And then, of course, when you extend, you make yourself vulnerable. You get hurt. You get into arguments.

You get into fights. When you extend your public persona to the masses, you can easily be defamed on the Internet and on YouTube and all kinds of things. You're vulnerable when you do that, and we accept vulnerability because we know what we're doing.

We're expanding the kind of love that our Lord is asking us to have, the will sometimes bolstered by emotion and sometimes not, the will to do what is good and what is right for the other. And so in order to understand how we manage when we're in conflict with other people as we extend it and we looked at the more mature idea, getting rid of the idea that anger is wrong and judgment is wrong and getting rid of that idea by making more precise vocabulary, our Lord expects of us moral evolution. And with your moral evolution and your concern for other people, you enter into the arena in this way as our Lord did with love under pressure, but it's pressure.

This is how we do it. With a very simple instruction, if you're engaging with other people in a very strong way and love suddenly disappears from your motivation, then close your mouth and go sit down and have a few prayers and re-center yourself until you can engage yourself again with love. How do I know when love is not in it anymore? It's because I'm showing by my behavior and by my words, it's not what's good for the other person what I'm doing right now and that is certainly not good for me to be doing that.

And if you think the teachings of our Lord are for the weak, just try closing your mouth and stepping away and sitting down. Just try it and see how much strength that takes in order to be able to do it. So similarly, I said we would speak about the art of loving, which really means the art of harmony.

It means the art of unity. It means the art of repairing a lot of damage. And I think you're getting the pattern that it's not that there's a recipe for each one of these things.

It's the same virtues that keep kicking in for all of them. Just for some, you need a lot more heroism than for others. You really need to hold back when you're angry.

You need good control of yourself. But these are the virtues that you need to be somebody who brings peace, who unifies, who tries to settle differences, and how much we need that in our world. You're on the golden path.

You must be humble. You must. If you're going to try to reconcile and make peace, you must be humble.

When I used the example the other day, Isaiah sees God. God lives in glory and praise. Isaiah suddenly feels small, unworthy, and wrong.

This is normal in the face of greatness. And so after praising God in our prayer, our next word should be, Lord Jesus, Son of the living God, have mercy on me. I'm so small.

I'm so wrong. Let rather your grace be my guide. Then the angel will come and bless you.

And then you're commissioned to go forth. That's imitation of Isaiah, not imitation of the Lord, because our Lord was never wrong. Our Lord could never say, have mercy on me, I'm a sinner.

So we learn this from the mysticism of Isaiah. We must be humble. Not in any old-fashioned, five-year-old Catholic idea of guilt.

It's not to make you feel inadequate, to give you an inferiority complex, and keep that going in your life. It's not that. Admit you're small.

Admit God is greater. Then you can get out of the way, and you have a chance that it's God's grace that's enlightening you and guiding you. It's why we must be humble.

For the person who has the strong art of unity, of harmony, of reconciliation, they have courage. Courage to speak the truth in a gentle way. Not offensive, not condemning.

Courage. Why do you need courage? Because people are going to fly at you like you can't believe. That's why you need courage.

And when you have encounters like that, which are difficult, that's when you really need to have self-control. You have to be a master at self-control. And while you're talking to the person that you're opposing, that you're not reconciled with, or trying to reconcile to other people, you have to be committed to fairness.

You can't like one more than another. You can't have one preference for one opinion over another. You have to learn what the person really means when you push away all their aggression.

Your compassion has to cross the divide. It has to cross to each human being. Your compassion has to cross the divide.

And this takes patience. And it also takes an absolute, stubborn determination on your part that it's possible. That change is possible.

That there's reason to be optimistic. That we can do this. We know the formula.

And I'm going to stay at it. These are the characteristics of the art of harmony. They all come off of the same characteristics of being a good person and being a holy person.

Like I said, it's really important also to talk about the art of dying. You're going to die. You're going to roll the seven in the dice.

I'm going to die. I'm going to roll the seven. And so even from early on, in all of the circles of concern and engagement of ourselves, we also have to encircle the idea of our own mortality.

This is not morbid. This is healthy. And when we learn how to do it, once again, we turn to the words and the behavior of Jesus first and foremost.

What did Jesus say about death? Jesus was a child of the Old Testament, the Lord is my shepherd, the Lord shepherds me through every dark valley and every darkness. The Lord is my shepherd. Jesus taught us his belief that death is the conclusion, that death is the fruit, that death gives the gift of our life.

A seed, a plant, a fruit that comes to maturity, and the seed falls, and this is the gift of our life. And Jesus teaches, by the way, I am the resurrection. And when we watch him, we can see that Jesus had fear of death.

Several times when he was going to go this way or that, the disciples said, they're lying in wait for us there, we better not go that way, and Jesus would say, okay, fine with me, for a simple reason, and it's called maturity, and it's called timing, God's timing, kairos, it wasn't the mature moment. And when it was the mature moment, then Jesus set his face like flint, it's what the scripture says, his chin was like a flint stone, if you struck anything against it, sparks would come out, that's how determined he was and how much he conquered his fear. Afraid but not ruled by fear, and he marched into Jerusalem, and when it's our time, this is the kind of courage we have to have to march toward the completion of our work on earth.

These are the examples and these are the words that our Lord has given us. And so what is in the art of dying? What do we need to know and what do we need to do to die well? Believe it or not, the best preparation for the art of dying is that you really are on the road to living. You're living the right way is the best way to prepare for your death.

Everything we've been talking about along the golden road, living is the best way of getting ready to die. When my mother had cancer, and in fact it was maybe seven or eight months before she died of cancer, it was her birthday in August, August 11th, and we were having a birthday party for her, and she didn't want to go. And she didn't want to go because she said, everybody knows I have cancer and they look at me like a dying woman, not like a

living woman, and if I go to this party, it's like I'm going to my own wake and I don't want to go to my own wake.

And she said, I'm alive until I'm not, and I'm going to live until I'm not living anymore. I am not a dying woman; I am a living woman until I die. And I said, well, that's the best birthday present that you could give everybody there is to show them your determination.

And that's why I'm saying it again, the best preparation for dying is to live until the end. Live these virtues. Clear conscience.

When your conscience is clear, then you have less fear of dying. When you are reconciled with other people, you have less fear of dying. When you live your life in gratitude, you have less fear of dying.

No matter what you've lost, there are ways of looking at it where you still have what you lost. Your grandmother's farm and her farmhouse of so many years ago, you still have those memories, and you still have all the values and the enjoyment alive in you from those days. Yes, you lose in one way, but there are ways that you don't lose anything at all of what you had.

You always have more than you don't. This is living with gratitude. People who live with gratitude are less afraid of dying.

When we grow in belonging, I belong to my intimate ones, I belong to my friends, I belong to the public, I belong in agape, even to my enemy, and then you learn the words in the creed, I believe in the communion of saints. Then you learn that everyone who has gone before you already lives in God. They pray for you.

They intercede for you, and you can feel it, and they don't replace Jesus as mediator. They mediate in the mediation of our Lord for your good. And when you understand you belong to this ever-widening circle of people, then you understand what it means to be made in the image and likeness of God who is Trinity, because belonging is the name of the game, and we belong eternally.

And so all of these things give peace when it's time to die. The people who die in peace can say, I have loved fully, and I feel loved. I allow love to enter my life.

I have blessed even those who curse me, and I feel blessed by life. I forgive, and I also feel forgiven for my wrongs.

I feel I mean something to my family and my community, and they mean so much to me. I die with meaning. I belong to them, and I belong to God, and we all belong to God.

This is the art of having a peaceful and happy death. And if your life hasn't been so great up to now, then start now, living the right way. It's not too late.

It's never too late. You just turn toward the Lord and start now. And how do you practice all these virtues of self-control and compassion across difficult lines and everything else? Be more patient in traffic.

Just try it. Be more patient with other people. Do little things.

Hello, how are you today? Open your door. Hold it for somebody. It's by doing little things that we gain great strength.

All the big saints have said it. Mother Teresa, Teresa of Lisieux. Did you think they were kidding? Do everything in the small ways the right way, and you'll become strong in the biggest ways.

These are the secrets. The other day, I was telling you that I hung on the bars in order to get a little bit taller. It was the day of the gospel, who is my brother? Who is my sister? And I saw the sad woman on the bleachers, and I went and I spoke with her. And when I gave that example, I was just more talking about the example of, as Jesus taught us, who is my mother? Who is my brother? Who is my sister? And it's very clear, it's anyone who needs you and anyone who needs me. And to ignore that is a big sin of omission.

So I've been praying that I might see her again, and I was so sure I would see her again. And her issue is a son who just died. That's why she said it's irreparable when I asked her.

Is it something that can be fixed? She's in deep grief over the loss of her son. I was so sure I would see her again, I went into the gift shop and I looked around and I saw an angel about this big, and I brought the angel that that's big, and I knew just what I would say to her if I saw her again. And I saw her again.

And I tell you these things because I was meant to see her, and I was meant to see her again, and I was meant to give her this gift. And any bit of it would have fallen apart if I omitted. And there are many things that you are meant to do.

So when I saw her again after one of the novenas, and we had a nice long talk and a big embrace, and I said, I have a present for you. And I said, I have a message for you, but understand it the right way. I don't have an Ouija board.

I'm not one of these people that tells the future or sees ghosts or hears voices. I just know that I'm supposed to give this to you. This is an angel.

Angel means messenger of God. This statue represents only a message to you from the heavens. And this is the message.

Your son is in peace. Your son is happy. Your son is in bliss, and he doesn't want to watch you spend the rest of your life in grief.

Yes, grieve, but also live. You have to live. He wants that of you. You have to live. He's in bliss. He wants you also to be happy in life. That's the message. Put the angel where you can see it. It's deep teaching.

It's not mine. I receive it, and you receive it. It's deep teaching.

But the mystery of the body of Christ, those who have gone before and ourselves, can be summarized in this simple expression of an anonymous monk of the year 300. And I told her this. When someone you love dies, they're no longer where they were.

They're now everywhere that you are. And for those of us who are afraid of dying and leaving people behind, it's the same message. When you do let go of your body, you will be everywhere that they are.

We ask through the intercession of St. Ann that the Lord help us to understand these deep and ancient teachings and help us to apply them in our lives.

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