



Faith in 52

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

Week 8: December 24th through December 30th, 2012

For Individuals

(pages 40-48 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:
 - Read the story of Jesus calming the turbulent sea in Mark 4:35-41. Imagine yourself in the boat with Christ. What is your disposition when you are in crisis? Do you pray at such times? Do you say the perfunctory words but only halfheartedly, mistakenly thinking that the Lord is “sleeping” or unconcerned by your troubles? The mighty prophet Elijah once taunted the prophets of the false god Baal, saying that the pagan god sleeps and is disinterested in human affairs (1 Kings 18:27). Could the one true God could ever ignore or neglect His children? Could He ever forget you?
 - Beg the Lord for the gift of absolute faith and to calm your anxiety with but a word. Say to Him: *“With you, Jesus, I cannot perish; You are always in the boat with me; what have I to fear? You may sleep; I shall not awaken You. My poor nature will tremble, oh yes! But with all my will I shall remain in peace in the midst of the storm, confident in You”* (p. 41).
 - Assuming that you are presently in a state of grace, do you know that



(Continued on page 2)

Faith in 52

Week 8: December 24th through December 30th, 2012

For Individuals

(pages 40-48 of the book *I Believe in Love*, stopping at the ☮ symbol)

(Continued from page 1)

you are forgiven? “I imagine you are like me. I need to be happy; I need to live on love; I need to be festive; I need to sing; and for all that, to which my being aspires, I need to know that I am forgiven” (p. 46). Ask the Lord for the grace to trust in the efficacy of Reconciliation.

- Abandon yourself into the arms of Jesus and say: “Jesus, I come to You completely beautiful, beautiful like the Sun which You are, pure with Your own purity, beautiful with Your own beauty, rich with Your own treasures” (p. 44).
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: Hope, Part I

From the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

1817 Hope is the theological virtue by which we desire the kingdom of heaven and eternal life as our happiness, placing our trust in Christ’s promises and relying not on our own strength, but on the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit. “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.” “The Holy Spirit . . . he poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that we might be justified by his grace and become heirs in hope of eternal life.”

1818 The virtue of hope re-

sponds to the aspiration to happiness which God has placed in the heart of every man; it takes up the hopes that inspire men’s activities and purifies them so as to order them to the Kingdom of heaven; it keeps man from discouragement; it sustains him during times of abandonment; it opens up his heart in expectation of eternal beatitude. Buoyed up by hope, he is preserved from selfishness and led to the happiness that flows from charity.

1819 Christian hope takes up and fulfills the hope of the cho-



Abraham & Isaac

sen people which has its origin and model in the hope of Abraham, who was blessed abundantly by the promises of God fulfilled in Isaac, and who was purified by the test of the sacrifice. “Hoping against hope, he believed, and thus became the father of many nations.”

Faith in 52

Week 8: December 24th through December 30th, 2012

For Group Sharing

(pages 40-48 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.

- What “pains and offends” the Lord the most (p. 41)?
- Do you think discouragement comes from God? Why or why not? What is St. Therese’s solution to discouragement (p. 42)?
- What are the three theological virtues (p. 45)? How do they each relate to humble confidence, the theme of this chapter?
- Pope Pius XII famously said that “the sin of the century is the loss of the sense of sin” (Radio Message to the U.S. National Catechetical Congress in Boston [October 26, 1946]). How does our modern culture suppress the notion of sin and why does it do so



The Creation of the World and the Expulsion from Paradise by di Paolo

(Continued on page 4)

Faith in 52

Week 8: December 24th through December 30th, 2012

For Group Sharing

(pages 40-48 of the book *I Believe in Love*, stopping at the ☞ symbol)

(Continued from page 3)

(p. 47)? Are these efforts in accord with the words of St. John: “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us”? (1 Jn. 1:8).

- St. John says with certainty, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just, to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all iniquity” (1 Jn. 1:9; p. 47). What keeps us from believing that Jesus can forgive us in the sacrament of Reconciliation? What are we still holding on to that prevents us from trusting Him? Why does the Lord forgive us?
- How is “our love for God ... a love of friendship” (p. 47)?
- What does the author mean when he says that “a sin of defiance offends and hurts Him (Jesus) more than a hundred sins of weakness” (p. 48)?

STEP 4: RESOLUTIONS & VIRTUES

1. The facilitator leads the group in praying the following passage from Scripture several times: “*Jesus, increase our faith*” (Lk. 17:5).

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*.

Loving 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. After childbirth, O Virgin, thou didst remain inviolate.

R. O Mother of God, plead for us.

Saintly Wisdom by St. Cyril of Jerusalem

How great is God’s love for men! Some good men have been found pleasing to God because of years of work. What they achieved by working for many hours at a task pleasing to God is freely given to you by Jesus in one short hour. For if you believe that Jesus Christ is Lord and that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved and taken up to paradise by him, just as he brought the thief there. Do not doubt that this is possible. After all, he saved the thief on the holy hill of Golgotha because of one hour’s faith; will he not save you too since you have believed?” (*Instructions to Catechumens*).

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.*