



Faith in 52

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

Week 12: January 21st through January 27th, 2013

For Individuals

(pages 68-73 of the book *I Believe in Love*, stopping at the ☞ symbol)

STEP 1: OPENING PRAYER

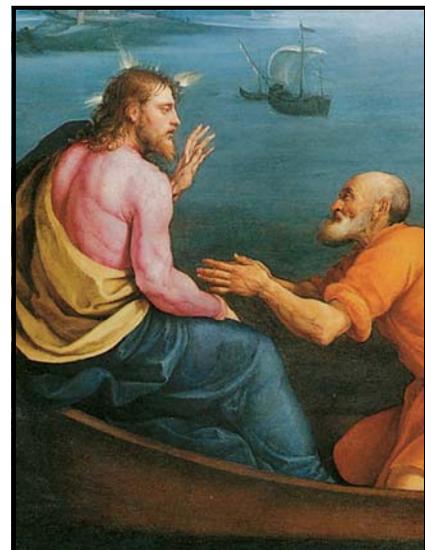
1. Speaking to the Holy Spirit, say: *“O Holy Spirit, soul of my soul, I adore You. Enlighten, guide, strengthen, and console me. Tell me what I ought to do and command me to do it. I promise to be submissive in everything that You ask of me, and to accept all that You permit to happen to me. Only show 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:
 - “Have you never had this feeling of sadness, even perhaps of jealousy, which comes from reading beautiful things in the lives and writings of saints, with the temptation to say to yourself, ‘This is not for me; it is too great for me’” (p. 71)? Consider the case of St. Peter, and prayerfully read Luke 5:1-11. When Peter first encountered the Christ, he was told by Jesus to “put out into deep water” for a great catch (Lk 5:4). When the catch was almost too great to haul ashore, Peter “fell at the knees of Jesus and said, ‘Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man’” (Lk 5:8). Despite being in the presence of God’s holiness, glory, and love, Peter embraced the subtle temptation of false humility, and dwelt more on his unworthiness than the glory before him. Astonishingly, Peter actually wanted Jesus to “depart” from him. Rather than focus on and accept the Lord’s love, Peter descended into self-judgment. Has envy, conceit, or false humility, rather than inspiration, ever entered your contemplation of the Lord and His Saints? Does your pride keep you from going to



The Miraculous Draught of Fishes by Bassano

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God? If so, ask the Lord to reveal the source of this fallacious thinking, and, naming this false belief, specifically renounce it in Jesus' name, for true movements of the Holy Spirit will unite a soul to the Lord and motivate it to holiness rather than lead it into separation and retreat. Say: "In Your Holy Name, Jesus, we cast this lie, _____, into Your holy wounds." This same formula can be used for any such pernicious falsehood that afflicts you.

- The Lord knows that you, like Peter, are imperfect, even a sinner, and still He loves you with His whole being, and invites you to follow Him. Hear the words He spoke to Peter: "Be not afraid," (Lk 5:10). Finish by saying the *Our Father* prayer once. If possible, repeat these steps.

Who Is St. Therese of the Child Jesus?

From *Lives of the Saints* by Omer Englebert (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1994), 376-377

Of a merchant family, St. Thérèse de l'Enfant Jesus was born at Alençon on January 2nd, 1873. Louis Martin and Zélie Guérin, her parents, had in their youth wished to embrace the religious state. Of their nine children, only five daughters survived, all of whom became nuns.

Theresa, the youngest, showed astonishing spiritual precocity. At two, she had the instinct of prayer; at three she was making sacrifices; at five she was able to profit by sermons. She lost her mother when four and a half, and two years later had a prophetic vision of the illness of which her father was to die. From October 1881 to December 1885, Theresa was brought up by the Benedictines of Lisieux; from March to May 1883 she suffered from a strange malady, characterized by violent crises, extended de-

lirium, and prolonged fainting spells.

Her entry into the convent of the Carmelites of Lisieux took place on April 9th, 1888. Before pronouncing her vows she declared she "was come to Carmel to save souls and to pray for priests." After having worked in the laundry, the refectory, at the turning-box, and in the sacristy, she was made, in February 1893, assistant to the novice mistress. Out of obedience she adorned the chapel of her convent with paintings, and occasionally composed a few verses.

Nothing then appeared extraordinary in this life which was known later to have been filled with suffering and heroism. The young nun followed what Fénelon had once called the 'way of childhood.' 'I prefer,' she wrote, 'the monotony

of obscure sacrifice to all ecstasies. To pick up a pin for love can convert a soul.' More even than scorn, she sought oblivion. In December 1894 she began her autobiography, entitled *The Story of a Soul*, which has spread the world over.

On April 3rd, 1896, Theresa began to cough blood. From that time on, enduring a true spiritual martyrdom, she seemed deprived of the light of faith and the sweetness of hope and speedily declined. On September 30th, 1897, at five o'clock in the afternoon, her last agony began. Shortly after seven she was heard to murmur: "I would not suffer less." Then she added: "I love Thee, my God," and drew her last breath. A short time before, she had written: "I want to spend my heaven doing good on earth."

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For Group Sharing

(pages 68-73 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.
- Why does the author “rely so heavily” upon the preaching and doctrine of St. Therese of the Child Jesus (p. 68)? What have the popes said about the teaching of St. Therese (p. 68-69)? How did St. Therese rediscover the “heart of the Gospel” (p. 69)?
 - What, in your own words, is St. Therese's “little way, the way of a golden simplicity” (p. 69), her “little doctrine” (p. 70)? What does she mean when she says “that in order to love Jesus, to be His victim of love, the weaker one is, with neither desires nor virtues, the more one is fit for the workings of this consuming and transforming love. The sole desire to be a victim suffices, but one must consent to remain always poor and utterly weak” (p. 71-72)? St. Therese is neither dismissing personal responsibility nor the need to grow in virtue, so what is she addressing? What is St. Therese’s “only treasure” (p. 71)?
 - Discuss the following insight: “To have burning desires, to ex-



Photo of St. Therese of the Child Jesus

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press them with eloquence, to feel ourselves full of enthusiasm, does not depend directly upon us. What we can always do, however, is to love, with our will, our littleness and our poverty; we can love our nakedness and our powerlessness and come to have nothing but a single treasure: our blind abandonment to mercy" (p. 72-73).

STEP 4: RESOLUTIONS & VIRTUES

- Lead the group in saying and repeating the following prayer section by section: "O my God, • *relying on your infinite goodness and promises*, • *I hope to obtain pardon for my sins*, • *the help of Your grace and life everlasting*, • *through the merits of Jesus Christ*, • *my Lord and Redeemer. Amen.*"

STEP 5: CLOSING PRAYER

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

Hail, holy Queen, Mother of mercy, our life, our sweetness and our hope. To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve: to thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears. Turn then, most gracious Advocate, thine eyes of mercy toward us, and after this our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus, O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary! Amen.

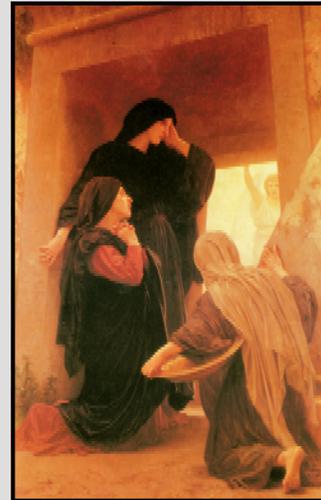
God Comes to Our Aid By Father Bernard Bro, O.P

Here we become aware of the complete conversion, the about-face, that our attitude and imagination must make, as far as hope is concerned.

It is not we who wait for God, and draw his attention, but it is God who awaits us. It is not we who are anxious to see him realize our desires, but it is he who wishes to enter into our plans and to invest us with his own strength. And in prayer it is he who anticipates us, giving us an opportunity to work for and with him, in the absolute certainty of success. "For thirty years I searched for God, and at the end I saw that it was he who was waiting for me."

This is the first response of God, the secret of our hope, and what should be the foundation of our certitude.

In this connection, it seems that too often we believe that the essential element in hope ("its formal object," as we say) is the desire to possess happiness and to possess God. Yet the essential note of hope is not primarily the desire for beatitude, but the assurance that God comes to our aid.



The Three Marys at the Tomb
by Adolphe W. Bouguereau

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.