

Believing in God is not, as some people think, an easy option for people with weak minds. I would find it much easier to live if I didn't have this terrible need to make sense of my experience.

Some people I meet seem to suppress the need for life to make sense. They don't do that because they think living senseless lives is a better way. They do it because they can't bear the strain of trying to understand, and they have a genuine fear that if they tested the system, and set out to find genuine meaning in it, they would make the awful discovery that when the chips are down life simply *doesn't* make sense, that there is *no* meaning, that it is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.

So better not to ask. Better to accept the little meanings, people think. Get up, shave, shower, shine your shoes; get the clothes washed, the breakfast eaten, earn some money, get the shopping done, keep out of the rain, cultivate the garden a bit, pay the bills, feed the troops, keep the family out of debt or jail or hospital, accept a bit of fun, meet up with a friend or two, at the worst collapse in front of the telly, and fall safely back to sleep. If you can do all that without offending the neighbours or kicking the dog, you've done all that could be expected. I think this state of mind is a genuine worldly contamination. We have a God-given drive to find meaning that will suffice for our whole universe. We should not make ourselves content with a nice cup of tea and a Kit-Kat.

How much harder it is to believe that everything that happens can be reconciled with the will of a just and loving God! How much harder to think that even those little things that make up my life need to be harmonised with the single mind that founds the whole story! And when the great and dramatic picture suddenly breaks through the fog, and we get a glimpse of the awesome theatre in which the story of the world is played out, suddenly the struggle to find meaning takes on its true proportions. I think of the wedding in which I took part yesterday. It was, for the bride and groom, doubtless a tremendous and dramatic happening, a day of great symbolic import for their lives: a threshold, if you will, whose crossing will mark a vital naming of names, a choosing, a consent; and the meaning of this deed will only grow as time unfolds, and as its influence deepens. So often the job of a priest is to try to open people's eyes to the realm of meaning, of understanding. We won't let things remain little and unconnected; we won't let people's lives be ignored and submerged and separated from each other. We are always calling people to reach out to one another, to hatch out of the egg of single life into a world of relationship and closeness. We are holding up the little lives of one person - the saint of the day, the poor of the earth, the sick in a geriatric ward, the departed or the bereaved, the newly-baptised baby - and saying: *Look: here is part of our meaning, here is something we must know and love!* When we pick up the bread and the cup, we are holding what everybody in the congregation holds in his or her hands three times every day, and saying *This is the bread of life, broken in remembrance, in awareness, of Christ: it is full of your meaning! This is the cup of salvation, the shed blood of the everlasting covenant with God: drink it in memory of Christ!*

Our faith is that God does not leave us incomplete and wandering, but guides us in all ways into the meaning which comes down from above. Let us never, even for a while, be content with trying to make sense without God. When we are deliriously happy, we may pretend that life is its own reward, and that it makes enough sense by itself to bring its own peace. When we suffer, when we lose, when we fail or stumble, when our weakness brings sorrow to others, when we learn about sin, it isn't enough to say *That's Life*, and try to find something else to balance our affliction. We shall know we have made progress when we find in the dread things of humanity - the broken body and the broken heart - a true showing of the mystery of love; and this is the lesson taught us by our Master...we have one Teacher, the Christ...and his textbook is the Cross, and if we learn nothing else from our lives, we must hope to learn how the key to every part of it is written in that book. If we can find the way to accept this, and share it with others, then we shall have done something eternally valid, which will make us shine like bright stars in the Kingdom of the Father.