

# Volunteers: Nehemiah 11:1-2

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Sunday, Date  
Covenant Church  
Pastor Zack Phillips

## Nehemiah 11:1-2

**1 Now the leaders of the people lived in Jerusalem; and the rest of the people cast lots to bring one out of ten to live in the holy city Jerusalem, while nine-tenths remained in the other towns. 2 And the people blessed all those who willingly offered to live in Jerusalem.**

### A. Henri Perrin

As you know very well, our Christianity isn't just precepts and ceremonies; it's God's passion for this bloody world and the whole of squabbling mankind; it's the work of Christ to take the love of all these poor men in charge, and it's a love that neither you nor I can judge, because God alone can read a human heart and see, perhaps, the greatest love when we see only defects and weaknesses. So let's leave the adding-up to God. His scales aren't the same as ours. All that's asked of us is to love mankind with passion, and show it that Christ's love burns.<sup>1</sup>

Whoever they are, they have their own personal gestures at times: a glance, a movement, an attitude, a smile, a way of leaning over the machine, of feeling the tool edge, of taking a piece of bread, of telling me about their kids – those little refinements that come near to being a prayer. They have no idea how much I love them; and when I leave them in the chill of dawn, my head throbbing and my fingers trembling with the fatigue of the night, and lift up the Host at Mass, they don't know how heavily my hands are weighted with their whole life, with all their suffering of the night, which I long to charge with love as one charges an electric battery.<sup>2</sup>

### B. Engelmar Unzeitig

It was a very peculiar relationship, almost a mystery, how father Englemar's deeply spiritual, priestly conduct influenced this person, who up until then had been far from the Church. It will probably always remain a secret what the two finally talked about and how deeply Father U influenced the future of this man.<sup>3</sup>

Love doubles one's strength, makes one inventive, renders one interiorly free and happy. It is really not entered into the heart of any man what God has prepared for those who love Him. Of course, they too are buffeted by the rough reality of this world with all its haste and chase and tumultuous wishes and demands, with its dissension and hate like a biting frost, but the rays of the warming sun of the love of the all-good Father are stronger and will triumph, the Good is undying and victory must remain with God, even if it sometimes seems useless for us to spread love in the world. Nevertheless, one sees again and again that the human heart is attuned to love, and it cannot withstand its power in the long run, if it is truly based on God

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<sup>1</sup> *Priest and Worker: The Autobiography of Henri Perrin*; trans. Bernard Wall (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1964): 76.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>3</sup> Adalbert L. Balling and Reinhard Abeln, *Martyr of Brotherly Love: Father Engelmar Unzeitig and the Priests' Barracks at Dachau*; trans. Vergil Heier (New York: Crossroad, 1992): 62.

and not on creatures. We want to continue to do and offer everything so that love and peace may soon reign again.<sup>4</sup>

### **C. Reflections**

Do you know what idea I'm keenest on now? It's that we still have a lot of work to do together, helping one another, in order to develop something resembling a Christian mentality. This, and acquiring a Christian temperament, will take years and years of work. And it will need heroism...<sup>5</sup>

### **Reading Recommendations**

Adalbert L. Balling and Reinhard Abeln, *Martyr of Brotherly Love: Father Engelmar Unzeitig and the Priests' Barracks at Dachau*; trans. Vergil Heier (New York: Crossroad, 1992).

*Priest and Worker: The Autobiography of Henri Perrin*; trans. Bernard Wall (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1964).

**Question: What is one thing that God may have said to you through this sermon?**

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 92.

<sup>5</sup> *Priest and Worker*, 17.