



# Faith in 52

A yearlong parish retreat based on the work *I Believe in Love*  
by Father Jean C. J. d'Elbee

*Week 1: November 5th through November 11th, 2012*

## For Individuals

(pages 3-11 of the book *I Believe in Love*, stopping at the ☞ symbol)

### **STEP 1: OPENING PRAYER**

1. Speaking to the Holy Spirit, say: *“O Holy Spirit, soul of my soul, I adore You. Enlighten, guide, strengthen, and console me. Tell me what I ought to do and command me to do it. I promise to be submissive in everything that You ask of me, and to accept all that You permit to happen to me. Only show me what is Your will”* (Cardinal Mercier).

### **STEP 2: PRAYERFUL READING**

1. Prayerfully read **ONLY** the weekly assigned pages of *I Believe in Love*.
2. While reading, pay careful attention to the phrases, ideas, or images that might bring about comfort or even those that are challenging. Rest on these a while and speak with the Lord about them, receive His graces, and ponder what has been laid out before you.

### **STEP 3: MEDITATION**

1. Keeping your imagination quiet, figuratively or literally shutting your eyes to all the things of sense, and closing your ears to all the sounds of earth, so as to be able to withdraw into the sanctuary of your baptized soul, which is the temple of the Holy Spirit, do the following:
  - Meditate on the love of Jesus in His Gospel, on the love of Jesus in His own life: Bethlehem, Nazareth, Gethsemane, Calvary, the Eucharist, etc.
  - Rest a while and imagine your head laying against the chest of Jesus at the Last Supper, listening to His beating Heart. Remember the words of St. John: “God is love.” Repeatedly say to the Lord: “*You are love.*” Now say, “*You are my love.*” Are these words hard or easy for you to say and to mean? Speak to Jesus heart-to-heart about it.
  - Meditate on the love of Jesus in your own life. If it helps, think of how Jesus has loved you in the various periods of your life, such as birth, childhood, adolescence, adulthood, vocational state of life, etc. Where has and where is Jesus loving you? Is it hard or easy to accept His love?
2. Finish by saying the *Our Father* prayer once.

### **STEP 4: REREAD**

1. If possible, repeat these steps or reread these pages throughout the week but do not read any further. This is not a book study but prayer; trust that He will speak to you in these pages.

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## Caritatis Splendor

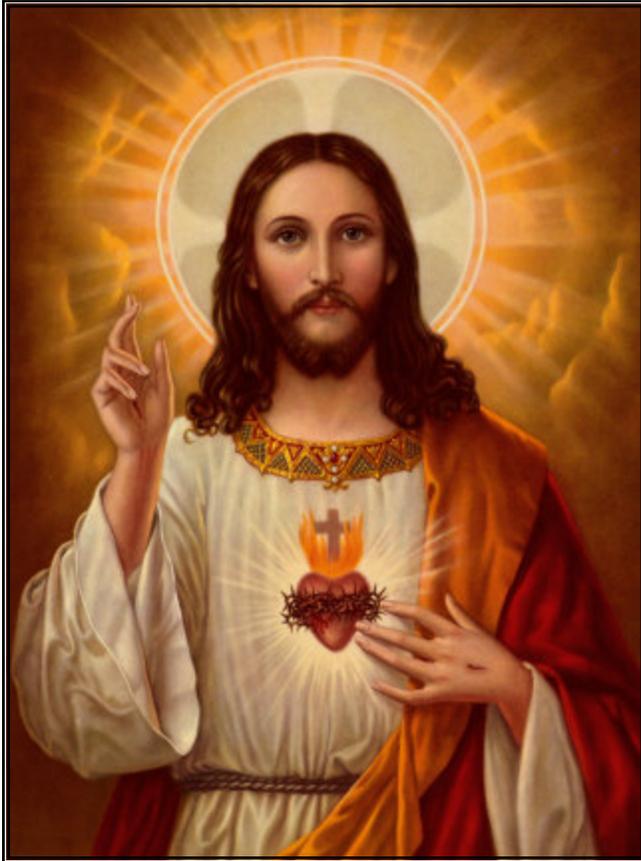


Image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus

While specific devotion to the pierced Heart of Jesus has been an undercurrent of the Christian Faith for a millennium, if not longer, it was not until St. John Eudes that the devotion became public, enshrined in the composition of a liturgical Office and possessing a Feast Day in 1670. Certainly greater still in affecting widespread devotion to the Sacred Heart were the mystical experiences of St. Margaret Mary Alacoque from 1673 through 1675, in which Jesus disclosed His infinite love for humanity and His desire to diffuse such knowledge through depictions of His most loving Heart.

Usually in these artistic depictions the Sacred Heart

is ablaze with lustrous fire, visibly pierced and bleeding from the penetration of St. Longinus' lance, surrounded by a crown of thorns and surmounted by a cross. The wound and relics of the Passion of the Christ are lasting reminders of the Lord's infinite act of redeeming love and the price of such love, a transformative love that is alluded to by the radiant fire.

The Feast of the Sacred Heart is celebrated 19 days after Pentecost, and, because Pentecost always falls on a Sunday, the Feast of the Sacred Heart always occurs on a Friday.

*"But if they do not love me  
after I give them the gift of my Heart,  
when will they love me?"*

"I have given them everything. I have given them my sweat and fatigue on the roads of Palestine; I have given them all my Blood on Calvary; I have given them the gift of my beloved Mother; I have given myself in the Eucharist. What more can I do that they may believe in my love? I know: I shall give them my Heart; I shall give them the source of all these follies of my love. But if they do not love me after I give them the gift of my Heart, when will they love me?" (p. 10-11).



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## For Group Sharing

(pages 3-11 of the book *I Believe in Love*, stopping at the ☞ symbol)

### **STEP 1: OPENING PRAYER**

1. Gathering with your spouse, family, or a group of friends at a time of your choosing, though preferably on the following Sunday, make the Sign of the Cross and then say together to the Holy Spirit: *“Come Holy Spirit, come by means of the powerful intercession of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, your well-beloved Spouse.”*

### **STEP 2: PUBLIC READING (10 minutes)**

1. Depute or invite a competent reader among the group to read aloud the weekly assigned pages of *I Believe in Love*. All should be encouraged to listen attentively; any distractions, i.e., cell phones, televisions, etc., should be turned off or removed during this time.

### **STEP 3: PRAYERFUL DISCUSSION**

1. After the public reading, someone should facilitate the public discussion. This facilitator should read aloud the questions below. Considering the constraints of time or the particular audience, not every question need be asked nor discussed. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you when in doubt.
2. Everyone may speak but should not speak over others, should not dominate the conversation, and should not ridicule others. All should try to be like Christ who is “gentle and humble of heart.” Moreover, all should be asked to keep confidential the contents of the discussion. No one should reveal more than what they feel comfortable sharing or be forced to speak.

- Pope Paul VI said that “only your personal and profound union with Christ will assure the fruitfulness of your apostolate, whatever it may be” (p. 3). Usually we think skills and talents yield success, not a relationship. How does a “personal and profound union with Christ” help us fulfill our apostolate? Why is it essential? How might such an intimate friendship transform your own particular apostolate?
- Why did God create the world and us? Was it out of necessity, or justice or something else (p. 4)?
- Do you believe that “God is love” (1 Jn 4:8), (p. 4)? Why do you believe this or struggle with this notion? Can you share any examples that explain your response?

(Continued on page 4)

#### **What is the Apostolate?**

The word apostolate refers to “the work of an apostle, not only of the first followers of Christ but of all the faithful who carry on the original mission entrusted by the Savior to the twelve to ‘make disciples of all nations’ (Mt. 28:19).

The apostolate belongs essentially to the order of grace. Its purpose is not temporal welfare, however noble, but to bring people to the knowledge and love of Christ and, through obedience to his teaching, help them attain life everlasting” (Fr. John Hardon, *Modern Catholic Dictionary*, ©Eternal Life).

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## For Group Sharing

(Continued from page 3)

- What are the two “rights” Jesus purchased on Calvary (p. 6)?
- St. Therese said, “In the evening of this life I shall appear before You with empty hands.” “It is just this – to find myself at my death with empty hands – that gives me joy, for, having nothing, I shall receive everything from God” (p. 7-8). Usually we think it is “better to give than to receive.” Is that the case when approaching the Lord? What does she mean by this?
- Why did Jesus give us the Eucharist (p. 9)?
- Speaking truly and humbly, do you see elements of Jansenism in your own life, attitudes, and beliefs (p. 10)? Is God a Savior who is loving, or one who is mean and exacting? Do you generally judge yourself as “bad” or “good,” “unlovable” or “loveable”? Why is it hard to believe that God is greater than our faults, that His mercy is greater than our sins?
- What is your favorite artistic image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus or of Jesus Himself? Why does it speak to you?

### **STEP 4: RESOLUTIONS & VIRTUES**

1. The facilitator encourages everyone in the group throughout this next week to say to themselves, frequently, even aloud, and with as much faith and devotion as they can muster: “*My sins on Him, His Blood on me.*”

### **STEP 5: CLOSING PRAYER**

1. When finished with the discussion, the entire group should conclude with a Marian prayer, preferably the *Salve Regina* or *Hail, Holy Queen*.

**H**ail, holy Queen, Mother of mercy, our life, our sweetness and our hope. To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve: to thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears. Turn then, most gracious Advocate, thine eyes of mercy toward us, and after this our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus, O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary! Amen.

### **What is Jansenism?**

**T**he heresy of Jansenism falsely believes that there is no free will, that human beings are incapable of good, and that salvation is limited to a select few, an idea otherwise known as predestination.

Because it deprives all humanity of God’s mercy, it breeds an intense harshness and rigorism. God becomes vengeful, demanding, and without love.

Our unworthiness and sinfulness are not obstacles but the very things that attract the arms of a loving and forgiving God; the Jansenist, in contrast and quite mistakenly, emphasizes our fallen state at the expense of Divine Mercy.

### **Next Eucharistic “Hour of Power” in English**

- Saturday, Dec. 1st, 7-8 p.m., St. Peter Church

### **Next Parish Dessert Potluck\***

Hosted by TBD

- Saturday, Dec. 1st, 8-9 p.m., McMahon Hall

*\*All attending are asked to bring a dessert or an appetizer to share that would feed at least 15 other people.*