



# Faith in 52

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

*Week 6: December 10th through December 16th, 2012*

## For Individuals

(pages 33-37 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:

- Parables can be like mirrors or windows: They can reflect how we should act or peer into the very heart of God. When Jesus explains that the Kingdom of Heaven is like a pearl for which one would sell all that he owns to possess (Mt. 13:45-46), it reflects the kind of love and importance we should offer to the Lord: to make Him our first priority. It shows that we must be willing to give up everything in order to love Him with all our heart, mind, and soul. But it can also be a window onto heaven that reveals how the Lord sees the world. God is the one who would sell everything to purchase the pearl of great price and you are that treasure! He has given His Son to you and for you. Read the parable of the return of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32). With the help of the Holy Spirit and before the love of God, recall your sins. Now imagine the Heavenly Father clothing you in His most beautiful cloak, putting a ring on



Return of the Prodigal Son

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(pages 33-37 of the book *I Believe in Love*, stopping at the symbol)

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your finger and telling you to dance with joy. What is it like to have so much love heaped upon you? How will you respond? Will you let Him shower you with love and forgiveness?

- Do the people in your life know that they can come to you even if they have fallen into sin or hurt you? What keeps them from approaching you? What allows them to come to you? Tell Jesus what you need and desire in order to be the face of God's mercy.
  - "When you see how miserable you are after an act of infidelity, a failure which has humiliated you, if you look toward Jesus, with the look of the good thief, do you not believe that you will be purified in a moment, in a second, as he was?" (p. 37). Meditate upon this question while looking upon a crucifix or an image of Jesus crucified. Ask the Lord for the gift of sincere contrition and to give you the humility and confidence of St. Dismas, the good thief.
  - Mustering as much confidence as possible, say repeatedly: "*Lord, remember me when you come into your Kingdom.*"
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.

### Catechism Corner: The Theological Virtues

#### From the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

**1812** The human virtues are rooted in the theological virtues, which adapt man's faculties for participation in the divine nature: for the theological virtues relate directly to God. They dispose Christians to live in a relationship with the Holy Trinity. They have the One and Triune God for their origin, motive, and object.

**1813** The theological virtues are the foundation of Christian moral activity; they animate it and give it its special character. They inform and give life to all the moral virtues. They are infused by God into the souls of the faithful to make them capable of acting as his children and of meriting eternal life. They are the pledge of the presence and action of the Holy Spirit in the faculties of the human being.  
**There are three theological virtues: faith, hope, and charity.**

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## For Group Sharing

(pages 33-37 of the book *I Believe in Love*, stopping at the ☮ symbol)

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

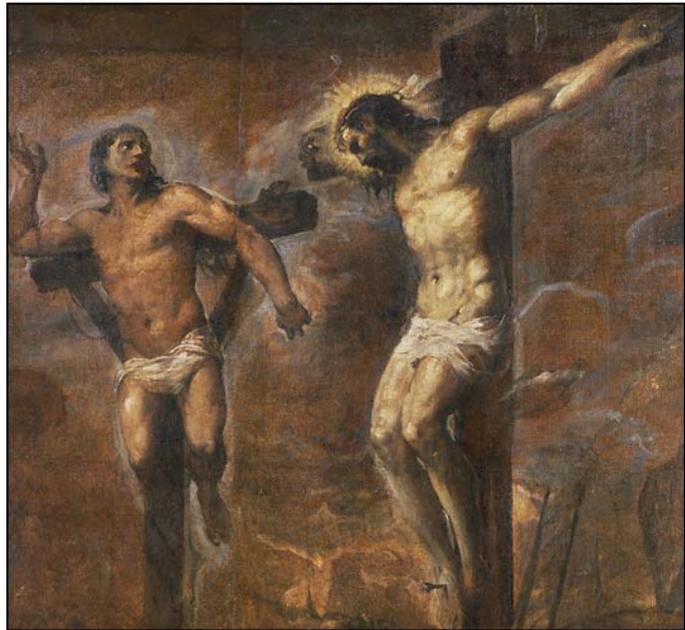
1. Gathering with your spouse, family, or a group of friends at a time of your choosing, though preferably on the following Sunday, make the Sign of the Cross and then say together to the Holy Spirit: *"Come Holy Spirit, come by means of the powerful intercession of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, your 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.
- It is often said that the parable of the Prodigal Son is a "mini-Gospel," i.e., it succinctly expresses the heart of the Gospel. What do you think is the essence or point of the parable? Despite all his sins, what allowed the son to return to his father?
  - "Parents, educators, give the children confided to your care an understanding of this divine mercy by believing in it and practicing it yourselves" (p. 35). Does pa-



*Christ and the Good Thief* by Titian

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## For Group Sharing

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rental discipline violate God's mercy? How can discipline be a form of mercy? When does such disciplining lack mercy and what does discipline tempered by mercy look like?

- Some object to the story of St. Dismas, the good thief to whom Jesus promised paradise upon the cross. They think that it is unjust for a person to gain heaven by making only one sincere act of repentance at the end of his life. What do you think? Did the good thief steal heaven or was he given heaven? How is the real life story of the good thief like the parable of the return of the prodigal son?

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

1. The facilitator leads the group in praying the following prayer several times: *"Jesus, meek and humble of heart, make our hearts like unto thine."*

### **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.

### **This Day You Will Be With Me in Paradise**

**By Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen**

**D**ear Jesus! Your kindness to the penitent thief recalls the prophetic words of the Old Testament: "If your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made as white as snow: and if they be as red as crimson, they shall be white as wool." In Your words of forgiveness to the penitent thief, I understand now the meaning of Your words: "I have not come to call the just, but sinners... Those who are healthy do not need a doctor; but sick people do." "There will be more joy in Heaven at the repentance of one sinner than at ninety-nine of the righteous who had no need of repentance." I see now why Peter was not made Your first vicar on earth until after he had fallen three times, in order that the Church of which he was the head might forever understand forgiveness and pardon. Jesus, I begin to see that if I had never sinned, I never could call you "Savior." The thief is not the only sinner. Here am I! But You are the only Savior (*The Seven Last Words*, p. 18-19).

### **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.*