

# Reflections

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## The Ways to the Heart of the Father

Father Kentenich, the founder of the Schoenstatt Movement, points to 4 ways which God uses to help us journey toward his heart.

**1. The normal way.** This consists in man/woman learning to open himself/herself to God the Father by means of a joyful experience with his/her natural father. This was the way for St. Therese. She learned to know God by looking at her father. As a child, when she went to Mass, she did not look toward the altar because she did not understand anything, but she would look at the face of her father. By what she saw on the face of her father, she captured the importance of what was happening on the altar. After his death, each time she prayed the “Our Father,” she directed herself simultaneously to her two fathers in heaven whose faces had never been separate for her. This is the normal or ideal way which we all would have followed had it not been for original sin. Nevertheless, there are few who can follow this way today.

What happens if this normal way is lacking? The Almighty Father who is capable of taking good from bad, can straighten the crooked ways. According to Father Kentenich, God mainly resorts to three other ways to compensate for the deficiencies of the home and thus offer us access to Himself.

**2. The way of the substitute father.** A compensatory way is the experience of someone who becomes, on the human level, a true father. It can be a grandfather, an uncle, a teacher, a priest – someone who substitutes as a father for me. This experience can become the way of access to the paternity of God.

They are able to discover in another person the type of authority they are seeking: a man who is approachable... a man who serves... a man who inspires confidence... a man who motivates... a true father who leads to God.

**3. The way of contrast.** This compensatory way is traveled by those persons who do not block themselves up by the absence of a human father. God sees to it that that emptiness generates an immense hunger for that father which they have not had.

When that type of person discovers that God is that father they had been seeking, they attach themselves to Him with an extraordinary force.

**4. The way of one’s own paternity.** A third way is the experience of one’s own paternity, be it of the flesh or spiritual. Many men, in spite of having lived a sad childhood, have become excellent fathers. It has been their own children, with their simple and childlike surrender, who have awakened and formed in them the heart of a father. They discovered the marvelous mystery of the father-child relationship. The fruit of that joyful experience of their own paternity helped them to understand that God also is that way.

Let us reflect on his/her own history, on his/her own personal experience of paternity. Let us review our own way toward the vital discovery of the love of the Father God.

## A great challenge

I think we are all aware of the unique importance of being the father of a family. The happiness of our children and our own happiness depends on this. If we think about the ideal way of St. Therese, the challenge is really great. Not only must we be loving fathers to our children, but we must also make God the Father and the Blessed Virgin present to them. Our children should recognize them in us, love them in us and through us they should reach them spontaneously. We should be able to say like Christ: Whoever sees me, sees God the Father. Whoever sees me, sees the Mother of God.

It is a challenge to aspire to the highest sanctity. “Be perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect.” Be perfect as your heavenly Mother is perfect.

## Questions for reflection

1. What was my experience with my father?
2. What image do my children see in me?
3. How could I improve my paternal image?

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