



Daring Practical Faith in Divine Providence

Part Seven

Father Joseph Kentenich, *Childlikeness Before God*, 157-159

Introduction: We continue with Father Kentenich's insights given at the retreat for the Swiss priests' community of the Bethlehem Fathers in 1937. In Part Six, we ended with Father Kentenich explaining aspects of our response to the *yes* the Heavenly Father says to us in our lives. In Part Seven, he unfolds three aspects of a childlike joyful *yes* to the Heavenly Father's plan for our life.

A childlike joyful yes to my way in life

Father Kentenich continues:

I begin by looking at the way God has led me and say to myself in the light of faith: This is really my way in life. You must take the word *way in life* literally. This is the way that makes me alive... I think I should subdivide this childlike joyful *yes* into three subpoints:

- The *yes* to my surest way in life,
- The *yes* to my happiest way in life, and
- The *yes* to my most fruitful way in life...

The *yes* to my surest way in life

Father Kentenich shows how much the Heavenly Father loves us. He has made the most secure plan for our lives and in childlike faith we can believe that we are even called to be one of his *elect*¹ or *chosen* children.

Is it true that my way in life is the surest way in life? Absolutely! Why? ... *Who has planned my way for me? My Father!* Is that enough? Will [not] my Father choose for me, his child, the surest way in life? You must answer this question for yourselves... The second reason applies if I am one of the [his] *elect*... In the simplicity of childlike faith, I can dare to assume so, because God has given me *a truly tender Marian devotion*. Be that as it may, I think I can still assume that my way in life is on much safer ground [planned by God] than if I had designed it myself. (....)

Thought questions: When have I experienced security in God's plan for my life?

When have I experienced that God's plan for my life is better than my plan?

The *yes* to my happiest way in life

Father Kentenich goes into the second point:

Furthermore, I can also say that this *yes* to my way in life is a childlike joyful *yes* to my happiest way in life. What does this mean? Is this really true? ... Through my life God wants to increase his glory in some unique way. Part of this glory is my happiness. If I therefore glorify God through my life as he desires, I will be happy... I am always the happiest when I am seeking God. Would you like some confirmation of this serious thought? Listen to Our Lord's powerful words: *Whoever loses his life will gain it. Whoever wishes to gain his life must lose it.* (Mt 10:39) ... If I seek my own interests, if I am allured by this or that, even when God wants something else, then the words apply, *whoever wishes to save his life, that*

¹ Chosen for salvation through divine mercy, www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary.

is, follows his own interests, *loses his life... But whoever loses his life*, that is, when I offer my *yes* to God in my interests, troubles, worries then it can be said of me, *he will gain his life*, namely [gain] God and in God [gain] a happy life.

Thought question: When have I experienced happiness in doing God's will?

The greatest security

Father Kentenich invites us to consider our attitude toward security in the Heavenly Father:

If we want to be true children, then we must not ask: *Where am I the happiest?* But to ask: *Where do I give the Father the greatest joy?* ... The immature child asks: *Where am I happiest, where am I most sheltered?* But the mature child asks: *What gives the Father the greatest joy?* This [happiness] will be connected with the most security, but it is a security which comes as a fruit [of the Holy Spirit] and not as a direct striving. My awareness of being sheltered and my need for being sheltered are then fruits of my full surrender [to the Heavenly Father].

Thought question: What may I do today to give the Father the greatest joy?

When have I experienced security in my surrender to God?

Bearing and enduring love:

Father Kentenich gives us a challenging insight into applying this to family life:

At this point I can repeat those hard words which I said earlier: The table of family life is not primarily a table of pleasure but of sacrifice! What do I want from family life? To give joy to the Father! The more mature we are, the more we must abandon the conscious, direct search for security and relaxation. No, relaxation, happiness, and security come on their own if we seek God unselfishly. This is why you as a family must foster... *bearing and enduring* love which serves the other... The most important thing is that we seek God unselfishly! This powerful attitude must also be mine in family life...

Thought question: In what situations am I asked to foster bearing and enduring love?

When do I seek security and relaxation rather than confront the challenges of my family life?

The yes to my most fruitful way in life

The third point that fits to the missionary life of the Bethlehem Fathers community, but it also applies to all baptized Christians. We are part of a one, holy, catholic, and *apostolic* Church. Father Kentenich continues:

I can also say that [my joyful *yes* to my way of life] is a *yes* to my most fruitful way in life. Why? Because our vocation is an apostolic one. God has called us to fruitfulness. God will therefore also take care that wherever I am and work there will be opportunities to be apostolic, either directly or indirectly- through my sacrifices.

Thought question: Where do I experience fruitfulness for God's kingdom in my life?

Where can I work for God's Kingdom either directly or indirectly?

-to be continued in Part Eight-