



Faith in 52

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

Week 15: February 11th through February 17th, 2013

For Individuals

(pages 91-98 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 worry about everything” (p. 92). “The moment you realize you are worrying, make very quickly an act of confidence” (p. 92). Spend a moment confessing your worries to the Lord, and, with each anxiety, say to Him: *“No, Jesus, You are there: nothing – nothing – happens, not a hair falls from our head, without Your permission. I have no right to worry”* (p. 92); *“Jesus, it is Your will that I love; it is that which I want and nothing else. It is You whom I choose”* (p. 94). Hear Him respond: *“Do not be afraid. It is I – Jesus”* (Mt. 14:27).
 - Do you believe that your soul is a temple and dwelling place for the Lord? Why so? If not, activate your will and choose to believe that your soul, if in a state of grace, is “His temple and the dwelling place of the Holy Trinity” (p. 94).
 - “How many times I have heard this statement: ‘I am a proud person; I am always having thoughts of pride, vanity, self-centeredness, preferring myself to others’” (p. 95). What makes a “truly proud person” (p. 95)? Examine yourself. When weaknesses in your nature or personality seek to seduce you, renounce them in Jesus’ name, and, instead, choose the Lord. Remember, “there is no sin without consent” (p. 93). Use these moments to grow in virtue and contrition rather than to descend into self-judgment and lack of remorse.

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- “Ask yourself, ‘How does Jesus see me’” (p. 96). Answer this question in prayer after prayerfully re-reading pages 96-97. Allow the Lord to surprise you with your own goodness: the graces, virtues, and blessings that He has elected to give you. Pour over the words: “Every soul in a state of grace is for Him a Heaven which only that soul could give Him” (p. 97). What is it like to know that you are, in fact, a “Heaven” for the Lord; that He delights in you that much; and that “you are a joy for Jesus” (p. 96)? If you are not in state of grace, resolve yourself to go to confession and to give the Lord the greatest gift: your confidence in His ability to forgive you from the cross.
- Finish by saying the *Our Father* prayer once. ■

Spiritual Peace at Any Price

You should remember all your life that one of the principal causes of the small progress made by certain good people is that the devil continually fills their souls with disquiet, perplexities, and troubles, which render them incapable of serious, gentle, and constant application to the practice of virtue. The great principle of the interior life lies in peace of the heart: it must be preserved with such care that the moment it is in danger everything else should be abandoned for its re-establishment, just as when the house is on fire, one leaves everything in order to extinguish it... This blessed peace of soul is the high road to heaven. And the reason of this is that peace and tranquility of spirit alone give the soul great strength to achieve all that God wills, while trouble and disquiet turn the soul into a weak, languishing invalid. In



The devil tempts the Christian soul in *The Last Judgement* by Taddeo de Bartolo

that state, one feels neither zest nor attraction for virtue, but, contrariwise, disgust and discouragement by which the devil never fails to profit. This is why he makes use of all his ruses to rob us of this peace on a thousand specious pretexts: at one time on pretence of examination of conscience or of sorrow for our sins, at another time on the ground that we are abusing grace and that our total lack of progress is our own fault, in short that God is about

to abandon us; and by means of a hundred other dodges against which few are able to defend themselves. This is why the masters of the spiritual life give this great principle for distinguishing the true inspirations of God from those which come from the devil, namely, that the former are always gentle and peaceful and lead us to confidence and humility while the latter are agitating, unquiet, and turbulent, leading to discouragement and suspicion, or even to presumption and the following of our own will. We must, therefore, firmly reject all that does not bear this mark of peace, submission, gentleness, and confidence, the impressions, as it were, of God's seal; this point is of great importance for the whole of our life.

- Taken from Fr. de Caussade, a French Jesuit and revered spiritual director of the 18th century. ■

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For Group Sharing

(pages 91-98 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.
- Read the passage of the storm afflicting the Apostles while Jesus sleeps in the boat (Mk 4:35-41). Should the Apostles have awakened Him? What would you have done? What can we learn from Jesus' response?
 - Anxiety has never added a day to one's life (Mt 6:27). In fact, in fretting about things we allow the Devil to steal our joy. What should we do when we worry (p. 92)?

Hope From Depression

by John Janaro

This disease is not who I am. The recognition of this is essential, but the translation of this judgment into a disposition of the heart requires a continual effort. It requires prayer. I am not entirely healed, which means I must live my relationship with God in the recognition that he wills the cloud to remain in some measure, as part of his loving plan for my life.

By God's grace I have found that depression can be transformed into an awareness of my total dependence on God. I must beg him continually to deepen my awareness of my need for him. The good news, of course, is that he is here to meet that need, that dependence that really *is* who I am. Jesus Christ has united my whole life to his. He is here, in every circumstance, in every difficulty. The cloud says, 'I am nothing.' Humility says, 'I am nothing *without* You.'

I noted above that depression can become a context for growing in love. But I don't grow in love simply by figuring this out. It is possible to affirm, as a kind of external idea, that "God loves me" while at the same time being plunged into the cloud. I could

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For Group Sharing

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- We can often become frustrated that we have not mastered our nature, that we are not already perfect. We forget that we are in the process of becoming holy and that we are in a “fight which we must take up again and again without ceasing” (p. 93): “We must not think that sanctity is soaring above temptations, difficulties, and obstacles” (p. 94). The Saints were holy but they did not have carefree interior lives; they were constantly at war with sin, and from such testing came virtue. What should we do when our “nature revolts” (p. 93)? Why is the exercise of the will in choosing God and renouncing evil an essential component of the Christian life?
- How can temptations and weakness actually be turned from defeat into victory (p. 94-95)? What does the author mean that “the Devil makes the gravity of the sin appear to be less during the temptation and greater after the fall (p. 95-96)?
- How does Jesus see you? Share your thoughts with the group.

STEP 4: RESOLUTIONS & VIRTUES

1. Lead the group in saying this prayer section by section: *“I promise You, Jesus, ● to worry about nothing ● consciously, voluntarily, deliberately. ● As soon as I notice myself worrying, ● I shall listen to Your gentle voice saying to me, ● ‘Let me do it. ● Am I not here with you, in you?’ ● and I shall say unconditionally ● ‘O Jesus, I thank you for everything,’ ● for You always expect that of me”* (p. 97-98).

STEP 5: CLOSING PRAYER

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

Hope from Depression (Continued from page 3)

write a brilliant theological treatise on the love of God for every human person and still be afflicted and crushed with the essence of being worthless. To grow in love is to grow in the heart.

I can grow because, in fact, Jesus really is here. He takes the initiative. He knows the depths of my sorrow, and he enters into me right there, where I think I am most alone. If I am talking to him (prayer), it is because he is already here. And he knows the language of the heart. He hears and understands my secret cry before I even know that I have made it. He answers, and he promises that he is not going to give up on me. I must never give up on him.

I sense that the cloud is not so big, because - after all - I am rather small.

“You, O God, are good.” And the nothingness of me is filled with the goodness of God. That is how it should be...

“Jesus, make me good. Make me holy. Make me yours.”

- From *Never Give Up: My Life and God’s Mercy* ■

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.