



Daring Practical Faith in Divine Providence

Part Eight

Father Joseph Kentenich, *Childlikeness Before God*, 159-161

Introduction: In Part Eight, we continue Father Joseph Kentenich's retreat talks given to the Swiss priests' community of the Bethlehem Fathers in 1937. Part Seven concluded with Father Kentenich's insights into the childlike joyful *yes* God invites us to give to our way in life. Father Kentenich continues by going into a second point: Our childlike courageous *yes* to the way of the cross that God has planned for us from all eternity.

A Childlike Courageous *Yes* to My Way of the Cross

Father Kentenich asks:

...There is no other way. Our way in life must be a way of the cross. That is my personal way in life, that is your [family's] way in life, that is the Church's way in life... So that you start with a clear outline. It is:

- a *yes* to a difficult way of the cross,
- a *yes* to an easy way of the cross (even though that seems to contradict the first point),
- and a *yes* to a fruitful way of the cross.

Thought question: Why must our life be a way of the cross?

Our *yes* to a difficult way of the cross

Father Kentenich continues:

Is my way in life a way of the cross? I believe it has to be. Do you know why? Because Christ's way in life was a way of the cross, too. That is a very simple answer.

Do you want another way to look at it? Because I am a creature burdened by original sin and my soul is weighed down by all kinds of poison and toxins, the Father wants to free me from these toxins; suffering is the only way he can do this.

Thought question: What toxins is the heavenly Father trying to free me from through suffering?

When times are serious and difficult

Father Kentenich reflects:

It seems to me that those of us in the world today must prepare ourselves more for a serious and difficult way of the cross than other generations did. Do you know why? Because we live in the modern world. It seems to me that, just as there are times in history when Christ wants to relive more his life of glory, there are times when he wants to relive in a preeminent way his life of scorn, humiliation and crucifixion. And we live in just such times. What does this mean for me? From the very outset I must simply expect that my way in life will normally be a heavy way of the cross.

Thought question: Why should I expect cross and suffering to be part of my life?

Your own personal cross

Father Kentenich explains the personal way of the cross we each go:

...It may involve strong temptations, inner compulsions or something abnormal or morbid nesting in the soul. Do not forget: This is *my* way of the cross! My answer will be *Deo gratias* [Thanks be to God!], *Fiat* [Be it done to me], or *Sitio* [I thirst] depending on my maturity, but it is *my* way of the cross! ... I feel like I'm always persecuted, put down, misunderstood, denied. And if this way of the cross is difficult for me, then I speak my *Deo gratias!*

Thought question: What is the *name* of the cross I bear?

A yes to an easy way of the cross – a way of blessing

Father Kentenich continues:

... It is especially important to remember that if the Father reveals his fatherliness to the only begotten Son by sending him such horrendous crosses, we must be careful not to develop an incorrect concept of fatherliness. If I say *yes*, if I am willing and open to being formed, then I must expect that the Father will work on me so intensely that the chips will fly! But we remember that everything he does is done out of love and to always remember that behind the cross is the Father's love. He sends me the cross out of genuine love. Then you will see how, in spite of everything, the way of the cross becomes a way of blessing, even a happy way.

... God will never send me more than I can handle! ...It comes from a genuine Christian wisdom which has proved itself in ordinary everyday life. Learned theories lack such wisdom! We must simply be convinced that God will send the grace we need. If God gives us a cross, it will not be heavier than we can bear.

Thought question: How has God the Father shown that he helps me carry my cross?

Vision of the cross

Father Kentenich shares the following story:

A man was carrying his cross. He thought, *It is too heavy for me, I can't carry it.* God heard his wish. He took his cross away and said, *You may choose your own cross. Go, pick one out.* Now you can imagine that the man felt so relieved not to feel the weight of his cross anymore! But he was a good man and wanted to have some kind of a cross. He tried one. It was too light. He tried another one. It was too heavy. Finally, he found one lying in a corner which seemed just right for him. He chose it and took it to the heavenly Father. Then the Father said, *That is the cross you started out with.* The simple, unaffected truth in this story is that God does not send me a heavier cross than I can bear. As a result, my way of the cross is a relatively easy way of the cross.

A yes to a fruitful way of the cross

Father Kentenich continues:

My way of the cross is doubly easy because it is a fruitful way of the cross. When I am raised up on the cross like Christ, I too can join the Savior in drawing the world to God the Father (cf. John 12:32). I too can have a creative effect through my way of the cross. My response is therefore, *Thanks be to God!*

Thought question: Where has my cross born fruit for the kingdom of God?

-to be continued in Part Nine-