



# Faith in 52

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

*Week 5: December 3rd through December 9th, 2012*

## For Individuals

(pages 25-33 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:
  - “The good God would not inspire unattainable desires; I can, then, in spite of my littleness, aspire to sanctity. For me to become greater is impossible...’ (but) what I cannot do myself Jesus will do” (p. 27-29). Meditate on the passage from St. Therese. Do you desire the Lord? Do you at least desire to desire the Lord? Lay down all perfectionism and confide in Him who is perfection and is your perfection. Meditate on the Lord’s all-consuming love, His infinite love for you, and in the light of such burning affection confront your sinfulness; trust that Jesus will take you and lift you up to the summit of the mountain of perfection, to the summit of the mountain of love (p. 28).
  - Were Zacchaeus tall and respected he may never have sought the Lord, but it was his very shortness of stature that inspired him to seek out Jesus and that carried him to the top of a sycamore tree. It was his littleness and imperfections that led him to



*The Conversion of Zacchaeus* by Bernardo Strozzi

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seek a Savior. Prayerfully read the story of Zacchaeus in Luke 19:1-10. Imagine yourself unable to see over the crowds yet zealous to glimpse the Christ; imagine climbing the sycamore tree and imagine what Jesus looks like. Then hear Him say to you: "**N**, come down quickly, for today I must stay at your house." Now invite Jesus into your soul; it is not your perfection that draws Him but rather "it is misery which attracts mercy" (p. 29). He desires to be your Savior: To do what you yourself cannot do. Pray: "*Lord, your gifts have inflated my ego as if they were the fruits of my labors and mine alone; help me become diminished and small like Zacchaeus. I desire to climb the tree of sanctity, and even more to delight when, because of my limitations, I must actively search You out, for only in that humility will You come into my home.*"

- Is Jesus more of a Savior or a Judge for you? "This word, *mercy – misericordia – 'miseris cor dare,'* a Heart which gives itself to the miserable, a Heart which nourishes itself on miseries by consuming them" (p. 29); meditate upon the word "mercy" and its reality.
  - When you examine your conscience for your sins, do you think beforehand, during, and afterwards about the all merciful Heart of Jesus? Try it. Do you believe that He is so loving that your "multitude of offenses would be like a drop of water thrown into a flaming furnace?" (p. 30).
  - Mustering as much confidence as possible, say "*I believe, Jesus, that Your merciful love is without limits; that Your mercy is infinite.*"
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.

## Divine Mercy Chaplet

**O**ur Lord proclaimed: "I desire to grant unimaginable graces to those souls who trust in My mercy... Through the Chaplet you will obtain everything, if what you ask for is compatible with My will" (*Diary of St. Maria Faustina*, ¶1731).



**Opening Prayer:** You expired, Jesus, but the source of life gushed forth for souls, and the ocean of mercy opened up for the whole world. O Fount of Life, unfathomable Divine Mercy, envelop the whole world and empty Yourself out upon us. O Blood and Water, which gushed forth from the Heart of Jesus as a fountain of Mercy for us, I trust in You!

**Using a rosary, begin by saying the *Our Father*, the *Hail Mary*, and the *Apostle's Creed*. Then on the large bead before each decade pray:**

**V.** Eternal Father, I offer you the Body and Blood, the Soul and Divinity of Your Dearly Beloved Son, Our Lord, Jesus Christ,

**R.** In atonement for our sins and those of the whole world.

**On the ten small beads of each decade say:**

**V.** For the sake of His sorrowful Passion,  
**R.** Have mercy on us and on the whole world.

**Conclude by saying three times:**

**Closing Prayer:** Holy God, Holy Mighty One, Holy Immortal One, have mercy on us and on the whole world.

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## For Group Sharing

(pages 25-33 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**

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.
- How do you give Jesus "love for love"? Why is confidence the answer? In what must we be confident? "Confidence will be for you the golden key to His Heart" (p. 26).
  - "I, too, would like to find an elevator to lift me up to Jesus, for I am too little to climb the rough stairway of perfection" (p. 27).

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### **Saintly Wisdom**

**O**f greatest importance for sanctity or for prayer, is to desire to achieve this goal even though we deny it obstinately by our behavior. To clarify this concept, I will use the example of taking a walk. Let us say I propose to you a journey of five thousand miles, and you cannot walk further than one hundred and fifty feet. It is clear that your walk of only one hundred fifty feet means anything only if you really wish to walk the entire distance. It may not make much sense to people like us who deal with reality, but in the realm of the spiritual, matters are different.

It is important always to have the desire to pray even though we may not accomplish this perfectly. You will be judged on the basis of your desires. He who has done well, but has not wished for the impossible will be in a delicate position. You will be judged ultimately by your desire for the impossible. If you do not wish for the impossible, you do not desire God because God is the impossible. It is written in the Gospels "that which is impossible for man is possible for God" (St. Catherine of Siena, *The Dialogue*).

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## For Group Sharing

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What “elevator” did St. Therese find? What disposes her to this “elevator?” At Christmas time we are accustomed to holding the infant Jesus in our arms; what is it like to be held in His arms?

- What does the author mean when he says: “I am not telling you, ‘You believe too much in your own wretchedness.’ We are much more wretched than we ever realize. But I am telling you, ‘You do not believe enough in merciful love’” (p. 29).
- They say that grace is receiving what we don’t deserve and mercy is not receiving what we do deserve. When have you experienced mercy from God or from other people? What does mercy feel like? When have you been merciful with another person?
- Some may falsely object that such humble confidence was natural to St. Therese and impossible for them. How does this claim both miss the point and simultaneously prove the necessity of confidence in God? Does not St. Therese promise that were there “a soul more miserable than hers, it would receive even more favors, as long as it abandoned itself in complete confidence to infinite mercy?” (p. 32). Do we trust more in ourselves to become perfect or do we trust the Lord to make up for our limitations and to make us perfect?
- What does it mean to say “abandonment rightly understood is the greatest of all renunciations?” (p. 32). “When we see ourselves to be so unworthy, so fainthearted, falling every moment, how could we not be tempted against confidence? The question occurs: ‘Is the love of Jesus, His merciful love, really so great? Is it as great as that?’” (p. 32). What is the answer?

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

1. The facilitator leads the group in praying the *Divine Mercy Chaplet*, found on page 2 of this booklet.

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

1. When finished with the discussion, the entire group should conclude with a Marian prayer, preferably the *Alma Redemptoris Mater* or *Loving Mother of the Redeemer*.

**L**oving Mother of the Redeemer, gate of heaven, star of the sea, assist your people who have fallen yet strive to rise again. To the wonderment of nature you bore your Creator, yet remained a virgin after as before. You who received Gabriel’s joyful greeting, have pity on us poor sinners.

**V.** The Angel of the Lord declared unto Mary.

**R.** And she conceived of the Holy Spirit.

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

- Saturday, Jan. 5th, 7-8 p.m., St. Peter Church

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

Hosted by TBD

- Saturday, Jan. 5th, 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.*