

Faith in 52

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

Week 10: January 7th through January 13th, 2013

For Individuals

(pages 55-61 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 says that even holy souls doubt the path of confidence for it seems “too beautiful to be reliable” (p. 59), but, acknowledging God truly to be love, can anything so good not be true? Do you suffer from this fear of excessive beauty, exorbitant love? Relate to the Lord this fear and ask Him to reveal its causes. Now pray with St. Claude de la Colombière: *“I glorify You in making known how good You are toward sinners, and that Your mercy prevails over all malice, that nothing can destroy it, that no matter how many times or how shamefully we fall, or how criminally, a sinner need not be driven to despair of Your pardon... It is in vain that Your enemy and mine sets new traps for me every day. He will make me lose everything else before the hope that I have in Your mercy”* (p. 56).
 - Spend some time adoring the Lord, telling Him of His goodness to you and to others; bask in His sheer beauty and love for you. In our dire sinfulness some might ask: “So what then? He calls me just as I



*The Miracle of Christ Healing
the Blind Man by El Greco*

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am? I can go to Him with all my miseries, all my weakness? He will repair what I have done badly? He will supply for all my indigence? **Yes, provided that you go to Him**, that you count on Him, that you expect everything of Him, that you say with St. Paul, 'I can do all things in Him who is my only strength and my only virtue'" (p. 59).

- Ask the Lord for the gift of unshakeable confidence in His goodness; speak with Him and offer your prayers believing that you have already received what you pray for (p. 60).
2. Finish by saying the *Our Father* prayer once. 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.

Catechism Corner: Charity, Part I

From the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

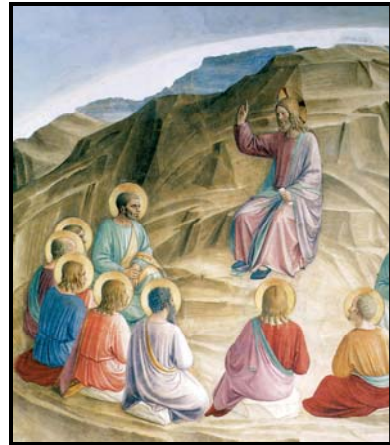
1822 Charity is the theological virtue by which we love God above all things for his own sake, and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God.

1823 Jesus makes charity the new commandment. By loving his own "to the end," he makes manifest the Father's love which he receives. By loving one another, the disciples imitate the love of Jesus which they themselves receive. Whence Jesus says: "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love." And again: "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you."

1824 Fruit of the Spirit and fullness of the Law, charity keeps the commandments of God and his Christ: "Abide in my

love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love."

1825 Christ died out of love for us, while we were still "enemies." The Lord asks us to love as he does, even our enemies, to make ourselves the neighbor of those farthest away, and to love children and the poor as Christ himself. The Apostle Paul has given an incomparable depiction of charity: "charity is patient and kind, charity is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Charity does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Charity bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."



The Sermon on the Mount by Fra Angelico

1826 "If I ... have not charity," says the Apostle, "I am nothing." Whatever my privilege, service, or even virtue, "if I . . . have not charity, I gain nothing." Charity is superior to all the virtues. It is the first of the theological virtues: "So faith, hope, charity abide, these three. But the greatest of these is charity."

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For Group Sharing

(pages 55-61 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 is the story of the conversion of St. Paul (Acts 9:1-31)? Have someone familiar with the story explain it to the group. How does his life confirm St. John Vianney’s saying: “God’s greatest pleasure is to pardon us” (p. 56). Do you believe that is His greatest delight? Why or why not?
 - Some might fear that the spirituality of complete confidence in God’s love and mercy will lead to the sin of presumption, i.e., we will stop trying to become better because we presume we are saved. What do you think? What does the author say is the “double danger in the method which diminishes the role of confidence and stresses the role of personal effort” (p. 58)? How does the overemphasis on personal effort lead to the heresies of Pelagianism and Jansenism (cf. the handouts for weeks 1 & 2)?
 - Jesus certainly does not will or want us to sin, but even such evils do not prevent Him from fulfilling His plan. Share some

Saintly Wisdom **by St Cyril of Jerusalem**

The one word “faith” can have two meanings. One kind of faith concerns doctrines. It involves the soul’s assent to and acceptance of some particular matter... The other kind of faith is given by Christ by means of a special grace. To one wise sayings are given through the Spirit, to another perceptive comments by

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examples in which the Lord brought out good from the bad. Do you believe that the Lord can bring an even greater good from terrible situations than if the evil had not occurred (p. 59-60)? What kind of faith in God does such a belief require?

- Invite the group to verbally express petitions and supplications for themselves, their loved ones, some just cause in the world, or the deceased, and to do so by first believing that they have already received that for which they ask (p. 60).

STEP 4: RESOLUTIONS & VIRTUES

1. The facilitator leads the group in praying and repeating the following prayer section by section:
“Jesus, I know—I am sure that You will do it. • I unite myself to that • which You bring about in me continually. • I unite myself with the marvels You accomplish in my soul • without my perceiving it. • You hide them from me wisely, • to keep me in my littleness, • in a fitting mistrust of myself, • and to preserve for me all the merit of faith, • but I do not doubt it” (p. 60).

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)

the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing. Now this kind of faith, given by the Spirit as a special favor, is not confined to doctrinal matters, for it produces effects beyond any human capability. If a man who has this faith says to this mountain move from here to there, it will move. For when anybody says this in faith, believing it will happen and having no doubt in his heart, he then receives that grace. It is of this kind of faith, moreover, that it is said: If you have faith like a grain of mustard seed. The mustard seed is small in size, but it holds an explosive force; although it is sown in a small hole, it produces great branches, and when it is grown birds can nest there. In the same way faith produces great effects in the soul instantaneously. Enlightened by faith, the soul pictures God and sees him as clearly as any soul can. It circles the earth; even before the end of this world it sees the judgment and the conferring of promised rewards. So may you have the faith which depends on you and is directed to God, that you may receive from him that faith, too, which transcends man’s capacity.

Next Eucharistic “Hour of Power” in English

- Saturday, Feb. 2nd. 7-8 p.m., St. Peter Church

Next Parish Dessert Potluck*

- Saturday, Feb. 2nd, 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.