



# Faith in 52

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

*Week 14: February 4th through February 10th, 2013*

## For Individuals

(pages 81-91 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:
  - Meditate upon the Scriptural passages: *“Without me, you can do nothing”* (John 15:5) and *“with You, Jesus, I can do all things”* (Phil. 4:13).
  - *“We open our arms to Him, yet we close the doors of our intelligence, of our will, of our heart, by not living in this abandonment. We bid Him come, but we do not permit Him to enter”* (p. 83). What are you holding back from the Lord? Grant Him entrance to your soul by giving Him the *“full liberty to act;”* give Him everything (p. 83).
  - *“You may hear Jesus a hundred times a day, saying to you, ‘Let me do it.’ In your difficulties, in your problems, in all those things in your daily life which are sometimes so difficult, so distressing, when you ask yourself, ‘What shall I do? How shall I do it?’ listen to Him saying to you, ‘Let me do it.’ And then answer Him, ‘O Jesus, I thank You for all things’”* (p. 86).
  - Take a moment to consider any *“apparent failures”* in your



The 13th station of the cross from Saint Symphorian, a church of Pfettisheim, Bas-Rhin, France.

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life and simply say, "Thank you, Jesus, for this failure" and then "kiss His adorable hand" (p. 89). Now contemplate your beautiful successes and say: "Jesus, thank you again" (p. 89).

- Prayerfully read and contemplate Matthew 6:25-30. Permit God's providential love into your thoughts and soul, and tell Him your concerns and anxieties. Hear Him say to you: "I will take care of everything. All will be well."
- Do you believe that God can "bring good out of evil and even... a greater good than if there had been no evil" (p. 91)? What keeps you from fully trusting in God's power and goodness? Make an act of faith to trust in Jesus completely.
- Finish by saying the *Our Father* prayer once. ■

## The Vocation of Love

Taken from *Story of a Soul*, the autobiography of St. Therese of Lisieux

Since my longing for martyrdom was powerful and unsettling, I turned to the epistles of St. Paul in the hope of finally finding an answer. By chance the 12th and 13th chapters of the 1st epistle to the Corinthians caught my attention, and in the first section I read that not everyone can be an apostle, prophet or teacher, that the Church is composed of a variety of members, and that the eye cannot be the hand. Even with such an answer revealed before me, I was not satisfied and did not find peace.

I persevered in the reading and did not let my mind wander until I found this encouraging theme: "Set your desires on the greater gifts. And I will

show you the way which surpasses all others." For the Apostle insists that the greater gifts are nothing at all without love and that this same love is surely the best path leading directly to God. At length I had found peace of mind.

When I had looked upon the mystical body of the Church, I recognized myself in none of the members which St. Paul described, and what is more, I desired to distinguish myself more favorably within the whole body. Love appeared to me to be the hinge for my vocation. Indeed I knew that the Church had a body composed of various members, but in this body the necessary and more noble member was not lacking; I knew that the Church had a heart and that such a heart appeared to be aflame with love. I knew that one love

drove the members of the Church to action, that if this love were extinguished, the apostles would have proclaimed the Gospel no longer, the martyrs would have shed their blood no more. I saw and realized that love sets off the bounds of all vocations, that love is everything, that this same love embraces every time and every place. In one word, that love is everlasting.

Then, nearly ecstatic with the supreme joy in my soul, I proclaimed: O Jesus, my love, at last I have found my calling: my call is love. Certainly I have found my place in the Church, and you gave me that very place, my God. In the heart of the Church, my mother, I will be love, and thus I will be all things, as my desire finds its direction. ■

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## For Group Sharing

(pages 81-91 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 total abandonment (p. 81, 84, 87)? How would it transform your life to believe that “nothing – nothing – happens without His having willed or permitted it” (p. 84), that the will of God is in all “creatures and events present to you” (p. 87)?
  - According to the author, what is the “definition of sanctity” (p. 82, 83)?
  - Some might object that they cannot see themselves growing in sanctity (p. 82). What is it that “trips us up” (p. 83)? Why is sanctity not commensurate with the “sensible fervor” we experience (p. 83)? How does St. Therese contrast “the feelings of joy and sadness which follow each other so quickly” and “profound peace” (p.

#### **Maximalism**

The 10 Commandments provide a series of limits which should not be broken. By their nature, however, they may elicit a spirit of minimalism and an attitude that asks, “What is the least I must do to be saved?” The Beatitudes, on the contrary, ask generously, “What more can I do?” They open the door to a form of Christian “maximalism.” While we might say that we have not broken a particular commandment, can we ever say that we have totally fulfilled the Beatitudes? For example, we may not violate the 5th Commandment and take a life, but what do we do to give life to those around

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86)?

- Does St. Therese take the credit for her marvelous “degree of abandonment” (p. 87)? To whom does she credit this change?
- In all of our efforts, why must we never “worry over the results” (p. 88) or be consumed by our failures (p. 88, 91)? How should we respond to our failures and apparent successes (p. 89)? What “spoils everything” and “paralyzes...His providential action on us” (p. 89)?
- Take a moment to pray for each other in the group. Either the facilitator alone or, taking turns, the members of the group should simply and powerfully pray for each person in the group to be in the peace of total abandonment to God: “Lord, I ask you to take N., and to put him/her in the depths of Your Heart.”

### **STEP 4: RESOLUTIONS & VIRTUES**

1. Lead the group in saying this prayer section by section: “Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, • my memory, my understanding, and my entire will, • all I have and call my own. • You have given all to me. • To you, Lord, I return it. • Everything is yours; • do with it what you will. • Give me only your love and your grace, • that is enough for me.”

### **STEP 5: CLOSING PRAYER**

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

**Maximalism** (Continued from page 3)

us? Can we ever say, “I have done all I could” (p. 88)? Both the Decalogue (Ex 20:1-17) and the Beatitudes (Mt 5:3-12) are necessary, but they are opposite ends of the moral spectrum: The former is a boundary which should never be crossed, while the latter is an expanse that knows no borders. Which are you: Are you a Christian minimalist or a maximalist?

### **The Beatitudes (Mt 5:3-12)**

**B**lessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land.

Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied.

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you [falsely] because of me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven. Thus they persecuted the prophets who were before you. ■

### **Next Eucharistic “Hour of Power” in English**

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

### **Next Parish Dessert Potluck\***

- Saturday, March 2nd, 8-9 p.m., McMahon Hall

\*All attending are asked to bring a dessert or an appetizer to share.