



Faith in 52

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

Week 9: December 31st through January 6th, 2013

For Individuals

(pages 48-53 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 author describes a common attitude among those who do not believe their prayers have been answered: *“I have prayed, and I have not been heard. All is lost; all is finished. God does not listen to me. He does not love me”* (p. 50). Have you thought like this at times? Why does the Lord permit you to undergo such challenges? Do you believe that love is stronger than death, *“that whatsoever (Jesus) will ask of God, God will give it to (Him)”* (Jn 11:22)? Ask the Lord specifically to give you confidence in His absolute love for you, trust without limits. Beseech Him to give you the faith to *“move mountains”* (Mt 17:20). Beg for the spiritual gift of perseverance in prayer. Now say to the Lord with St. Martha: *“Yes, Lord... I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God”* (Jn 11:27).
- Read the story of Jesus walking on the sea in Matthew 14:22-33. Imagine yourself in the boat on the Sea of Galilee as St. Peter was. See Christ doing the impossible and walking upon the waves. Hear



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Him comfort you, saying: "Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid" (Mt 14:27). What are you afraid of? Abandon to Him even your lack of faith. Say to Him: "Truly, you are the Son of God."

- "The highest and most complete proof of love is to surrender ourselves completely, giving all our confidence to Him whom we love. Be with Jesus as a friend with his friend, very loving and very beloved. Take your weaknesses and faults to Him, as you take Him your acts of generosity. The acts of generosity are for the Judge who is so good; the weaknesses and the faults are for the Savior. And everything is for the Friend" (p. 51).
2. Finish by saying the *Our Father* prayer once.

Catechism Corner: Hope, Part I

From the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

1820 Christian hope unfolds from the beginning of Jesus' preaching in the proclamation of the beatitudes. The beatitudes raise our hope toward heaven as the new Promised Land; they trace the path that leads through the trials that await the disciples of Jesus. But through the merits of Jesus Christ and of his Passion, God keeps us in the "hope that does not disappoint." Hope is the "sure and steadfast anchor of the soul . . . that enters . . . where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf." Hope is also a weapon that protects us in the struggle of salvation: "Let us . . . put on the breastplate of faith and charity, and for a helmet the hope of salvation." It affords us joy even under trial: "Rejoice in your hope, be patient in tribu-

lation." Hope is expressed and nourished in prayer, especially in the Our Father, the summary of everything that hope leads us to desire.

1821 We can therefore hope in the glory of heaven promised by God to those who love him and do his will. In every circumstance, each one of us should hope, with the grace of God, to persevere "to the end" and to obtain the joy of heaven, as God's eternal reward for the good works accomplished with the grace of Christ. In hope, the Church prays for "all men to be saved." She longs to be united with Christ, her Bridegroom, in the glory of heaven:

Hope, O my soul, hope.
You know neither the



A Soul Brought to Heaven by
Adolphe William Bouguereau

day nor the hour. Watch carefully, for everything passes quickly, even though your impatience makes doubtful what is certain, and turns a very short time into a long one. Dream that the more you struggle, the more you prove the love that you bear your God, and the more you will rejoice one day with your Beloved, in a happiness and rapture that can never end.

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For Group Sharing

(pages 48-53 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.
- In your experience, do people give up on God and prayer? Why? Have you ever felt like this or had this temptation?
 - The author says that the Lord often doesn’t grant our first prayers in order to permit greater trials, in order to push and strengthen our confidence (p. 50). How is this true? Can you see how this could be done out of love? What examples from Scripture does the author use to illustrate his point (p.

***Saintly Wisdom* by St. John Chrysostom**

The waters have risen and severe storms are upon us, but we do not fear drowning, for we stand firmly upon a rock. Let the sea rage, it cannot break the rock. Let the waves rise, they cannot sink the boat of Jesus. What are we to fear? Death? Life to me means Christ, and death is gain. Exile? The earth and its fullness belong to the Lord. The confiscation of goods? We brought nothing into this world, and we shall surely take nothing from it. I have only contempt for the world’s threats, I find its blessings laughable. I have no fear of poverty, no desire for wealth. I am not afraid of death nor do I long to live, except for your good. I concentrate therefore on the present situation, and I urge you, my friends, to have confidence.

Do you not hear the Lord saying: “Where two or three are gathered in my name,

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48-50)? Can you think of other Biblical examples?

- Have you ever been witness to a miracle or read about one? What happened? Share it with the group. Why do you think it says in Scripture that Jesus sometimes could not perform miracles because of the lack of faith (Mt 13:58)? How does that support the author's claim that "Jesus will give us this peace in proportion to our confidence in Him, to the extent that we do not doubt that it is He who saves us" (p. 52)? Why should there be confidence in God even if a miracle does not result from our prayers?
- Why did Jesus perform "all these 'foolish' acts of love, the Incarnation, Calvary, and the Eucharist" (p. 52)? Do you believe that Jesus wants happiness for you, for you to be at peace?

STEP 4: RESOLUTIONS & VIRTUES

1. The facilitator leads the group in praying the following passage from Scripture several times:
"Lord, increase my 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 *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 (Continued from page 3)

there am I in their midst"? Will he be absent, then, when so many people united in love are gathered together? I have his promise; I am surely not going to rely on my own strength! I have what he has written; that is my staff, my security, my peaceful harbor. Let the world be in upheaval. I hold to his promise and read his message; that is my protecting wall and garrison. What message? "Know that I am with you always, until the end of the world!"

If Christ is with me, whom shall I fear? Though the waves and the sea and the anger of princes are roused against me, they are less to me than a spider's web. Indeed, unless you, my brothers, had detained me, I would have left this very day. For I always say "Lord, your will be done"; not what this fellow or that would have me do, but what you want me to do. That is my strong tower, my immovable rock, my staff that never gives way. If God wants something, let it be done! If he wants me to stay here, I am grateful. But wherever he wants me to be, I am no less grateful.

Next Eucharistic "Hour of Power" in English

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

Next Parish Dessert Potluck*

- Saturday, Jan. 5th, 8-9 p.m., McMahan Hall

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