



# Faith in 52

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

*Week 2: November 12th through November 18th, 2012*

## For Individuals

(pages 11-13 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:
  - Jesus, speaking about his disciples, says, “Father, they are your gift to me. I wish that where I am they also may be with me” (Jn. 17:24). Meditate on this passage and hear Jesus saying these words to you: “You are a gift to me.” What is it like to know that you bring joy and delight to the Lord? What is it like to know that the Lord has chosen you? Make an act of the will to believe this truth.
  - Not being “chosen” can cause terrible pain. Where in your life, even today, have you have felt excluded, unwanted, or humiliated? Tell Jesus directly about each of these moments and meditate upon Isaiah 43:1-5: “Thus says the Lord, who created you, O Jacob, and formed you, O Israel: Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name: you are mine ... Because you are precious in my eyes and glorious, and because I love you ... Fear not, for I am with you ...” Thank Jesus for choosing you; for never abandoning you; for being with you even when it seemed like you were alone.
  - Remember when you last went to the sacrament of Reconciliation. After being pardoned, how did you feel? Were you relieved and at peace or did you feel miserable upon leaving? If at peace, what was the experience like? Thank Jesus for His mercy. If miserable, what was the cause of the sor-

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row? Doubt in the sacrament? A lack of faith in His mercy? Unwillingness to let go of self-judgment? If so afflicted, pray the following prayer: *"Jesus, the memories of my past sins continue to afflict me, sins I have validly confessed and even sins that I did not withhold from confession but that arise at this present moment; seal me in Your Precious Blood and by Your expiatory sacrifice I ask for the grace to believe and I do believe that they have been irrevocably forgiven and are gone forever. Amen."*

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.

## Don't Look Back

When our Lord rescued Lot and his wife and daughters from the cursed fate of Sodom and Gomorrah, he warned them: "Flee for your life! Do not look back or stop anywhere on the Plain" (Gen. 19:17). Despite the vivid warning, Lot's wife did turn back and was immediately "turned into a pillar of salt" (Gen. 19:26). It was a warning not just for Lot and his company but for all ages: Do not return to past sin. Sadly, so often this eternal admonition is ignored.

Not only do we sometimes commit old sins anew but we actually dwell on them in a most unbecoming manner. I speak of sins that have actually been forgiven, that have been revealed in a valid confession. We let these previously confessed sins sabotage His mercy; we cling to them as if they were still unforgiven. In so doing, the Devil entangles us in a net of false humility and slowly begins to drown us in regret despite the truth that through Reconciliation the

Lord has "cast into the depths of the sea all our sins" (Mic. 7:19).

The anecdote is often told of St. Margaret Mary Alacoque and her incredulous confessor. Desiring indisputable proof for the apparitions of Jesus appearing to St. Margaret, the confessor asked her to request information only Jesus would know: What were the sins he last confessed in the sacrament of Reconciliation.



Sometime later the confessor revisited the issue and asked Margaret if she had done as he had asked. She had and, when she asked Jesus the names of the particular sins the priest had last confessed in the sacrament of Reconciliation, Jesus replied: "I forget."

What a loving Savior that He gives us the sacrament of Penance, the assurance that our sins really are forgiven, and the grace to let go of the past. Don't look back; look forward towards God!

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## For Group Sharing

(pages 11-13 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.
- Sometimes “cradle Catholics” envy adult converts because of their greater experiences of felt conversion; sometimes adult converts envy “cradle Catholics” because they always had the Faith. Share with each other how the Lord has personally and specifically chosen you to be among His Christian family (p. 11-12). What events and persons throughout the course of your life thus far—both obvious blessings and even those things that did not seem good at the time—have prepared you for a life of faith? If there are no “cradle Catholics” or adult converts in the discussion group, invite those who are present to relate, if possible, the stories of such conversions on behalf of whatever constituency is not represented.
  - “You could say that you were in some way a need of His Heart” (p. 12). Share with each other some occasions in which you have felt wanted, accepted, or desired? What

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#### **Saintly Wisdom**

**S**t. John of the Cross said that “the tenderness and truth of love by which the immense Father favors and exalts this humble and loving soul reaches such a degree - O wonderful thing, worthy of all our awe and admiration! - that the Father Himself becomes subject to her for her exaltation, as though He were her servant and she His god. So profound is the humility and sweetness of God!” In other words, **God loves man as if man were God’s god.**

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## For Group Sharing

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were those experiences like? What do you think it means that you are a “need of His Heart?”

- G.K. Chesterton once said that “it is not familiarity but comparison that breeds contempt.” Yet we constantly compare ourselves to others. Why do we do this? How does knowing that God loves all of His children, even those who have lost their way, work against making judgmental comparisons? How does knowing God’s individual love for us, that God has chosen each of us, help alleviate the sin of envy?
- What are the dangers of dwelling on past sins? For what reasons alone should we think of our past sins (p. 13)? Without revealing any sins confessed, share with each other a positive experience of the sacrament of Reconciliation.

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

1. The facilitator encourages everyone in the group throughout this next week to begin any period of prayer first remembering, acknowledging, and believing that God has chosen them, that He delights in them.

### **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.

### **Predestination**

**C**atholics believe in predestination but it is a very different notion than other, popular views. John Calvin, the founder of Presbyterianism, and the Jansenists believed that only those chosen by God were saved and that He willed all others to eternal damnation. The ancient heretic Pelagius believed the opposite: he believed that anyone could be saved through his own free will, unaided by grace. For Calvinists, everything is grace and free will makes no difference. For Pelagians, free will is everything and grace is unnecessary.

Catholics, on the other hand, embrace the truth in between: God is the source of all salvation, i.e., every grace, act of faith, and even good works originate with Him, but within that plan He also includes “each person’s free response to His grace” (CCC, ¶1600). Though He “wills everyone to be saved” (1 Tim. 2:4), men can reject salvation or cooperate with His grace. The interaction of grace and free will may be a profound mystery, but the Lord’s desire for each and every one of His children is not.

### **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.