



Faith in 52

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

Week 13: January 28th through February 3rd, 2013

For Individuals

(pages 73-80 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:
 - Think of the Lord’s great mercy towards you, and ask the Holy Spirit to repair any lack of humility in your soul. Is there someone in particular to whom God is prompting you to be merciful?
 - We often consider God’s justice through the lens of reciprocity and an “eye for an eye.” This notion of justice, while fair, can incorrectly lead some to fear the Lord and to withdraw from Him. St. Therese is unafraid of heavenly justice for “it is because He is just that He is compassionate and full of gentleness, slow to punish and abounding in mercy, for He knows our frailty. He remembers that we are nothing but dust” (p. 76). She experiences His justice through the lens of mercy. Dwell on the sweetness and wisdom of her words for a little while in prayer, and ask the Lord for the grace to trust in His mercy and to experience His mercy.
 - Meditate upon your hands. These are hands that have been soiled with the godness of work, brushed hair from a child’s brow, applauded others in their accomplishments, written words of friendship, and caressed the wounded soul. They have been used innumerable ways to show love, but at present they are empty. Now look upon a crucifix, upon Jesus’ wounded hands, upon His hands opened to the Father. They are empty but not barren. They are the gift of Christ Himself to the Father. Pray with St. Therese: “In the evening of this life I shall appear before You with empty hands, for I do not ask You to count my works. All our justices are stained in Your eyes. I want

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therefore to clothe myself in Your own justice and receive from Your love the eternal possession of Yourself” (p. 76). Give back to the Father the greatest gift entrusted to you: the gift of His Son.

- The Curé of Ars, St. John Vianney, said, “It is not the sinner who comes back to God to ask His pardon, but God Himself who runs after the sinner and who brings Him back to Himself,” (p. 80). Imagine the Lord rushing towards you as the father in the prodigal son parable so famously ran to his son. Allow Him to embrace you.
- Finish by saying the *Our Father* prayer once. ■

When one tears something dear away from us, and when this is demanded of us in the name of obedience – for a future which is yet hidden from us – one must say yes, one must be content in saying yes, one must be content even to feel suffering... But it is with happiness one suffers, for he has something to give to God.

- From Cardinal Journet



You Are a Chosen People: Deuteronomy 7:6-10; 8:1-6

Moses summoned all Israel and said to them, “For you are a people holy to the LORD, your God; the LORD, your God, has chosen you from all the peoples on the face of the earth to be a people specially his own. It was not because you are more numerous than all the peoples that the LORD set his heart on you and chose you; for you are really the smallest of all peoples. It was because the LORD loved you and because of his fidelity to the oath he had sworn to your ancestors, that the LORD brought you out with a strong hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt. Know, then,

that the LORD, your God, is God: the faithful God who keeps covenant mercy to the thousandth generation toward those who love him and keep his commandments, but who repays with destruction those who hate him; he does not delay with those who hate him, but makes them pay for it.

“Be careful to observe this whole commandment that I enjoin on you today, that you may live and increase, and may enter in and possess the land which the LORD promised on oath to your ancestors. Remember how for these forty years the LORD, your God, has directed all your journeying in the wilderness, so as to test you by affliction, to know what

was in your heart: to keep his commandments, or not. He therefore let you be afflicted with hunger, and then fed you with manna, a food unknown to you and your ancestors, so you might know that it is not by bread alone that people live, but by all that comes forth from the mouth of the LORD. The clothing did not fall from you in tatters, nor did your feet swell these forty years. So you must know in your heart that, even as a man disciplines his son, so the LORD, your God, disciplines you.

“Therefore, keep the commandments of the LORD, your God, by walking in his ways and fearing him.” ■

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For Group Sharing

(pages 73-80 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.
- According to the author, what was the “great sin of Judas” (p. 74-75)? Jesus says that “every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people, but blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven” (Mt 12:31). In light of this chapter, what might be this blasphemy, and why can’t it be forgiven? How important is it to experience “a truly merciful, universally merciful heart... the Heart of Je-

Saintly Wisdom

by Saint Caesarius of Arles

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.” My brothers and sisters, sweet is the thought of mercy, but even more so is mercy itself. It is what all men hope for, but unfortunately, not what all men deserve. For while all men wish to receive it, only a few are willing to give it.

How can a man ask for himself what he refuses to give to another? If he expects to receive any mercy in heaven, he should give mercy on earth. Do we all desire to receive mercy? Let us make mercy our patroness now, and she will free us in the world to come. Yes, there is mercy in heaven, but the road to it is paved by our merciful acts on earth. As Scripture says: “Lord, your mercy is in heaven.”

There is, therefore, an earthly as well as heavenly mercy, that is to say, a human and a divine mercy. Human mercy has compassion on the miseries of the poor. Divine mercy grants forgiveness of sins. Whatever human mercy bestows here on earth, divine mercy will return to us in our homeland. In this life God feels cold and hunger in all who are stricken with poverty; for, remember, he once

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sus..." (p. 74)?

- Sometimes there seems to be a competition between justice and mercy. How does St. Therese answer this paradox (p. 76)? What do you think?
- What soul has not passed through "grievous interior trials such as dryness, aridity, anguish in darkness, when all the words of love, confidence, abandonment say nothing more to us, do not touch us, do not reach us anymore" (p. 77)? St. Therese experienced such pain at the end of her life (p. 78-79). Share with the group any occasions where you have suffered such dryness in prayer and life. What, if anything, relieved the desolation? What does the author suggest we do during such trials (p. 77-78)?
- This chapter is entitled "Unshakeable Confidence." How do you now understand this confidence? Why is it essential? How has your confidence in the Lord grown these past few weeks or months?

STEP 4: RESOLUTIONS & VIRTUES

1. Lead the group in saying and repeating the following prayer several times:
"Jesus, meek and humble of heart, make our hearts like unto Thine."

STEP 5: CLOSING PRAYER

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

Saintly Wisdom (Continued from page 3)

said: "What you have done to the least of my brothers you have done to me." Yes, God who sees fit to give his mercy in heaven wishes it to be a reality here on earth.

What kind of people are we? When God gives, we wish to receive, but when he begs, we refuse to give. Remember, it was Christ who said: "I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat."

When the poor are starving, Christ too hungers. Do not neglect to improve the unhappy conditions of the poor, if you wish to ensure that your own sins be forgiven you. Christ hungers now, my brethren; it is he who deigns to hunger and thirst in the persons of the poor. And what he will return in heaven tomorrow is what he receives here on earth today.

What do you wish for, what do you pray for, my dear brothers and sisters, when you come to church? Is it mercy? How can it be anything else? Show mercy, then, while you are on earth, and mercy will be shown to you in heaven. ■



The Good Samaritan
by George Frederic Watts RA
(Image courtesy of Project Gutenberg
and the Victorian Web)

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.