

Living Faith



For Those Desiring to Dig Deeper

Insights from Father Joseph Kentenich

Sources:

I Go to the Father, Father Joseph Kentenich – English Edition WI
1979 Translation by M. J. Hoehne

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LIVING FAITH

(Sermons given by Servant of God, Father Joseph Kentenich)

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Comment: This booklet is made for small group discussion as suggested:

- Opening prayer – asking the Holy Spirit and Mary to accompany us
- Read Texts out loud
- Underline inspiration from Holy Spirit
- Share insights (not personally revealing – rather opportunity to learn to share religious insights)
- Common resolution to live out of faith chosen from insights (best when written down)
- Prayer thanking our Heavenly Father for the gift of this time together

Introduction:

Servant of God, Father Joseph Kentenich (1885-1968) is the father and founder of the International Schoenstatt Family. In the humble beginnings on October 18, 1914 in Schoenstatt, Germany, Father Joseph Kentenich with a group of High School seminarians followed the promptings of the Holy Spirit. This small group invited Mary to be their Mother and Educator from her little chapel that they were privileged to renovate at the beginning of World War I (1914-1918). This 29 year old priest invited the boys to share in “living faith” with the Mother of God who lived in deepest union with Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of the Living God and Father.

Throughout his abundantly fruitful life, Father Joseph Kentenich invited people from around the world to do the same. The excerpts for this collection come from sermons that were given by this Servant of God to the German Parishioners at St. Michael's Parish in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The door opened for sharing “living faith” insights with these Eastern European refugees from World War II who found a new home in America. The volume used for the insights are: *I Go the Father* (sermons from May 5-June 9, 1963). These sermons are translated from the German collection “Aus dem Glauben Leben.”

To fulfill the wish of Pope Benedict XVI for a Year of Faith from October 11, 2012 to the feast of Christ the King on November 24, 2013, this booklet was created. It is intended to help share some of the riches we have as Schoenstatt Family from our Founder, Father Joseph Kentenich in answer to the need of modern persons for a deep love and faith in the living God. The quotes come from the YOUCAT – the Catechism for Youth that was published in 2011 for World Youth Day in Madrid, Spain.

This small attempt is dedicated to Father Joseph Kentenich in gratitude for his faithfulness to the Church and to Schoenstatt during the time he lived in Milwaukee during his Exile (1952-1965). It is also dedicated to my brother Father Jonathan Niehaus (1960-2012) in gratitude for his living faith as a faithful son of the Founder of Schoenstatt.

1. Faith

(J. Kantenich: *I Go to the Father*, Sermon May 26, 1963 pp. 55-68)
Gospel for this Sunday was John 15:26 & John 16:1-4

...Christ, looking back on his life and on his public ministry, he actually had to admit he failed. He performed miracle upon miracle, he worked day and night, he preached and taught in order to serve the people, and what was the outcome? Nothing, really! People did not believe in him. Especially the leaders of the people did not want to have anything to do with him. (...)

Why did Christ have so little success? Why could he who did his utmost reap so little fruit in the end? At least there was no immediate tangible success. I think he wanted to embody the over-all blueprint of man for all of us so that each person would find himself in him. Therefore, it seemed fitting that he, like most of us, would experience an immense amount of disappointments.

“When the Advocate comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who issues from the Father, he will be my witness” (Jn 15:26). What is the name of the Holy Spirit here? The Advocate, the Consoler. ... How dependent the apostles have become on Jesus. He has led them; he has taken them by the hand, so to speak. Now they have nobody at their side to support them. Nobody? The Holy Spirit will do it in my place; the Holy Spirit will comfort you who are standing here like a defeated flock. He will comfort you; he will comfort you in all situations. He will answer all your questions; he will counsel you. Even if you have to share my fate – and you have to expect that you, too, will be nailed to the cross – then the Holy Spirit will comfort you...

“When the Advocate comes...” From whom does he proceed? “..Whom I shall send you from the Father...” We are told again that the Holy Spirit is not simply an idea or the spirit of Christ, as we might speak of the spirit of a human being; the Holy Spirit is a Person, the third divine Person. Ah, we modern people have completely forgotten this truth. We have forgotten God, we have forgotten Christ; and the Holy Spirit is – as some scoff – the

unknown God, the unknown third Person of God even for us Christians, for us Catholics. (...)



Then Christ continued: He is the Spirit of truth. He is truth personified, for he is God. All that he inspires us to do, all that he awakens with us, all that he tells us, is the truth. What is ultimately truth? He will bear witness to me. Everything Christ taught, that the apostles and the people failed to understand will become clear and light. The mind will be enlightened, the heart will be peaceful and the will strong when the Spirit comes and changes souls.

“The Spirit of truth will be my witness...” He will bear witness to the Person of Christ. Christ is the second Person of the Trinity, he is the God-Man to be praised forever; he is not simply a man, a human being like many others. He is the God-Man, Jesus Christ, of whom it is said: “No one can come to the Father except through the Son” (Jn 14:6). He is the God-Man of whom it is said that whoever does not believe that Christ is God, that he is the Redeemer cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. He is the God Man who says of himself; “Anyone who does eat my flesh and drink my blood has eternal life” (Jn 6:54) It is the Holy Spirit who explains all these truths to us. (...)

The Holy Spirit also wants to introduce us to the mission which Christ, in God-willed union with his permanent associate and helpmate in the entire plan of salvation, must fulfill. He should re-open the closed gates of heaven; he should not rest until the entire God-alienated world lies at the feet of the heavenly Father. Our modern world does not know the heavenly Father anymore, the God of life; people think that he has been abolished, that he is sleeping, that he no longer cares for creation. You see, the Holy Spirit wants to give new life to these truths (that Christ taught); he wants to give us life. He wants to proclaim and kindle in us the burning light of the truth. ... Which truths should be brought home to us in a special way? ... First of all, it is the truth of God the Father and of faith in Divine Providence.

...Again it is St. Paul who points out: It is the Holy Spirit who makes us cry out: Abba, Father (cf. Gal 4:6). Unless the Holy Spirit with his grace breaks into our nature, unless his person enters our souls, we might listen to the message about God the Father countless times, but it will not affect us.

There is either no response at all or it lacks the strength and depth to transform us. With unspeakable moanings the Holy Spirit speaks within us. It is not we who speak but the Holy Spirit. We could almost say, he acts like a mother who teaches her child to say “Papa, papa” and then asks the child: “Please repeat it.” And the child tries. In the same way, the Holy Spirit makes us repeat the word “father”. The Holy Spirit, then, is the great power who must change our innermost beings. (pp. 55-60)

YOUCAT: 307. *What is Faith?*

Faith is the power by which we assent to God, acknowledge his truth, and commit ourselves personally to him. (CCC1814-1816, 1842)

Faith is the path created by God leading to the truth that is God himself. Because Jesus is “the way, and the truth, and the life” (Jn 14:6), this faith cannot be merely an attitude or “confidence” about something or other. On the one hand, the faith has definite contents, which the Church professes in the CREED (= profession of faith), and it is her duty to safeguard them. Anyone who wants to accept the gift of faith, in other words, anyone who wants to believe, acknowledges this faith, which has been preserved constantly through the ages and in many different cultures. On the other hand, part of faith is a trusting relationship to God with heart and mind, with all one’s emotional strength. For faith becomes effective only through charity, practical love (see Gal5:6). Whether someone really believes in the God of love is shown, not in his solemn affirmations, but rather in charitable deeds.

- What do we/I mean by faith?
- How do we/I grow in faith?
- How would we/I explain what faith is to someone who would ask?



2. Hope

(J. Kentenich: *I Go to the Father*, Sermon May 5, 1963 pp. 9-21)
Gospel for this Sunday was John 16:16-22

Christ wants to imprint hope, the second theological virtue indelibly upon us; hope, that is, a virtue which is greatly in danger in our time, a virtue you hear little about. By and large, we really understand very little of what Christ wants to tell us.

There are two thoughts in particular which we would like to dwell on today. The first thought: What do we understand by the theological virtue of hope? We know that there are three theological virtues: faith, hope and love. Since faith is the root of our religious lives, we could call hope its bud, and love the blossom and fruit. The second thought: What, precisely, does Christ want to teach us in today's Gospel (*John 16:16-22*)?

What do we understand by the virtue of hope? To begin with, I will give you a clear definition and then try to explain it a little. I will do so in words and images. The image is the Blessed Mother. I will then add a few words regarding the effect of the virtue of hope.

1. Theologians tell us that hope is a virtue infused into our souls by God. It creates an inner disposition and enables us to expect with unshakable trust and confidence everything that the Father promised us because of the merits of Jesus Christ.
2. For the sake of clarity I will add that there is also a purely natural hope. This is a kind of passion. I have a goal. What do I want? Let us say I want to make progress in some field; I want to improve myself economically; I want to improve in sports; I want to become a champion... The silent, passionate hope really to reach my goal gives me the strength to overcome a mountain of difficulties. But in the Gospel we are not talking about this kind of hope which is a natural passion.

Hope is a virtue or rather an infused virtue which I received in holy Baptism. We call it a divine (in German: *goettliche Tugend*) or theological virtue because God infuses it into our souls; it is directly connected and bound up with the divine life which is given to us in Baptism. We said that this infused theological virtue disposes and enables our souls to trust unshakably in everything that God has promised us because of the merits of Jesus Christ. We also call it a theological virtue because we cannot acquire this virtue through our own efforts, no matter how great these may be.

We also call this virtue a theological virtue because God is its object. This virtue centers continuously on God. Of course, faith does that, too; so does love. Hope centers on the promises of God. God promised us something. What did he promise? We will receive everything, just everything. Hope relies on this promise with unshakable confidence.

What does “everything” include? First of all, it includes Jesus Christ. We will receive him. His person shall fill our whole soul. Our souls shall live, be creative, dwell, work in Christ, the God-Man, as in a home. Christ, that is, the participation in the life of Christ, the participation in the glory of Christ is our promise. In heaven we will participate in the glory of Christ, but already here on earth we will share in his life. We shall be members of Christ.

However, this is not everything the Father promised us. He also promised earthly goods. We expect everything from him. However, earthly goods are promised to us only to the extent that (1) they do not hinder us in sharing in the life and love of God and (2) that they help us in this direction.



Since hope makes us center on God, we may never overlook that the center of my life is not my own self; it is not my bridegroom, my bride; it is not even my father and mother; the absolute center is and will always be the eternal God. Hope makes us center on God, that is, the promises of God. Think of all that the world promises us! Think of all the earthly goods life here on earth promises us! But here (in the Gospel) God speaks. And he speaks of eternal goods, of imperishable goods.

We should center on God in a threefold way. We could also say: the virtue of hope has a threefold function:

1. It provides our hearts with an indescribable longing for God. The first function, then, is longing.
2. It provides us with trust in God amid the difficulties of life, when the world attracts us with its pleasures and its splendor. Longing for God! Trust in God!
3. And lastly, it helps us to cooperate with our partner of love, with God. Longing for God! Trust in God! Cooperation with God!

We will best understand the meaning of all this if we look at the Blessed Mother's life and view it under the aspect of hope. Longing for God! Was God really the center of her heart so that all the desires and longings her heart might have felt were ultimately overshadowed by her longing for God; that is, her longing for the promises of God? What did God promise? He promised the Redeemer and all the gifts of glory which the Redeemer of the world would also give to each human being.

There is a simple, beautiful picture which represents the Blessed Mother as a child kneeling by her mother. Her mother holds the Bible in her hands and points with her finger at this passage: “...and let the clouds rain the Just...” The Blessed Mother looks with special interest at these words. “Let the clouds rain the Just...” Whom should the clouds rain down? The Redeemer!

This outlines briefly the Blessed Mother's deep longing for the Savior, her longing for the God-Man before he was born. With good reason, she is called the Queen of the Patriarchs. For this is the characteristic virtue of the patriarchs: an unquenchable longing for the coming of the Redeemer. He was promised to them, and they transmitted all that God had revealed to them. The characteristic virtue of the patriarchs, then, is a great longing for God. And therefore, the Blessed Mother's heart, too, was filled with this great longing. After Christ has assumed human nature, her longing was the same. True, the Redeemer had come, but he also had to be recognized and acknowledged by the people. *Ecce ancilla Domini. (Behold the handmaid of the Lord.)* I am the handmaid of the Lord. She wanted to serve the Redeemer of the world so that he would be seen everywhere as the Redeemer, so that he would be recognized and loved. *Ecce ancilla Domini,*

fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum. (*Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me as you say.*)

(pp.9-13)

YOUCAT: 308 *What is Hope?*

Hope is the power by which we firmly and constantly long for what we were placed on earth to do: to praise God and to serve him; and for our true happiness, which is finding our fulfillment in God; and for our final home: in God. (CCC 1817-1821, 1843)

Hope is trusting in what God has promised us in creation, in the prophets, but especially in Jesus Christ, even though we do not yet see it. God's Holy Spirit is given to us so that we can patiently hope for the Truth.

After reading these passages:

- How would we/I define Hope?
- How is hope shown in our attachment to the Schoenstatt shrine as a place of pilgrimage?
- How would we/I explain the gift of Hope to a friend who does not practice their faith?
- How can we/I live out of Hope after Mary's example?



3. Love

(*J. Kentenich: I Go to the Father, Sermon June 2, 1963 pp. 71-85*)
Gospel for this Sunday was John 14:23-31

Come Holy Spirit! Fill the hearts of your faithful... What does that mean: "fill" (the hearts of your faithful)? It is true; the Holy Spirit is in us! Since we have received baptismal grace, we are all churches of the Holy Spirit. This is what we are: we are dwelling places of the Holy Spirit, we are consecrated to the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is continuously effective within us. Fill us, come with your fullness into our earth-bound hearts; kindle in us the fire of your love. It should be a firebrand which burns everything within us, everything that is earthly, all our enslavements to earthly things. We are not satisfied with a little spark of love. Kindle in us a fire, the firebrand of your love, that is to say, of divine love, of love for God, of love for our fellow men, of love even for our enemies. (...)

We expect that the Holy Spirit will lead us more deeply into the fundamental law of love, that is into the law of love as the fundamental law in the kingdom of God. There are two thoughts we want to mediate on. First of all, what is this fundamental law in the kingdom of God? Secondly, in accordance with which law of growth and action does it unfold?

1. What do we mean when we speak of a fundamental law of a community? We refer to the ultimate norm by which a community makes its decisions, by which the interrelationships are regulated, the norm by which all matters are decided. We thus speak of the principle of a democracy, for instance, or of a monarchy. In a similar way we now speak of the basic principle in the kingdom of God.

By "kingdom of God" we simply mean the whole world; after all, the world is a kingdom which belongs to God. In the narrow sense, we especially refer to communities which have consecrated themselves to God. These may be religious communities in the strict sense of the word or simply Christian parish communities or even Christian families.

2. If these are an essential element of God's kingdom, then they must be

islands of love, not of hatred or envy. Is it really so? As far as religious communities are concerned—if these are a constitutive element of the kingdom of God and not of the devil or the world—should not an atmosphere of love govern them? Or are they being destroyed by envy and jealousy in their souls. What is the Christian family like? Is it really a realm of love?



More precisely, the members of a community which is governed by love as its fundamental law, are naturally convinced that everything God does, is ultimately done out of love, through love, for love. This includes everything: his manner of governing the world, of sending us cross and suffering, of governing the members of our families. The ultimate motivation of God's activity is and remains his love.

Everything out of love! Of course, justice might be involved, too, but even his justice is always motivated by his great love. Everything through love! The stream of love proceeding from God flows through the families and through the individual members. And the goal of God's government, of his guidance and dispensation is a far-reaching union of love with him, the Triune God. Consequently, there shall be only one answer on the part of the individual members of a family: everything they do, should be done out of love, not out of envy, not out of jealousy, not out of hatred; everything should be inspired by love; the motive should always be love.

Everything through love: one single stream of love flows through a Christian family. The ultimate goal is and remains an endlessly deep and affectionate union of love with the eternal, infinite God. This is an exceedingly high ideal, isn't it?

3. If we want to know why the fundamental law of love governs such a community, I think that we have already explained the reason. The reason lies in the essence of God, in the essence of the law giver in this kingdom. God's essence is and will always be his love, the highest degree of love.
(pp. 71-75)

YOUCAT: 309. *What is charity?*

Charity is the power by which we, who have been loved first by God, can give ourselves to God so as to be united with him and can accept our neighbor for God's sake as unconditionally and sincerely as we accept ourselves. (CCC 1822-1829, 1844)

Jesus places love above all laws, without however abolishing the latter. Therefore, St. Augustine rightly says, "Love, and do what you will." This is not at all as easy as it sounds. That is why charity, love, is the greatest virtue, the energy that inspires all the other virtues and fills them with divine life.

- What is the fundamental law of the world?
- Why is the word "charity" and "love" used together?
- How would we/I explain "charity" and "love" as it is explained here to others (especially since love is often seen as using another for my selfish pleasure)?
- Give examples from the lives of modern Saints and our Schoenstatt heroes of how they lived "charity" and "love" as Father Joseph Kentenich is describing it?
- Why should our covenant of love with Mary help us to live out of the fundamental law of the world?



4. The Holy Trinity

(J. Kentenich: *I Go to the Father*, Sermon June 9, 1963 pp. 88-100)
Gospel for this Sunday was Matthew 28:18-20

The Christian religion has a great many mysteries, but the fundamental mystery, the essential fundamental mystery of all mysteries is that of the Most Holy Trinity.

1. It is a fundamental mystery. All other mysteries are nourished by this fundamental mystery and all of them without exception lead up to it. All mysteries of the Christian religion—whatever they may be—center on the mystery of Triune Love and all of these mysteries—I repeat: whatever their names may be—are held together by the Triune God's infinite love for us human beings.

If we want to have a proof, we might think of one or the other mystery. Think, for example, of the mystery of the incarnation, of the mystery of redemption and election, of the mystery of the holy Eucharist—just to mention a few.



Let us examine how we encounter in these mysteries a concrete form of the mystery of the Trinity, for instance, in the mystery of the incarnation. Remember the words of the angel: “The Holy Spirit will come upon you... And so the child will be holy and will be called Son of God... The power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow” (Lk 1: 35-36). This is the Triune God. The mystery of the incarnation is thinkable only in relation to the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity. (...)

It is even more important for us to realize that since the time of the apostles the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity has become part of Catholic thinking, of a Christian view of life. Whether it has also been fruitful is another question, but it has always been a vital part of a Christian way of life. Holy Scripture tells us again and again that Christ gave the blessing wherever he went; he gave the blessing in the Name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. The apostles made Christ's attitude their own. Just read the letters of St. Peter and St. Paul; whenever they blessed a community (of

believers), they always did so in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Ever since that time, Christians have always had a great love for the sign of the cross. (...)
(pp. 90-91)

If we look, for example, into the lives of our grandparents or of men and women who lived by their faith—how often did they make the sign of the cross! It was a protection against all devilish influences, a means to persevere in temptation. By making the sign of the cross, they called on the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit and relied on the blood of Christ. Our fathers, our ancestors and the early Christians thus lived out of their self-surrender to the Triune God.

We know of men and women in Church history who made the thoughts we are discussing here the specific content of their lives. For instance, we know that St. Francis Xavier had a favorite little prayer in all situations: O beatissima Trinitas! O Trinitas beatissima! O Most Holy Trinity! (...)

We ask ourselves: When did Christ profess his faith in the Triune God? In what significant, mysterious hour did it take place? (...)

2. “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” In heaven: He together with the Father sends us the Holy Spirit. He prepares a dwelling place for us in heaven. From heaven he lets us participate in his sonship before the Father through the sacraments. (...)

First of all, it is the authority to teach. Therefore: “Go, therefore, make disciples of all the nations... and teach them...” Now we must imagine the apostles as we know them before the descent of the Holy Spirit: they were swaying reeds. They did not understand Christ; they were weak; they ran away and trembled like aspen leaves when serious battles were to be fought. They still cherished the wrong opinion that Christ had come to establish a kingdom on earth with civic power. This little group, this trembling little group was to go into the world: “Go, therefore, make disciples of all the nations... and teach them...” What were they suppose to teach? They should teach what Christ the Crucified had taught through his cross and that to a world which has no understanding for the cross; the cross which was a scandal for the Jews and foolishness for the Greeks. However, the Holy

Spirit will come upon them and remove all inhibitions. It is St. Paul who forcefully tells us later: The Spirit of Christ dwells within us.

“Go, therefore, make disciples of all the nations; baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit...” Baptize them. Thus it was not only a participation in Christ's teaching authority, in his teaching ministry, but also a participation in his priestly ministry. Baptism is in this context the symbol of all the other sacraments.

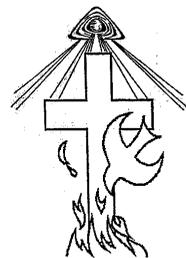
“...Baptize them... and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you...” This is the pastoral authority. They should be the shepherds of their communities. (...)

Does not our time need the Holy Spirit also? How much weakness must be removed in us who are bound up in earthly things, enslaved to material things! Should not our vision become wide so that, through all earthly things, we see another world and surrender ourselves to this world?

The third thought: Our created intellects will never be able to comprehend this central and fundamental mystery. We will never be able to comprehend it; we will not grasp it here on earth with our natural vision nor with our intellects, not even with the lumen fidei (the light of the faith) nor with the lumen visionis (the light of glory). (...) With the light of glory we can see and enjoy God directly, but we will never be able to understand him completely. This fact is a hard and severe truth for it demands that we believe not only the mysteries of Christianity in general, but also this central mystery. Man's pride does not want to accept this. (...)

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. I believe in God, the Father almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth. I believe in his only-begotten Son; I believe in the Holy Spirit.

We, too, believe—as the apostles, above all, St. Paul tells us—that not only Christ, but the Blessed Trinity lives in us (*1 Cor 6:20*).



We also know it from Ignatius the Martyr. He was condemned to be killed by the lion. When asked for his name, he replied: Theophorus—God-bearer. Thereupon it was decided that Theophorus shall be killed by the lions.

This should also be our attitude. We all are little churches of the Blessed Trinity. We all have the Triune God in our hearts. We are ready to give our lives for this faith; we are ready to live and to die for it.

It is told of another martyr that, while being tortured, he did not tire of repeating: I believe, I believe. And when he was no longer able to speak, he dipped his finger in his blood and wrote: Credo, I believe.

(pp. 94-100)

YOUCAT: 27 How did the creeds come about?

The CREEDS go back to Jesus, who commanded his disciples to baptize. In doing so, they were to require of the people seeking Baptism the profession of a definite faith, namely, faith in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (⇒TRINITY). (CCC 188-191)

The original cell from which all later CREEDS grew is the profession of faith in Jesus the Lord and in his missionary mandate. He told his apostles, “Go there for and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Mt 28:19). All the creeds of the Church are elaborations of the faith in this Triune God. Each of them begins with a profession of faith in the *Father*, the Creator and preserver of the world, then refers to the *Son*, through whom the world and we ourselves have found redemption, and concludes with a profession of faith in the Holy Spirit, who is the presence of God in the Church and in the world.

- How would we/I explain “the Trinity” to a friend who is struggling to believe?
- How can we/I open my heart for the presence of the Holy Trinity to continue to grow in me?

5. God' Personal Love

(J. Kentenich: *I Go to the Father*, Sermon June 2, 1963 pp. 71-85)
Gospel for this Sunday was John 14:23-31

What is the essence of God? This question touches a problem which has occupied mankind for centuries. It is the question: What is he like, he who dwells above the stars? What is his specific character? What is he like, he who holds our destiny in his hands? What is his essence? How hard people have tried to find a solution to this question and yet, how helpless they are in facing it. What is the answer? ... We do not know the answer. The essence of this eternal Being governing world history is a complete mystery to us. Who of us has seen him, who has seen his face? Precisely the most intellectual persons and nations have time and again repeated the question: What is God really like? What qualities characterize him?

The following story is told about a statesman of Syracuse (Sicily) who thought about this question. He was unable to come to a conclusion and to find an answer. Therefore, he summoned the wisest man in his kingdom. This man was 90 years old; so he was really an old man. The statesman asked him: what is the ruler of the world like? The wise man, Simonides was his name, shook his head and said: "I do not know. Give me until tomorrow to reflect upon it." The day passed. The statesman of Syracuse expected an answer. The answer was "Give me another day to think about it." That day also passed, and he still had no answer. The wise man asked for two days, for four days, for eight days, for three weeks. Thus it continued. Finally, the ruler lost patience and said: "Do you want to make a fool of me!" "By no means," Simonides answered, "but the more I think about the nature of God, the more helpless I become." (...)

... The Savior came into the world. What did he tell us about his father? At the end of his life, he expressed it specifically in the words: I have been sent to make your name, your 'father' name known to the world (cf. Jn 17: 26). He who is dwelling above the stars, the God who holds the destiny of the world and of mankind in his hands is in truth our father. Therefore, Christ teaches us to pray: "Our Father in heaven..." (Mt 6: 9). Certainly, he is also

a judge; he can also be severe like a father, but the characteristic mark of a father is and remains his love. (...)

Let us go into the school of St. John for a moment to examine how the apostles and evangelists viewed God the Father after the descent of the Holy Spirit. St. John summarizes it in the great statement: "Deus caritas est" (1 Jn 4.8). God is simply love, not justice. Of course, he is also justice, but his essence is and remains love. Deus caritas est. God is simply love. "And anyone who lives in love, lives in God, and God lives in him" (1 Jn 4:16).

What does all this mean to us? Why did God create the world? Why did God call me into existence? The great answer which we received through the Holy Spirit and his inspiration is this: God has created me so that he would have someone he could love. So great is his love that he has created me in order to love me with infinite love; he has created me so that I would learn to love: so that I would learn to love in him, with him and like him. This is the great purpose of my life. Therefore, I may picture the purpose of my existence like this: I have come from Eternal Love and I should return to Eternal Love. I am drawn into an infinite stream of love. And I may pass through all the stages included in this stream of love. I should learn to love; I should mature in my love, mature to perfection. I should know all forms of love, experience them and unfold all degrees of love in my heart, all forms of love, childlike love, motherly or fatherly love, brotherly or sisterly love. The reason for my existence is that I should love. I should pass through all the stages of love, beginning with primitive love until I reach perfectly mature love.



(...) Upon hearing this message about love, we feel like saying: I hear the message, but I lack the faith. We modern people have lost the organ for love. St. Paul gives us the reason or one reason for this. Evidently the reason is timeless. He speaks of the homo animalis et homo spiritualis—the earth-bound man and the man permeated by the Spirit. The earth-bound human being clings to this earth; he fails to understand everything related to matters of the Spirit of God.

The earth-bound human being! Ah, it is a characteristic of our time that we cling to the earth, that we are bound to the earth. We have an organ for

games and sports, for muscular strength, for the exterior beauty of the body, for astronauts and I don't know what. This is all right; this is all wonderful and great. But if we are only earth-orientated, if we cling to this earth alone, if we care for our animal needs alone, for food, for material things, then it is understood that as earth-bound creatures we fail to understand the Spirit of God. We have no organ for the activity of the Holy Spirit within us; and least of all do we have an organ for love, for genuine, true, divine love.

The person permeated by the Spirit, the homo spiritualis, the person in who dwells the Holy Spirit, who adores the Holy Spirit in his soul might also struggle for his existence, he might also struggle and toil to make a living, to make ends meet every day, he might also struggle for a place in the sun, but he understands the workings of God's Spirit. What is the reason that we have no organ for the world of true, genuine love? We are too much earth-bound.

We are simply living in a time which deserves to be characterized as unloving and cold. Some time ago, a book was published with the title: *Der Mensch lebt in einer Zeit der Lieblosigkeit*, (We are living in a time without love.) Holy Scripture would say instead: it is the apocalyptic time in which love has grown cold. We modern people can accomplish all kinds of things, but we neither learn to love nor teach how to love. And if we try to love, it is more like hopping from branch to branch, a big sensual game; it is not a steadfast, serious, creative love. Ah! Where to you still find such a love?

What might be the deeper reasons for this? Ah, there are countless reasons. To quite a large extent, the reason for a limited capacity to love lies also in the fact that our present-day youth establish ... ties much too early. Therefore, they do not learn to respect each other deeply. They love here a little and there a little. Today I have this boyfriend, tomorrow that. They play with the power of love. There are no longer any deep and sound relationships. This is the great, great problem of our modern time. (...)

In this light we understand what kind of grace we pray and beg for today: a deeper understanding of the fundamental law of love in the kingdom of God. We also pray and beg for a deeper understanding of the principle of growth and the principle of action of this kind of love. (...)

The principle of the growth of love. How little understanding we have for it! Come, Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit shall kindle in us the fire of love so that we understand God's ways, especially when he sends us the cross and an abundance of suffering. (...)
(pp. 75-84)

YOUCAT: 1. *For what purpose are we here on earth?*

We are here on earth in order to know and to love God, to do good according to his will, and to go someday to heaven. (CCC 1-3, 358)

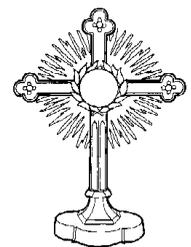
To be a human being means to come from God and to go to God. Our origin goes back farther than our parents. We come from God, in whom all the happiness of heaven and earth is at home, and we are expected in his everlasting, infinite blessedness. Meanwhile we live on this earth. Sometimes we feel that our Creator is near; often we feel nothing at all. So that we might find the way home, God sent us his Son, who freed us from sin, delivers us from all evil, and leads us unerringly into true life. He is "the way, and the truth, and the life" (Jn 14:6).

YOUCAT: 2. *Why did God create us?*

God created us out of free and unselfish love. (CCC 1-3)

When a man loves, his heart overflows. He would like to share his joy with others. He gets this from his Creator. Although God is a mystery, we can still think about him in a human way and say: Out of the "surplus" of his love he created us. He wanted to share his endless joy with us, who are creatures of his love.

- How can we/I help open my heart for the experience of God's personal love for me?
- How can we/I share this truth with others?



6. Faith in Divine Providence

(J. Kentenich: *I Go to the Father*, Sermon May 26, 1963 pp. 55-68)

Gospel for this Sunday was John 15:26 & John 16:1-4

We hear the truth about God the Father and of faith in Divine Providence. ...There is the great doctrine of faith in Divine Providence. The Holy Spirit must impress this truth upon us modern people in a special way. What is faith in Divine Providence? It is a courageous, blindly trusting and loving leap into the arms of God which he opens to us through the circumstances of life and through the events in world history. The living God speaks to us through these events. The living God speaks to us in person, but he also does so through world history, through world affairs.

Faith in Divine Providence is a leap, a courageous leap into the arms of God. It is like saying I must jump from the mountain peak into the ocean. It is God who stands behind all world events, behind all situations; whether I am healthy or sick, whether I experience success or failure, nothing happens by chance. God stands behind it. Faith in Divine Providence gives me the courage to leap into the arms of God who stands behind all things....

We should dare this leap with great confidence Why? Did Christ not tell us that if anyone has faith and confidence, he can say to this mountain: "Get up and throw yourself into the sea and it will happen" (Mk 11:25)? Confidence! Did Christ not tell us before he ascended into heaven: "I am with you always; yes, to the end of time" (Mt 28:20)? Always. Is he not with us? Is he not with us with his Person here in the Eucharist? Does he not invite us to come to him when we are troubled and burdened? Is he not with us in the sacraments, also in the sacrament of reconciliation? It is Christ himself who absolves us. Therefore, the priest says: "I absolve you..." I (the priest), that is, I speak in Christ's stead. We modern men have become so very superficial in this direction....

The person who has faith might be thrown out of his safe circumstances, he might feel as though he were falling out of God's arms into an abyss, but down below the arms of God hold him up safely. This is the religious

person, the new creation. Who can bring this about? Who alone? The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God.

The Holy Spirit wants to impress a second great truth upon us, namely, the great mystery of the covenant of love with the Blessed Mother. Christ himself proclaimed it from the cross as his last testament: "There is your mother, there is your son" (*Jn 19:26*). Scripture tells us that the Holy Spirit will explain everything, he will teach us. Years ago we have made the covenant of love with the Blessed Mother. Look Back! Has she fulfilled her duty as the covenant partner? (...)

We as parents, must we not admit that we have tried very hard to keep our children together, but we did not succeed. Nor will we succeed tomorrow or the day after. However we are convinced that the Blessed Mother has accepted our covenant of love. She has also accepted the duty to take care of our children in the future: she does so even while we see them going astray. Sooner or later, she will prove that she, our covenant partner, is the *Virgo fidelis*, the Faithful Virgin. Time and again, we as parents want to move the Blessed Mother at least through our trust in her to take our children by the hand. This is the kind of witness which the Holy Spirit bears in us to Christ and the Blessed Mother. (...)

How do we bear witness to him? Ask once: how do children bear witness to their parents? By being noble-minded and good, by proving their good education through their actions. Bearing witness to Christ means to lead a Christian life and thereby to prove that Christ is different from the idea the present-day world has of him. Bearing witness to Christ means to love Christ, to be ready to suffer for Christ. It means that each one of us can say: "I live now not with my own life but with the life of Christ who lives in me, who prays in me, who works in me, who suffers in me, (*Gal 2:20*). This is the truth which Christ wants to impress upon us today.



YEAR OF FAITH ²⁰¹²/₂₀₁₃

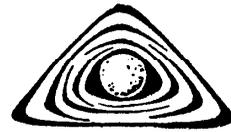
(pp. 61-67)

YOUCAT: 49. Does God guide the world and my life?

Yes, but in a mysterious way; God guides everything along paths that only he knows, leading it to its perfection. At no point in time does something that he has created fall out of his hands. (CCC 302-305)

God influences both the great events of history and also the little events of our personal life, without reducing our freedom or making us mere marionettes in his eternal plans. In God “We live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28). God is in everything we meet in all the changes in our life, even in the painful events and the seemingly meaningless coincidences. God wants to write straight even with the crooked lines of our life. What he takes away from us and what he gives us, the ways in which he strengthens us and the ways which he tests us – all these are arrangements and signs of his will.

- Do we/I believe that God has a loving plan for my life?
- How would we/I explain this to another person who hears this for the first time?
- How does the phrase “God is Father, God is Good, Everything He does is Good” fit with living faith in Divine Providence?
- What can we/I do to grow in our belief in Divine Providence?



7. Importance of Prayer

*(J. Kentenich: I Go to the Father, Sermon May 19, 1963 pp. 39-52)
Gospel for this Sunday was John 16:23-30*

I am not able to pray without faith, without a deep spirit of faith. The reason is inherent in the nature of prayer. What is prayer? It is a loving communication, a loving encounter with the eternal, the living, the infinite God. Is my prayer really an encounter with God?

What is my prayer? If it is an encounter with God, then, of course, my partner in this conversation must be a living person; he must exist, or else it is nothing but an illusion. I must believe in the existence of the person with whom I converse in prayer, to whom my heart flies in prayer, with whom my heart speaks. The living God truly exists, the almighty God exists; after all, in prayer I want to unite my helplessness with his omnipotence. The all-kind, all-merciful God truly exists; after all, he should uplift my miserableness, my weakness. The faithful God exists. These are the truths which faith has to show me. Therefore, if I pray but the flame of faith is not burning, my prayer is nonsense, empty talk; it is a mere repetition, parrot’s talk; it is not true prayer, it is not a dialog.

Can we understand, therefore, how difficult it is for modern man to pray? His faith has cooled off. Let us look into our own hearts. There are so many layers, earthly layers between us and the living God. The world interferes and stands between me and the living God. He is so far away from me. I wonder whether he exists at all. (...) We stand in admiration before the greatness of the human mind. It can accomplish ever so much. However, we may not forget that such events cultivate a strange outlook on life in modern man.

In our grandfather’s time this was totally different. At that time, we were told in the sermons that creation is God’s vestige (fingerprint). God put on the mantle of his glory and this mantle is all of creation. The whole of creation points to God. Unfortunately, modern man views the world and everything in it in a strange way as a vestige (fingerprint) of man, of the human mind. The human mind seems to be the creator, the former, the

molder of the world. To a large extent this is true. Therefore, we relate the modern world much more to man than to the eternal, the infinite, the living God. This is one of the main reasons why it is so hard for modern man to pray, to make contact with the living God. A relationship with the human mind, even worship of the human mind is easy. But to perceive God in the modern world, behind all these great “miracles” which the human mind seems to work is very hard; however, it should not be impossible. (...)

What does it mean to ask the Father for something? Christ is always worried; as it were that the Father might come off second-best. And therefore he always directs us in all situations to the Father. Of course, if I ask the Father for something that is not good for me, (he will not fulfill my request.) A tyrant, a dictator rejoices to give his people something that would harm them just so that he can rule. However, a father who is really a father has a different attitude: if the child begs, for instance, for a poisoned berry, he will refuse it. He does not fulfill the request. He fulfills a different request; he gives the child a true good. To ask correctly also means to ask in the name of Jesus. This means two things: 1. I rely on him, on his precious Blood. 2. I pray with his attitude.

I rely on his precious Blood. If I do that and if the thing I am asking for is somehow for my best, the Father cannot but give it to me. If I rely on the Blood of Christ and on the merits of the Blessed Mother who is always united with Christ, the Father cannot resist my request.

To ask in the name of Jesus also means to pray with Christ’s attitude. And what is his attitude? It is always a complete self-surrender to the Father’s will. It is always the Father who stands in the center, not the little, insignificant ego. “Your will be done on earth as in heaven” (Mt 6:10).

To pray correctly also means to pray with a recollected heart and not with a distracted heart. If I address only a prayer of the lips to God, I am not really praying. Lip service is abhorrent to the Lord. Be recollected! (...)

To pray correctly also meant to pray with a sinless heart. This does not mean that my heart should be completely free of sin – I will never succeed in that -; but in my attitude I must have turned away from sin; for a heart in

the snare of sin cannot expect the heavenly Father to grant its requests. Just think if you submitted an application for some favor to an earthly ruler and you would have the attitude of murdering him, or of having nothing to do with him. (...)

We should also have a heart which is absolutely convinced. What does that mean? I must be convinced that the heavenly Father is able to help me, that he is able to give me even the impossible. (...) Martha said to Jesus: “If you had been here, my brother would not have died” (Jn 11:21). And Christ’s answer was: If you have faith and trust, you will see the glory of God. God will work the miracle of raising him from the dead. The degree of confidence is the degree of fulfillment. (pp. 43-51)

YOUCAT 493: *What are the characteristics of Christian prayer?*

Christian prayer is prayer in the attitude of faith, hope, and charity. It is persevering and resigns itself to the will of God. (CCC 2656-2658, 2662)

Someone who prays as a Christian steps at that moment out of himself and enters into an attitude of trusting faith in the one God and Lord; at the same time he places all his hope in God – that He will hear, understand, accept, and perfect him. St. John Bosco once said, “To know the will of God, three things are required: prayer, waiting, taking counsel.” Finally, Christian prayer is always an expression of love, which comes from Christ’s love and seeks the divine love.

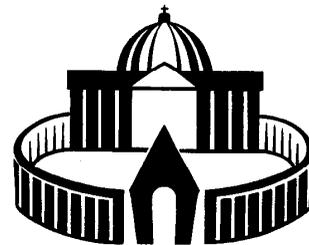
YOUCAT 494: *How can my everyday routine be a school of prayer?*

Everything that happens, every encounter can become the occasion for prayer. For the more deeply we live in union with God the deeper we understand the world around us. (CCC 2659-2660)

Someone who already seeks union with Jesus in the morning can be a blessing for the people he meets, even his opponents and enemies. Over the course of the day he casts all his cares on the Lord. He has more peace within himself and radiates it. He makes his judgments and decisions by asking himself how Jesus would act at that moment.

He overcomes fear by staying close to God. In desperate situations he is not without support. He carries the piece of heaven within him and thereby brings it into the world. He is full of gratitude and joy for the beautiful things, but also endures the difficult things that he encounters. This attentiveness to God is possible even at work.

- How do we/I pray?
- Do we/I keep trying to find time to pray in our/my busy life?
- Do we/I have a sacred place where we/I can prayer that lifts my heart upwards? (*Room shrine, spiritually visit the Schoenstatt shrine, etc.*)
- Do we/I pray everyday?
- Is my prayer united to a real person?
- Do we/I listen in prayer to my beloved?
- Do we/I pray for others?
- How can we/I grow in confidence in my prayer and share this with others?



8. Holy Spirit & Mary: the Great Educators

(*J. Kentenich: I Go to the Father, Sermon May 12, 1963 pp. 23-36*)

Gospel for this Sunday was John 16:5-14

“Where are we going? Homeward to the Father! “...I am going to the one who sent me” (Jn 16:5). “I am going to the Father.” At another occasion, Christ elaborated on his answer a little more: “I came from the Father and have come into the world and now I leave the world to go to the Father” (Jn 16:28). And then he added the very significant words: “I am going now to prepare a place for you...” (Jn 14:2). We are drawn into the destiny of Christ. Like Christ, in Christ and with Christ we, too, came from the Father into this world. And where are we going? In him and with we modern people forget this too easily. We simply cling too much to this world, to earthly things.

What about the road we should take? Christ entrusts us to a great educator, the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit should lead us to the Father; he should lead us to the Father already here on earth, but ultimately to the eternal God and Father in the other world. Therefore, Christ says today very clearly: “...it is for your own good that I am going because unless I go, the Advocate will not come to you...” (Jn 16:7).

It is for your own good! Why is it good that Christ leaves the Apostles? They were attached to him; they were dependent on him. Why, then, is it good that he, their leader, leaves them and goes away? There are several answers. The most important one is this: The objective work of redemption must first be concluded. Christ must die and rise. The resurrection was completed only when he who came from heaven, from the Father, ascended also with his human nature to heaven and was with the eternal God and Father. Once the objective redemption was completed, Christ could send the great educator of God’s children, the Holy Spirit. It is for your own good, then, that I go or else you will not be educated, or else the Holy Spirit, the great educator of God’s children will not come to earth, into your hearts.

It is understood that unless we surrender ourselves to the educative hand of the Holy Spirit, all that Christ did here on earth, is of little value; his suffering, his teachings, all his directives are of helplessly little use. (...)

The Holy Spirit is the greatest, the best educator of God's children. Is it not true that we as parents have the instinctive desire to give our children the best possible education? If we had a choice, if we had enough money and the opportunity, we would surely choose the best, the very best and greatest of all educators for our children in as far as we love them and care for their future! (...) Now Christ tells us that the best educator he has for us is the Holy Spirit. "But when the Spirit of truth comes he will lead you to the complete truth" (Jn 6:13). He will lead you to the truth, not only for the mind and will, but also for the heart.

- The truth about sin: The Holy Spirit will convince the world that Christ is the only begotten Son of the Father to whom we have to be united, to whom we have to submit in faith.
- We should make a greater effort to be alone so that we might hear what the Holy Spirit is telling us. If we do not hear him, we cannot know what he demands of us in concrete situations.

Mary stands completely under the influence of the Holy Spirit. She is our great educator in:

1. Longing for the redeemer. Mary's exceedingly deep longing moved Christ to leave heaven, to come to earth and to give to the world all that the Heavenly Father had commanded.
2. Trusting in trials and times of suffering. Mary stood under the cross. She believed unwaveringly that Christ was the Redeemer of the world. She closed his eyes; she took him in her arms and anointed him. To all appearances he had utterly failed, but she continued trusting in her heart that he had redeemed the world. Her trust was unshakable in all situations.
3. Cooperating in the work of redemption, Mary not only accepted God's grace, but also said a sincere "yes" and cooperated with it. St. Bernard tells us: God simply made it a law that the Blessed Mother should help us, that she as the co-educator has a great mission for the whole world. Do all mothers see their children in

the light of faith as children of God whom they should educate properly for the Father in heaven? Mary does. (pp. 24-35)

YOUCAT 120: What does the Holy Spirit do in my life?

The Holy Spirit makes me receptive to God; he teaches me to pray and helps me to be there for others. (CCC 738-741)

Augustine calls the Holy Spirit "The quiet guest of our soul". Anyone who wants to sense his presence must be quiet. Often the Guest speaks very softly within us and with us, for instance, in the voice of our conscience or through other interior and exterior promptings. Being a "temple of the Holy Spirit" means being there, body and soul, for this Guest, for God in us. Our body is therefore God's living room, so to speak. The more receptive we are to the Holy Spirit in us, the more he becomes the master of our life, the sooner he will bestow on us even today his charisms for the building up of the Church. And so instead of the works of the flesh, the fruits of the spirit grow in us. (290-291, 295-297, 310-311)

- How does the Holy Spirit educate us/me?
- How does Mary help to educate us/me especially from her shrine?
- How can we/I share the "best" educator with others?



9. The Meaning of Suffering

(J. Kentenich: *I Go to the Father*, Sermon May 5, 1963 pp. 9-21)

Gospel for this Sunday was John 16:16-22

What is the law of separation? Holy Scripture tells us: separation means suffering. The suffering of separation is a terrible suffering. Christ himself said: "I tell you most solemnly, you will be weeping and wailing while the world will rejoice; you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn to joy" (Jn 16:20).

What does the law of reunion after the separation mean? Separation from Christ; separation from God means suffering. Well, if it only were that way! When does the law of separation from Christ include suffering for us? We understand the answer: When our hearts are passionately attached to Christ. Our minds might know a lot of things, our lips might be able to utter a great deal about Christ, about God. However, unless our hearts are aglow for Christ, unless our hearts are kindled with the first of love of God, all this means nothing at all. And if this is so, we chatter like parrots and repeat what the saints have said about God and Christ, but these words have no echo in our hearts, with good reason Christ tells us: "...I am going to the Father..." (Jn 14:12). Why does he go to the Father? Christ has to ascend to the Father so that the Father will send the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit will kindle within us the love for Christ. "Unless I go (to the Father), the Advocate will not come to you..." (Jn 16:7). (...)

We look into Mary's life. How much joy must have filled the Blessed Mother's heart when she visited the temple with her Son. She was filled with bliss and joy. Then, on the way home, she suddenly realized: she had lost Christ. Loss of Christ, separation from Christ! We can imagine very well what that meant for her. Separation from Christ is suffering. Reunion with him is unspeakable joy, unspeakable bliss. (...) St. Alphonsus tells us that this separation from Christ was one of the greatest sorrows of Mary's life. In fact, he adds that some saints were of the opinion that this separation was even a greater sorrow for her than the separation at his death. Why? Here, in the streets of Jerusalem, she was separated from him without him; under the cross she had to depart from him in his presence.

And how is it with me? How often do I go to confession, to Holy Communion? What about my prayer life? Do I seek God in all situations of life? Do I suffer under the loss of God?

What was the Blessed Mother's greatest joy and bliss? To find Christ again, to find God again! Can we imagine the bliss she felt when she found Christ and they returned together to Nazareth? What a happy life they lived there! Where did the Blessed Mother find Christ? In the temple! Where may I seek and find Christ? Above all, in the temple! Christ is waiting for us there. "Come to me, all you who labor and are overburdened, and I will give you rest" (Mt 11:28). Christ is waiting for me in the temple and he wants to give himself to me: his flesh and his blood, his divinity and his humanity.

(pp. 16-21)

YOUCAT 66: *Was it part of God's plan for men to suffer and die?* God does not want men to suffer and die. God's original idea for man was paradise; life forever and peace between God and man and their environment, between man and woman. (CCC 374-379, 384, 400)

Often we sense how life ought to be, how we ought to be, but in fact we do not live in peace with ourselves, act out of fear and uncontrolled emotions, and have lost the original harmony that man had with the world and ultimately with God. In Sacred Scripture the experience of this alienation is expressed in the story of the Fall. Because sin crept in, Adam and Eve had to leave paradise, in which they were in harmony with each other and with God. The toil of work, suffering, mortality, and the temptation to sin are signs of this loss of paradise.



- How would we/I define suffering?
- How can joy come from suffering – as Father Kentenich explains it in this passage?
- How can we/I encourage someone in a time of suffering?

