

Kathy: Meetings with Her Director

First Meeting: Kathy comes and shares with her director, Father Mark, her experience as narrated in the handout, how as she prayed several days ago, Luke 4:18 spoke deeply to her heart, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor,” and how the thought of sharing more directly in Jesus’s own mission of service to the poor through teaching in the inner-city school had arisen in her heart with great joy and a sense of God’s closeness and love for her. Kathy tells Father Mark that this thought has remained with her and that it continues to awaken in her a sense of joy and being loved by the Lord. Kathy tells him that she wonders whether this joy may not be a sign that the Lord is asking her to take this new step, a step will meet a real need in the inner-city school and may lead her closer to Jesus as her life grows in imitation of his own.

Father Mark does not see clearly at this point whether Kathy’s attraction to an inner-city school is of God or not. He is aware that Kathy may well be a person in the second spiritual situation, generous and dedicated, and that therefore the enemy may attempt to deceive her as an angel of light, bringing consolation with preceding cause and good and holy thoughts. As he listens, Father Mark is aware that Kathy has described an experience of consolation with preceding cause—the joy of God’s closeness arose when she prayed with Luke 4:18 and thought about Jesus’ love and service to the poor. He realizes, therefore, that Kathy is not yet ready to discern whether her joyful experience in prayer is of the good spirit, truly a call from God to teach in the inner-city school, or whether the enemy may be attempting to deceive Kathy as an angel of light. Father Mark listens warmly, and invites Kathy to continue to be attentive in her review of her daily prayer and in her daily examen, to any further experiences in this regard. His listening and invitation to continue to be attentive to her spiritual experience reassure Kathy, and she leaves the conversation in peace.

Second Meeting: A month later, Kathy returns. She mentions some significant experiences in teaching of the past weeks and shares her spiritual experience during this time. In the course of the conversation, Kathy again refers to the thought of the inner-city school. This thought continues to awaken joy in her heart and a sense of closeness with the Lord. The thought of serving in the inner-city and so sharing more directly in the poverty of Jesus and Jesus’s love for the poor, continues to draw her and give her joy. Kathy tells Father Mark that she has no greater clarity than in the preceding meeting about this, but that she has found herself thinking that, if in fact God does want this of her, it might be best that she seek a largely Hispanic school because she has some knowledge of Spanish. Father Mark listens attentively, notes that the thought of the inner-city school has taken on a new specification with regard to a school with a number of Hispanic students, and still has no clarity about whether or not this thought is of God. He encourages Kathy to continue to be attentive to what stirs in her heart and thoughts as she reviews her prayer and makes her examen.

Third Meeting: Kathy shares her spiritual experience of the preceding weeks, a time of occasional struggles but above all of joy in her teaching and at home, and consolation in prayer. She tells Father Mark that the thought of the inner-city school continues to arise from time to time, and remains a source of joy and closeness with the Lord. Kathy tells him that she is not fully sure about seeking, in that event, a specifically Hispanic inner-city school, but that if she were to ask for this, perhaps the best school would be the one where she taught briefly during

graduate school. She got along well with the staff and students there, and she knows that the principal will need a new teacher there in the next year. Father Mark continues to listen attentively, notes the further development of the thoughts, and continues to invite Kathy to pray and be attentive to her experience in prayer and throughout the day.

Fourth Meeting: Kathy tells Father Mark of a recently concluded review of the buildings of her present high school and its conclusion that significant alterations were needed for the future needs of the school. A new capital campaign would be needed, and in some way the teachers would need to be involved. They would also have to teach in a reduced space during the two years of building that would follow the campaign. Kathy tells Father Mark that her heart sank a little at first when she realized the time and energy all of this would require, but that she was certainly willing to do what was necessary. Kathy mentions how the thought crossed her mind that it would be easier to undertake an effort like this if it were for the poor in an inner-city school, where the need of the people is so great, rather than in a well-to-do suburban school. In general, her teaching has continued to go well and prayer has been warmed with God's love. Father Mark continues to encourage Kathy to pray and be attentive.

Fifth Meeting: When she meets with Father Mark, Kathy mentions a difficult conversation with the parents of one of the school children. She tells him that sometimes these days she finds it a little harder to be patient with such parents when she considers that they have so much—so much more than the real poor—and yet can complain about the school. Nonetheless, overall the past month has been a time of grace both in teaching and in prayer. Kathy mentions that if she were to teach in the largely Hispanic inner-city school, it would require her to improve her Spanish, something she has always wanted to do so as to work with the Hispanics in her parish and also, on a more personal and spiritual note, because it would allow her to read the great Spanish spiritual masters—St. John of the Cross, St. Theresa of Avila, and others—in the original, as she has long wished to do so as to benefit even more from them.