



Daring Practical Faith in Divine Providence

Part 10

Father Joseph Kentenich, *Childlikeness Before God*, 167-170

Introduction: We conclude with Father Kentenich's insights given at the retreat for the Swiss priests' community of the Bethlehem Fathers in 1937. In Part Nine, Father Kentenich developed the insight that from our childlike *yes* to the Heavenly Father, heroic deeds should come forth from a daring attitude. In Part Ten, Father Kentenich shows that saying *yes* to God is a great security.

Security (on a Higher Level)

Father Kentenich continues:

Please do not think that I am contradicting what I already said about insecurity and unshelteredness. Absolutely not! What the *yes* gives us is security on a *higher level*. You must always remember that earthly things can never give us security to the degree for which we long. It is only on a higher level, in God, that we can truly find the security and shelter we crave. St. Paul says: *For those who love God, all things work together unto good* (Rom 8:28). If we try to love God and grow in love whenever blows of fate, insecurity, and unshelteredness come our way, all things will work together for the best. But I must ask you to understand me correctly. This does not mean that I say: I love you God; therefore, I am safe from all financial setbacks; therefore, I am safe from all political setbacks. (...) Remember: *For those who love God, all things work together unto good*—this means to be secure and sheltered in God.

Thought question: When have I experienced that *for those who love God, all things work together unto good*.

Pendulum Security

Father Kentenich uses the image of a pendulum:

Take the image of the pendulum again. The pendulum swings back and forth. The pendulum of our life is also pushed by world events and economic difficulties... We should not be exempt from this. You see, if our love for God were freed from all difficulties, then the danger would be much too great that we would stay back on a lower level [of love], but [God] wants us to reach his heart. *This is the God-willed meaning of all insecurity and unshelteredness: [that we experience] a still greater security and shelteredness in the hand and heart of God.* This is true of the life of individuals ... and [in the history] of nations.

Think this through for yourselves: Don't you think it is plausible and even obvious, considering how God governs the world, that the deepest meaning of our own era is the preparation of a new era of fervent faith? You notice that we touch on the great riddles of world history. If the meaning of personal unshelteredness is a higher shelteredness in God, then I think I am justified in saying that the meaning of the unshelteredness of the nations is the higher and deeper shelteredness of the human race in God...

Thought question: Father Kentenich said this at the difficult time just before the Second World War. How does this apply to our time now?

Attitude in economic loss

Father Kentenich gives the following insight into accepting the challenges of daily life especially in the experience of the loss of economic security. The following attitudes will help.

- The attitude of a radical trust [in God].
- The attitude of a deep shelteredness in the riches of God. Since I lack earthly riches, perhaps this works to my great advantage by giving me a better grasp of the riches of God. Be that as it may, whoever speaks a childlike *yes* is always wealthy in the sight of God, even if he/she is as poor as a beggar. The poorer one is in exterior and economic goods, the more one appreciates this wealth.
- The attitude of detachment from all earthly things. I am detached and not shackled to all the worldly things, or at least not inordinately attached to them.

Attitude in economic security

Father Kentenich also gives insight into the childlike attitude when we have material goods:

If God has placed at my disposal the necessary economic goods, perhaps even a certain level of luxury, if I am therefore economically well off and I nonetheless remain a child and speak my *yes*, what does that mean for me? [The following attitudes will help.]

- The attitude of gratitude for all the help that God has sent my way in fatherly kindness, including so many economic blessings.
- The attitude of simplicity, for I know that what I have is from God; my responsibility is to use it well and give a proper accounting for it.
- The attitude of a constant readiness to give it up at any time, should God so desire.

With that I have given you a simple outline of how we ought to act when either well off or poor...

Thought question: How do these points help me say a childlike *yes* to God in my life.

Conclusion

These reflections conclude with encouraging words from Father Kentenich:

Childlikeness gives us strength. ...Childlikeness gives us the strength to *bear all anxieties in the right way* and, to a great extent, to overcome them.

We must remind ourselves that there is much darkness [in life]. Things are not as bright and full of light [as we would like to think]. Of course, if our attitude from childhood on had been naive faith, it would have, for all practical purposes, solved this universal riddle in our own lives. But it does not solve it for others! Nor [does it solve it] for our intellect! [The challenges of our life] are only solved for childlikeness. The way out of the tangle, the terrible darkness can only be a daring surrender—I surrender myself to the Father-God. I almost want to say: I close my eyes and just blindly place everything into His hands. That is the daring of childlikeness!¹

Thought question: What would the Father-God ask me to surrender to him in daring childlikeness?

¹ Final paragraph from text on page 127.