

Faith in 52

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

Week 11: January 14th through January 20th, 2013

For Individuals

(pages 61-68 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:
 - “We must live a presently existing love” (p. 61). Do you love God in the here and now or is it something you put off until tomorrow? What keeps you from loving God? Seize the moment and pray: *“Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.” “In spite of appearances, in spite of my coldness and my unworthiness, You know well that I love You. You know it better than I, and I do not want to wait until tomorrow to tell You, because love does not wait”* (p. 61-62).
 - The author tells us never to be discouraged by our faults and not to be astonished by them (p. 64), after all, we are sinners and the Lord knows this, too. Take a moment to ask the Lord for complete freedom from fear and utter trust in His mercy, for “if you make each sin an occasion for you to kiss the wound of His Heart with repentance and confidence, each sin will become a rung in the ladder by which you ascend in love. From misery to misery we go from mercy to mercy” (p. 65).
 - “The soul... preoccupied with fear isolates itself in its weakness” (p. 64). When you reflect on your sins, are you led away from mercy and into despair or do you experience greater confidence in God’s love for you? It is clear from St. Therese and St. Ignatius of Loyola that the Lord never scolds us harshly; as a loving Father He only gently reproves (p. 66). Taking this into account, discern spirits and renounce the interior voice of your own spirit or a tempting spirit that cruelly “scolds” and leads us away from mercy; rather, accept only the interior correction of the Holy Spirit that neces-

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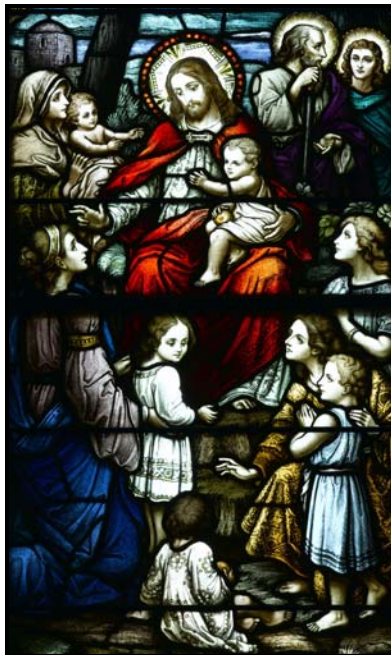
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sarily challenges us but always does so with kindness and hope.

- Spiritual desolation or dryness can afflict us all. “Many souls who attribute their dryness and their temptations against the Faith to their lack of fervor, and thus allow their impulse toward Jesus to be broken,” do not understand that “He often permits this to happen in order to immerse them... in humility and to give them the occasion for this childlike confidence...” (p. 67). Reflect on St. Therese’s words: “‘Instead of rejoicing in my dryness, I ought to attribute it to my lack of fervor and fidelity. I ought to be distressed at sleeping during my prayers and acts of thanksgiving. **Well, I am not distressed.** I think little children please their parents as much when they sleep as when they are awake’” (p. 67). Give everything away to Jesus, even your self-judgment, and rest in His arms.
2. Finish by saying the *Our Father* prayer once. If possible, repeat these steps or reread these pages.

Catechism Corner: Charity, Part II

From the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*



Let the Little Children Come to Me

1827 The practice of all the virtues is animated and in-

spired by charity, which “binds everything together in perfect harmony”; it is the form of the virtues; it articulates and orders them among themselves; it is the source and the goal of their Christian practice. Charity upholds and purifies our human ability to love, and raises it to the supernatural perfection of divine love.

1828 The practice of the moral life animated by charity gives to the Christian the spiritual freedom of the children of God. He no longer stands before God as a slave, in servile fear, or as a mercenary looking for wages, but as a son responding to the love of him who “first loved us”:

“If we turn away from evil out of fear of punishment, we are in the position of slaves. If we pursue the enticement of wages, . . . we resemble mercenaries. Finally if we obey for the sake of the good itself and out of love for him who commands . . . we are in the position of children.”

1829 The fruits of charity are joy, peace, and mercy; charity demands beneficence and fraternal correction; it is benevolence; it fosters reciprocity and remains disinterested and generous; it is friendship and communion: Love is itself the fulfillment of all our works. There is the goal; that is why we run: we run toward it, and once we reach it, in it we shall find rest.

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For Group Sharing

(pages 61-68 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.
- Awareness of our sinfulness often tempts us away from God rather than leads us to Him, but the author says that, “It is not He who grows weary of us; it is we who grow weary of looking at our ugliness” (p. 62). Is our wretchedness an obstacle to God’s love, or a “springboard” to propel us to Him (p. 61)?
 - Do we think we must be perfect in order to receive God’s love, or does God’s love help make us perfect; what does the author say (p. 64)? What does it mean in Scripture that “perfect charity casts out fear” (p. 63; 1 Jn 4:18)?
 - How can “temptation, humiliating as it is,” be “an occasion for victory” (p. 65)?

Saintly Wisdom

by St. Peter Chrysologus

Perhaps you are filled with shame for causing My bitter passion. Do not be afraid. This cross inflicts a mortal injury, not on Me, but on death. These nails no longer pain Me, but only deepen your love for Me. I do not cry out because of these wounds, but through them I draw you into My heart. My body was stretched on the cross as a symbol, not of how much I suffered, but of My all-embracing love. I count it no loss to shed My blood: it is the price I have paid for your ransom. Come, then, return to Me and learn to know Me as your father, who repays good for evil, love for injury and boundless charity for piercing wounds.

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- St. Therese, though never giving license to her sins and while sincerely repenting of them, actually abandoned even her own self-judgment, surrendering everything to God. She cried, “How happy I am to see myself imperfect and having so great a need of receiving the mercy of God at the moment of death!” (p. 67). How can perfectionism actually take us away from God (p. 66-67)?
- Even in the confessional, pride can overcome us so that we distort our confession with generalities and euphemisms rather than tell the truth. Why do we, like Adam, cover our shame from the Lord, who sees all, stands before us ready to give mercy? Review the requirements in making an integral confession: “The faithful are obliged to confess, according to kind and number, all grave sins committed after Baptism” of which they are conscious and have not previously confessed (*Code of Canon Law*, Can. 988, §1).
- Invite the group, in silence, to think of a painful situation in their lives, and then lead them in saying and repeating the following prayer section by section: *“Jesus, take this whole situation and redeem it • and turn it to beauty for everyone involved, • and make it even more beautiful • than if it had never happened in the first place.”*

STEP 5: CLOSING PRAYER

1. When finished with the discussion, the entire group says the *Hail, Holy Queen*.

Our Lady of Hope of Pontmain

The year was 1871 and the Franco-Prussian War had devastated France. On a snowy night on January 17, Our Blessed Mother appeared for around 3 hours in the small city of Pontmain. Our Lady first appeared in the sky above a farm in the middle of town to two young brothers, Eugene and Joseph Barbedette, and was also seen by other children. Adults, however, saw nothing.



Eugene said that the woman was garbed in a rich, azure robe with gold stars. Her hair was covered by a black veil that extended to her elbows, and upon her head was a golden crown with a red band. Towards the end of the apparition, a red crucifix appeared in her hands. Written on a scroll that unfurled from her feet were the words: **“Pray please. God will hear you soon. My Son allows Himself to be moved”** (p. 63). The following day the French-German armistice was signed.

After intense interrogations of the children and further investigations, Msgr. Wicart, Bishop of Laval, gave canonical approval to the apparition on February 2, 1872. Later, popes Pius XI and XII gave further recognition.

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.