

Love, Faith, Hope Talks to Teachers Day of Reflection, 2004 (Awareness of virtues and their opposite vices)

Today I would like to share with you basically about the Holy Spirit and about the **gifts of the Spirit, especially the fruit and moreover the virtues**. I think as teachers we need to be more aware of what the virtues are, especially the **three theological virtues**. St. Paul says everything is passing and everything will turn to dust, but “three things remain: **faith, hope, love.**” The German translation is “hope, love, faith.” I am going to start with love, but it doesn’t really matter because, really in a certain sense, they all go together.

Now in our minds, in our typical way of thinking, **we don’t really see the wholeness of reality**. So we want to think a little bit outside of the box today and to borrow from the mystical visionaries, whose basic gift to us is **a sense of unity: everything is one**. God is one; and the creation, although not God, nonetheless, is totally united to God. St. Augustine saw this. He said **if any part of the creation ever were not being supported by God at every moment, it wouldn’t exist**. So just by existing we are really united to God in a profound way, in a way that if we weren’t connected in this way, we wouldn’t exist. So the real mystery of life, the mystery that science has never even really approached is: **Why is there something rather than nothing?** There is no answer to that because it can’t be asked in a scientific way, and it really is always probing beyond the normal limits of our minds because it goes beyond the categories we can think with. And yet **our human spirit really can deal with this issue and wants to—and wants to!** That’s the important thing.

And our **children**, believe it or not, do actually **have a great capacity to think in a spiritual way**, even more so in some respects than us because they haven’t had rigid categories formed yet in their minds—one reason. The second reason is in many cases, most cases hopefully—I wish they were all cases, but anyway, most cases—**they have not experienced a sort of jading that comes with age**. We get jaded as we get older. We get disappointed. We lose our idealism. We lose our enthusiasm. We lose a lot of things. That’s partly why Jesus said, “Unless you become like a child, you cannot enter the kingdom,” because the kingdom is all about life and about life in its greatness, in its wholeness, in its wonder. And we can lose that. Children are more in touch with it, but, of course, today we find them more and more in a bad sense maturing earlier and earlier, being less and less children, having a shorter and shorter childhood—shorter and shorter childhood, longer and longer adolescence. It starts now about eight and extends to about forty-five, I think, with some people. So that’s really what we are dealing with our children.

I like to draw, and the reason is I find that images make it easy to remember, so I just use some diagrams for memory, my memory as well as your own. So we talk about God as one. If you have ever read the *Catechism*, it says, **“One God subsists in three divine persons,”** and unfortunately we use the word “persons.” When that was originally written the word “person” didn’t mean what it means today, so I believe some day the Church will change that wording because today “person” means an individual. It didn’t mean that

then. It didn't mean that in the early Church. *Persona* in Latin meant a "mask." So **the oneness of God is obscured by our word "person."** We understand that God is one. The oneness of God is obscured by the idea that there are three persons as if there were three beings. There aren't three beings. **There is one being, one God, and one will.** I think "will" is a good word because if you think about will, there is one, if I dare say, actor. **There is one chooser in God;** there are not three. There aren't three who choose. There is one God. There is one chooser; there is one will.

But **within God there is this intercommunication**, which is what we need to think about, I think anyway, **Father to Son to Spirit.** I think we need to think about it because **it's a reflection of who we are too.** We are made in the image and the likeness of God. And we say God is one and God is simple, but within God there is this manifold intercommunication. Well, we are also made in the image and likeness of God. We are also one. We are one, but we are also—not actually simple, actually complicated, but—**we are one and we also have an intercommunication. We have a body, we have a mind, and we have feelings.** They are not all the same, but they all are interrelated and they all make up who we are. **I would associate Father with soul—I'm just associating that.** I am not saying Father is a soul. I am just saying that. **I am just using the threeness of God to talk about the threeness of who we are and to deal with the life of virtue as it relates to our true nature.** And out of that will come then—later on we can discuss how the fruits of the Spirit emerge.

So soul and mind and body. Now it's very funny that **body is related to Spirit**, but that's really I think correct. And if we have the Spirit in us, **if the Spirit is really alive in us, we know it in our bodies.** In other words, the Spirit is not spiritual in the sense of abstract or disembodied—not at all. **The spirit is what enlivens our bodies and makes us really live in Christ.** Now by that I mean live in Christ more than simply living in a sort of mechanical sense. Jesus says, "Let the dead bury the dead." There is a way of living where you talk and you walk and you go through the motions of living, but you are not alive. But in the Holy Spirit we become fully alive—and that's really our birthright in Baptism, that we live a fully alive life. And it has to be something that actually touches our bodies, and that's why **people who are alive in the Spirit often are called to ministries of healing because our bodies are meant to be temples of the Spirit.** And if our bodies are meant to be temples of the Spirit, then **it is the will of God for us to live a healthy, whole life and a healed life.** Now God's will is not carried out perfectly on earth. We know that, but nonetheless it is the will of God.

Love

Now there are three great virtues, as St. Paul says. The first is love. He says that: love is the greatest of all these. Now, why? Well, actually **love expresses as best we can the very nature of God and therefore the very nature of reality itself.** As St. Augustine says, we all depend on God; another way of saying that is we all depend on love. **Without love we would not exist.** If for one second it were not for love, we would not exist. If any one of us were totally cut off from love, then we would not exist. It's the same thing. Love is God; God is love. So we put the virtue of love over here, and we can talk about how this is a reality that really **escapes our daily awareness.** Why? Well, in

our daily awareness we—first of all, no matter what we are taught and no matter what we read in the Bible, and no matter what we read in sacred authors, **we actually experience love as very limited.**

So we grow up with the idea that love is here but not there; this person is loveable; that person is not loveable. That is a denial of our faith, of course. **Our faith is that love is in essence unconditioned.** It is not possible for any creature to be unlovable—it's not possible. If we continue to live in this world where love is here but not there, where we become very selective about how love works and who is really worthy of it and so on, pretty soon we will fall into the category of the unlovable. It's a matter of statistical probability. Sooner or later **if you are going to set up criteria, and you are going to say love has to follow these criteria, pretty soon you won't fit into the criteria.** But what God says, through the revelation of the Scriptures and through Christ, is that **there are no criteria**, because God is unconditioned love and **God loves all because all comes from God and depends upon God.**

Now those saints who actually see this, who feel it and who actually experience it, these we call the “mystics.” But really **what the mystics experience they experience for all of us. We all need to get in touch with what they experience, this total reality of love.**

Now Jesus told stories in order to get across points because if you talk in poetry, there are some that like it; there are others who say, oh, well, that's just poetry. So Jesus told stories because **most people can identify more with stories.** There is one story in particular I want to tell about love, and you have heard it a thousand times, probably sick of it maybe, the story of **the Prodigal Son.** But I don't know that we actually hear the whole story. In the story of the Prodigal Son this young lad goes up to his father and says, “Dad, give me my share of the inheritance,” which is another way of saying I wish you were dead, because when you inherit you inherit when someone dies. This is not a loving relationship. This son does not love his father. But the father does love the son. The father's love is unconditioned. So the father says okay, I'll give it to you; here you are. And the son goes off on a journey, so to speak, away from love. And according to the story **this son wastes all his money**, especially on loose women. But in general the whole issue is waste. And that is the very idea of one of the capital sins, which is the sin of lust. **Lust is wasting, wasting your inheritance because of no love in your life,** because you don't have love because you haven't perceived love because you don't believe there is love because you think there is love here but not there, so you run away from love and you go waste your inheritance. That's what the life of lust is; it's a life of waste.

Now the son eventually wastes everything and that's actually the good news. That's one thing about **some sins: you feel the results earlier than others.** And that's one you feel it early. So the son realizes, my God, I am starving here. I have no more money and my father has all these servants; I think I will go home and just be a servant. And he goes home, and you know the story. The father embraces him and restores him to his place.

Meanwhile, there is the other brother, who is also very much unloving, but he never leaves. So sin—and I think what Jesus is trying to say in this story is be very careful with the idea that sin is always running off and going away. **Sometimes sin is staying home too**, because the elder brother has no more love for his father than the younger brother; it's just that he stays home and he works hard. **He works hard, but for what?** Not really to please his father; it's **to please himself, to please his idea of who he is**. And all the while he is doing this he is building up resentment because he says, "You never even gave me a kid, i.e., a goat, to celebrate with my friends." So in other words, he doesn't really care about his father; he doesn't enjoy his father's presence. He really is just living a life of isolation, but obedient isolation, even **servile isolation**. And what's happening here is all this is **resentment or also called "anger."** There is a great deal of sadness in this because the younger brother, having wasted all his money, comes to his senses; the older brother, having spent his life in this sort of hypocritical obedience—**it's hypocritical because it's all an act**; hypocrisy means "acting"; that's the Greek word; hypocrite means an "actor"—he is acting out the life of a faithful son, but he isn't. In his heart he is far from his father. And worse, when his father really invites him to come into the feast, he refuses because—and that's **a terrible thing about anger: it's hard to see how you are hurting yourself**.

Now there is a third major way in which we lose love in life, and that's through **total indifference**. Now the word we use for that is really a dumb word, "**sloth**." Sloth I don't know if people know it actually is an animal, and the animal has absolutely nothing to do with what this is. In Latin, St. Thomas used a word that isn't in the dictionary, **accidia**. And that comes from Greek apparently meaning "no care." No care meaning "I don't care!" That's a sin against love because it says I don't care about anything. It's like, well, life has left me behind and my response is going to be just sort of, you might say, passive aggression, you might say, just letting everything die inside. It's a total indifference. There are a lot of people that don't see sloth or indifference as the terrible thing it is because it's really **denial of the life and the vibrancy** that, again, we have a right to because we are created by God, in which we renew this right in Baptism. It should give us the connection; it does actually give us the potential for a new life. But, again, for whatever reason, as we grow we can become very jaded and we can become very disappointed and very **indifferent then to love and therefore to life and to therefore reality itself**. So what do we do? We live more and more in a self-absorbed, mechanical kind of existence. And it's very good if we start seeing this so that we can realize that really God is calling us to much more, and to have this sense of always wanting more. Katherine Kulman was a great preacher and a great healing minister, and every time she had one of these huge revivals she would conclude and she would say, "And there is much more." That was her parting statement every time she preached. And there is—there is much more. So the virtue of love is a strength. **The word "virtue" itself means a "strength"; it's a power that is supposed to energize life.**

Faith

Now the second virtue is faith. Again, **faith as a virtue was originally the strength to endure, for example, martyrdom or torture**. So think of faith as strength to endure whatever kind of suffering is needed, originally it was martyrdom. It was torment.

People, for whatever reason in the early Church, tried to dissuade Christians from believing. It went against, you might say, their system of values and beliefs and so it threatened them. So the virtue of faith was this idea of holding on and remaining strong. But there is much more to it.

Faith is also about the mind and about how you see things. Jesus gives the story, again about faith, in the story of **the Rich Man and Lazarus**. I will remind you of the story. There is a rich man. He is dressed in purple and every day eats at his table. Meanwhile, at the gate of his house a poor man, Lazarus, is dying of hunger. Eventually Lazarus dies and he goes to Paradise where he is in the bosom of Abraham, and eventually the rich man dies and he is in torment in the flames of Hades. So he says to Abraham, “O Abraham, send Lazarus to dip his finger in water to cool my parched tongue.” And Abraham says, “Oh, I’m sorry, but that’s not possible. There is a chasm now between you and us.” And what’s the origin of that chasm? He said, well, “On earth you had everything, and Lazarus had nothing, and you didn’t do anything to help Lazarus. Now he can’t do anything to help you.” I’m paraphrasing a little bit. Then he says, “Oh, send Lazarus to my father’s house because I have many brothers there and if he only tells them, then they won’t end up in a place like this.” And Abraham says, “Oh, they already have Moses, and they have the prophets; let them listen to them.” That’s faith—“Let them listen to them,” because if they don’t, they won’t even believe someone who is raised from the dead.”

Now what does that tell us? First of all, again, **when we don’t have this vision of faith, well, we are often pulled into, for one thing, gluttony.** Now people think gluttony is just eating a lot. Well, no, gluttony is basically **hedonism**. And we find a culture that is all based on this principle: **self-indulgence**. And what is it? It’s filling an emptiness, filling a void. See, **without real faith in our lives, there is a void in the very core of our mind because the mind is connected to the soul.** And if the mind doesn’t see, if the mind has no vision, then the soul becomes empty. “Without vision the people perish,” said the prophet Isaiah. And so without vision we perish. We become empty and then **in the emptiness of our lives we fill up ourselves with stuff.** And that’s what the rich man is all about. It’s about filling up your life with stuff. And one of the results of that is when we become filling our emptiness up, **we don’t really care about anybody else.** We don’t even see people around us because we are actually blinded by our lack of faith. We don’t see the need around us. We spend all our time filling up our emptiness. What I’m talking about are aspects of life; these are all little grooves or **avenues that people take in life because they are not connected to the one God in a deeply conscious way.**

Also related to gluttony is greed. What is greed all about? **This is also a country where greed has become a way of life.** Actually, **without faith there is nothing but fear.** Jesus says, “Fear is useless; what is needed is trust.” See, **faith is trust.** It’s a wholehearted, personal willingness, again, will—will has to be involved here—**it’s a personal willingness to depend upon God.** And if we don’t have this wholehearted willingness to depend upon God, then the contingencies of life become fearful. And it says in the Letter to the Hebrews that the devil kept the world in bondage by the fear of death. That’s the basic fear of all fears, the **fear of death**, the fear of annihilation, the fear

of not existing because there is actually no proof whatsoever in our daily waking existence that there is anything more than our waking existence. When we start to realize there's something more, we are entering into the world of trust and faith. Without trust and faith there is no proof that there is—even when I go to bed at night that I will wake up in the morning. There really is no proof—period. But I can only let go of fear of annihilation, fear of ending it all, by **starting to see beyond the limits of my senses, and that's the world of faith and trust.**

And greed and gluttony are both really going against faith and trust. Fear is ruling. And in the case of avarice I build walls around myself of my wealth, of my power, and my knowledge so that I'll be secure. And in the Bible there is the story—Jesus tells the parable of the rich man that has all the grain and he says, “I don't know what I am going to do; I have so much grain—oh, I know, I will build big granaries and then I will be secure and I will be able to rest and retire. I will be able to retire from life and enjoy myself.” And Jesus says in the story, God says to him, “You fool, this very night your life will be required of you.” **But avarice is this building of walls. And we see this strategy as a culturally approved way of life,** as we see this strategy of gluttony as a culturally approved way of life, this strategy of lust a culturally approved way of life, this strategy of sloth a very culturally approved way of life—total indifference. I don't know if anger is culturally approved or not—probably not. I think probably that's one thing people actually recognize as bad, is being resentful. It's odd, you know **our culture does recognize some things as bad, and one of them is anger.** That's actually the thing people say most often in confession—they are angry. They recognize that as wrong. There are all these other things, too, but they don't recognize them, see.

Hope

Okay, and then we go over to the last gift; the last theological gift is **hope**. The story of hope is probably the hardest one to understand, just as Spirit is the hardest person in God to understand. Now Jesus says, “The Spirit blows where it wills,” meaning you can't figure it out; you can't predict it. There is nothing predictable about the Spirit. Hope is not something quite as tangible—even though nothing is tangible; love isn't tangible either, but we taste love more easily because even in our personal affections, even though they are really not the same thing as unconditioned love, they are a taste of it. In our trusting of others, it's a taste of faith. But **hope is sometimes harder to get in touch with.**

Now there is a wonderful story about **Martha and Mary**. Jesus comes and Mary is sitting there listening to him and Martha is all upset. She says, “Jesus, why don't you tell my sister to help me. Can't you see I'm doing all this work? Can't you see what I am doing?” Now what is that? Well, that is, of course, pride. **Can't you see what I'm doing? Pride is manipulative.** So she says, “Well, why don't you tell her?”—see manipulative. And tell her—what is that? See, that's also **envy because she doesn't want Mary to enjoy Jesus' company.** She really doesn't want her to because she can't. And envy is very controlling. So she says, “Tell her to help me.” And Jesus says, “Oh, Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things.” See, that's **anxiety.** “You

are worried and upset about many things.” This is **fear**. This is anxiety. This was **anger, sometimes passive**. And Jesus says, “You are worried and upset about many things. There is only one thing really necessary, and Mary found it.” What was it? **What is one thing very necessary? It’s a sense that we all have to contribute something to life, but it does not depend on us. That’s what hope is all about. Life does not depend on us!**

Now a person that makes no contribution is really hurting himself or herself. But this idea that things really depend on me—as Martha apparently had this feeling that everything depended on her. Look at me. That is a **prideful way of thinking and feeling. It’s centered on myself and it’s centered on what I do**. It’s a very doing place, which is why I associated with body. Body is associated with our action, the action of our bodies. **The life of our bodies is action**. And we can become very much associated with me in that sense; not that these are not all—**all sin is really self-centered in one way**. Here in avarice it’s self-protecting. Here in gluttony it’s self-indulging, and so on. That’s true. However, there is **something about pride that, for whatever reason, doesn’t strike people as wrong at all**—doesn’t strike people as wrong at all; it’s just there. It’s just like I am the one who is really being hurt here. I am the one who has to do everything. I am the one who has to serve. And **it’s really a form of manipulation**. And Jesus called her on it.

Envy: is a comparing myself to other people and sadly judging my happiness in relation to other people’s happiness as if I could tell whether they are happy or not. So **envy is sad and controlling and comparing all the time**. And, again, people don’t see anything wrong with this. I don’t think people know what it is. But **the world is full of controlling people: parents trying to control their children, children trying to control their parents**, and often doing it quite well, and all kinds of comparisons. The whole world of comparison is envy. When parents compare what their children are doing either among their own family, let’s say, well, Johnny is really great, but Kathy never does anything and she is a bum, or the other way around. Or, well, how come this girl over there gets to dance in the school play and my daughter doesn’t get to dance? That’s envy. You have to start to see what it is.

These **capital sins** on this side I don’t think anyone recognizes as wrong. **We really are blind in regard to their work and their presence. And we are also blind to what hope means**. And as a Church—I remember I had a wonderful professor who was actually a member of the United Church of Christ, not Roman Catholic, but he taught me homiletics. And he used to say—he was a very ecumenical man—and he used to say the “Church” meaning all Christians; that’s how he talked—the Church of America is very Pelagian. Now what was Pelagian? Pelagius was a heretic at the time of Augustine who emphasized doing, our doing; everything is on what we have to do. And what this professor meant was that in **the Church in the U.S., Catholic, Protestant, all of us, we tend to exaggerate what we have to do**. See, we are always doing. **It’s body centered. Why? Because it’s Spirit absent**. See, **when we are prideful and envious, the Spirit is not there. We are missing that very important part of the unity of God. And we don’t have hope. We are not living in hope. We are being driven by anxiety**. When

we are driven by anxiety the Spirit is being pushed out and pride and envy are being given free reign.

When we are ruled by anger we are really not in communion with the Father.

That's what those parables are about. We are missing the real love of the Father and we are pushing love out of our lives and **we are either running off to find love somewhere else or we are staying home and just seething.** And **there are a lot of religious people that live in this area, the seething, resentment area of life,** because look at all they are doing. I mean, they keep all the rules. I remember a man I met once in a clothing store after I was ordained, and I had remembered him as a boy. He had always sat in the front pew. I always sat in the front pew and he sat in the front pew at the 10:00 Mass. And he said, "Oh, aren't you that lad that became ordained?" I said, "Oh, yes." He said, "You know, I don't go to church anymore." I said, "Oh." And he said, "Do you want to know why?" I said, "I guess you want to tell me, right?" And he said, "Yes, because," he said, "you know, in the old days Monsignor and the other priest used to really talk about the fires of hell and how all those evil people are going to hell, and they don't talk about that anymore." And I said, "And you miss it?" He said, "Oh, yes, because I never did any of those bad things." See, that is the world of resentment. That is **the world of perfectionism.** Now Jesus said, "Be perfect as your Father is perfect," but Luke put it a different way: "Be as compassionate as your Father is compassionate." **Perfection lies in love. It doesn't lie in one's work, one's duty.** You know pride and resentment are connected. Everything is connected in a sort of a circle, you might say.

Question about having to have pride in your school, pride in your church, pride for yourself?

That's not the sin of pride though. That's another problem with our culture because we mix together self-esteem with the sin of pride. But people don't notice the difference because their self-esteem could destroy other people, and that's not real self-esteem; that's the sin of pride, but they don't recognize it's wrong. I'm just taking care of me; I'm doing what I have to do. And pride also has another element which is very physical, which we could call vanity. **Vanity really has to do with the exaggerated emphasis on one's appearances or the appearances, the appearances of anything,** how things look, how things look to the neighbors. That's false pride; that's vanity. **That's not concerned with the substance. It's concerned with what appears to be.**

I want to show that hope as a sense of God at work: that's a virtue, a strength, to live by. We live by this sense. **I do what I can do and then I let everything in the hands of God because ultimately my contribution is not the most important thing.** It is important that I contribute, but it's not the most important thing. And **I don't even know how my contribution will actually work out. In a sense I really can't care about it.** The parables really talk about all these three all the time and all these seven capital sins. Jesus doesn't talk in the categories of abstraction, but he talks about stories, but the stories include all these things. And the story of the farmer: one farmer plants; another farmer perhaps waters and fertilizes; then someone else might come and do the harvesting; then the grain might be sold; somebody else buys the grain that turns into flour; somebody else takes the flour and makes bread out of it; and then finally someone

eats it. Now every single step along the way is necessary. But does the one who planted ever get to eat the bread? No, not necessarily. But if you are going to have bread, all those people have to be part of it. So **if you live in hope, you don't have an inordinate desire or demand to see results for your work.** That would really be pride to say, I gotta see, I gotta make sure that I really get the results I'm looking for. Well, then it's your work; it's not God's work. If we live in hope, it's God's work. And the sad thing is **when there is no hope in our lives, then we really are constantly being ruled by our anxieties.** And there is never any end to them. Now there is **a big difference between anxiety and fear** if you talk to psychologists. What's the big difference? **Anxiety has no particular target**, no particular reason. It's just there all the time.

Every individual is prone to one particular weakness. There is no one who has never been prone to any of them except perhaps the Blessed Mother and Jesus. I mean, that's what it means to be sinless: you are not prone to any of these weaknesses. But everyone is prone to something, and usually people are prone to one or two more than others. That tends to be the case. Entire personalities—there is a theory; I'm not going to go into it—**there is a theory that each personality is actually built around one of the capital sins**, which means if that is true, that's **something you are never going to see because it's going to be part of you.** By “never” I don't mean never never, but I mean it's hard to because it's so much a part of the way you always look at things. So that would mean that probably **there is a blind spot in everyone's life.** And Jesus said, “How can you take the speck from your brother's eye if you don't take the beam from your own.” So it's good **in self-reflection to see: What are the virtues that I really experience in my life, and what are the virtues I don't experience in my life?** How easy is it for me to trust, or how difficult? Ultimately, when we say these virtues are gifts from God we mean that they don't depend on something that we do. **It doesn't depend on some energy in us; it's a gift.** How easy is it for me to accept the gift of being trusting?

Now there are according to tradition seven capital sins. I really think there are eight. I think the eighth one is **disbelief** in a very specific way because it says in the Gospel of Matthew that when Jesus went to Capernaum he couldn't work any miracles there because he was so troubled by the people's disbelief. So disbelief is not simply like you go to the cupboard and there is no belief or you go to the refrigerator and you are all out of belief. It's really a choice because it belongs to the world of will and mind. **It's a mindful, willful choice: I am not going to trust.** And it says, “And Jesus could work no sign there because of their distrust.” It's translated unfortunately in our modern translation: “their lack of faith.” But that's a very poor translation because that's like an empty cupboard. It's not an empty cupboard. It's a willful, mindful decision not to trust, not to believe. And **I think that's the eighth capital sin.** It's related to another phenomenon we have seen so much too: cynicism. **Cynicism is being unbelieving.** A cynical attitude is really not a trusting attitude.

Now the more we can open our hearts to these virtues, the more alive we can be. If we find ourselves really troubled with anger—and there are various types of anger: resentment is one, rage, running off looking for love in weird places is actually a form of anger; it's a form of woundedness. And, as I say, total indifference is really a passive

anger. Then be aware of it. **Being aware is the beginning of wisdom, to recognize what's missing in oneself**, and then to see how **our society really encourages a world of self-indulgence and self-protection**. And I would add that in regard to our modern thinking, and I am not against evolution; I believe in evolution to some degree, however, if you take evolution and this idea of self-preservation too far, you end up in a world where the only thing that makes sense is self-protection, living for yourself, protecting yourself, and that of course cuts you off from other people.

And as you see people and parents, children, they are all under the influence of all these patterns. **Children are constantly being invited into the patterns of resentment, lust, gluttony, greed, envy, pride, vanity**. They don't know anything. They are being invited to be this way. And some of them are **more prone to each one of them than another, and they often take the way of least resistance**. It's simply good to be aware of that and to see it and to **possibly in a gentle way suggest an alternative**. Of course **you can't ever use force in any way in the spiritual life**. Force doesn't work. There is no force. The only force is God, and God is supremely gentle. That's why Isaiah says when the suffering servant comes "a bruised reed he will not break, a smoldering wick he will not quench." **That's what our life is, a life of ministry; it's being gentle, and to ourselves first, and letting the Spirit unwrap us and enfold us**.

Answer to a question about judgment. **Each capital sin is a wrong judgment about reality. If we lived perfectly the life of faith, hope, and love, then we would see truth everywhere**.