

Reflections

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Joseph Engling, a Free and Magnanimous Man

As we know, freedom is understood as the ability to decide for oneself and the ability to fulfill what has been decided.

A youth who knew how to decide for himself. In a 1940 letter, Father Kentenich describes the ability to decide: *“The first element consists in the ability to decide for oneself with a certain independence for or against something or determination, in spite of external pressure or inner difficulties, and in spite of the harassment of feelings, instincts, anxieties or personal oversensitivities and subconscious and negative predispositions.”*

It is especially cruel for youths, as we all know. Father is aware that it is difficult to educate the man of today so that he can decide for himself. Therefore, his great concern that Schoenstatters learn the art of self-decision. On one occasion, he commented: “I am in contact with a great number of persons. I wager that if I would say to some of them: go to the concentration camp and allow yourself to be beheaded, for sure they would go without protesting. But if they themselves have to make the decision, they would never do it.” And he adds: “How few are capable of deciding for themselves, independently.”

An outstanding exception in this was Joseph Engling. He knew how to decide for himself quickly and surely. And when he discovered an imperfection, even if it were the most insignificant, he immediately decided: I will never do this again, no matter what it costs me. And he practiced this consistently until the end of his life.

A youth who fulfilled what he decided. Ability of fulfillment is “the ability to fulfill firmly the decisions taken in spite of difficulties and limitations. In this aspect, we can once again shed light with the distinguished example of Joseph Engling. Father Kentenich had suggested that everyone say a personal night prayer in addition to the community night prayer.

In this way, he wanted to secure the night prayer outside the seminary. And Joseph Engling, as always very receptive, decided to follow this practice immediately.

They all slept together in a large room. In the evening, Joseph knelt in front of his bed and said his personal prayer. Everyone saw him and began to mock him. The next day, both Joseph and the others went to tell Father Kentenich about it.

He told the boys to only mock him, this belongs to it. And he advised Joseph: if you want to be a free and firm personality, you have to prevail. And it was not long before everyone followed Joseph Engling’s example.

A magnanimous youth. Magnanimity is the goodness of the heart which in every moment does everything possible to be useful and helpful with everyone. Father spoke a great deal about that magnanimity, about that generous and helpful love. And he also gave us the example, for example when he says in the Prefounding Document:

“I now place myself completely at your disposal with all that I am and have: my knowledge and ignorance, my ability and inability, but above all, my heart. EVERYDAY SANCTITY also explains to us that “true love is unhappy when it cannot be useful, remedy, console, or lavish on somebody.”

We would have to ask ourselves permanently: How can I serve my brothers and sisters? How can I concretely manifest to them the greatness of my heart? Joseph Engling’s Personal Ideal would have to be the motto for all of us: Omnibus omnia, **to be everything for everybody**. And the ones who must live magnanimity of service in the first place are the leaders: “I have not come to be served but to serve” (MT 20, 28), says the Lord.

Questions for reflection

1. Have we conquered the ability to decide?
2. Are we brave enough to decide for ourselves freely, in difficult situation or against what the others think?
3. And what do we do to educate ourselves and to educate our children in this area?

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