



# Love Your Spouse As Yourself

Father J. Kentenich, *On Monday Evenings*, April 24, 1961

*The following words from Father J. Kentenich, from On Monday Evenings, Vol. 21, shed light on the subject of the graces of mutual forgiveness and help in reaching sanctity together. The questions in between have been added to assist with further discussion.*

What are the four degrees [of love of neighbor]? We summarize now everything which the Savior said about it.

I should love my neighbor as myself (cf. Mk 12:31). As husband, I should love my wife as if I would be in her place. And the wife should love her husband as she loves herself.

Now you must pause here again for a moment and ask: How much do *I* love myself? That is how I must love my partner. You see, we are often not aware of the enormous demands which Christianity puts on us. We say such things like in a dream: You should love your neighbor as yourself; that it is, but we do not know what it means.

Then, again, the second degree: How should we love our neighbor, that is, how should I love my wife, and the wife her husband? I should see in him or her a part of Christ (cf. Mt 25:31-46). I love Christ in him or her. You may never overlook that we are in a certain sense "Christs." Therefore, we must love Christ in our partner. You must reflect on what an immense high degree of love for neighbor that is. Yes, and why do we very rarely find this degree of love for neighbor or of married love? Because we do not possess the spirit of faith. We often see in our partner anything but Christ.

❖ How do I love myself? Is it easy to forgive myself? Can I love my spouse to that extent?

Then the third degree: I must not only love Christ in my partner but must love Christ *in* Christ. I, as part of Christ, must love the part of Christ in the other person. If I ask now: How did Christ love his neighbor? ...

We must listen to it again: I give you a *new* command (cf. Jn 13:34). Yes, to what degree did Christ love us? He sacrificed himself completely, he offered his last drop of blood for us. Applied to myself: If Christ in me loves Christ in the other person, then there must be a unique ardor to sacrifice myself for the other.

May I ask you again (to reflect): Is this not a dizzy height which we face now? You may not say: This is for people of the state of consecrated life, for priests. No, the Savior said this in general; it is for us.

And then the fourth degree of love? To be united in love. That is, not only husband and wife, but also our children should be drawn into this unique circle, the circle of love. Or when we see ourselves now as family among one another and with one another, you see, the whole stream of love must flow through all of us.

This is what we discussed last time. I repeat once more: The light of faith gives light to our mind so that we understand better, yes, singularly, our being and destiny in this light.

- ❖ How do we secure that the love of God, as the source of life and holiness continues to flow among us?
- ❖ Give some concrete examples of common joys and renunciations that nourish mutual love and forgiveness.