



# Faith in 52

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

*Week 16: February 18th through February 24th, 2013*

## For Individuals

(pages 98-106 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:
  - Our Blessed Mother Mary is the perfect example of complete abandonment to Jesus, and her life is typified by her fiat, her response to the Angel Gabriel: *“May it be done to me according to your word”* (Lk 1:38). Say now, with Mary, the blessing she composed through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit: the *Magnificat*. In fact, pray it as if it didn't belong to Mary and to another time but to you here in the present. Mean the words that you say: *“My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my Spirit rejoices in God my Savior for He has looked with favor on His lowly servant. From this day all generations will call me blessed: The Almighty has done great things for me, and holy is His Name. He has mercy on those who fear Him in every generation. He has shown the strength of His arm, He has scattered the proud in their conceit. He has cast down the mighty from their thrones, and has lifted up the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent away empty. He has come to the help of His servant Israel for He has remembered His promise of mercy, the promise He made to our fathers, to Abraham and his children forever”* (Lk 1:46-55).
  - *“Remember that each event in your life brings you Jesus' will, which is Jesus Himself”* (p. 99). Despite the protests of your nature and the *“revolt of the senses,”* bless the Lord in everything. Permit and invite the Holy Spirit to enter your soul and reflect upon all of the events of your day, the good and the bad, the eventful and the mundane. With everything that you recall, bless the Lord.

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- “To abandon yourself... to Jesus is to permit Him to carry out His whole work of love” (p. 100). Will you give the Lord “His joy of being Savior” (p. 97)? Say: “*Lord Jesus, you are ‘the Divine Surgeon’ whose hand is guided by gentleness and love (p. 99). Excise any false dreams that afflict me and bring remedy to my soul, for You are my Savior and my God.*”
- Finish by saying the *Our Father* in a spirit of complete abandonment (p. 103-104). ■

## For What Should We Pray?

Perhaps you may still ask why St Paul said *when we cannot choose words in order to pray properly*, since it is impossible that he or those to whom he wrote should not have known the Lord’s Prayer.

Yet Paul himself was not exempt from such ignorance. When, to prevent him from becoming swollen-headed over the greatness of the revelations that had been given to him, he was given in addition a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet him, he asked the Lord three times to take it away from him. Surely that was not knowing to pray as he ought? For in the end he heard the Lord’s reply, telling him why even such a great saint’s prayer had to be refused: *My grace is enough for you: my power is at its best in weakness.*

So when we are suffering afflictions that might be doing us

either good or harm, we do not know how to pray as we ought. But because they are hard to endure and painful, because they are contrary to our nature (which is weak) we, like all mankind, pray to have our afflictions taken from us. At least, though, we owe this much respect to the Lord our God, that if he does not take our afflictions away we should not consider ourselves ignored and neglected, but should hope to gain some greater good through the patient acceptance of suffering. For *my power is at its best in weakness.*

Scripture says this so that we should not be proud of ourselves if our prayer is heard, when we ask for something it would be better for us not to get; and so that we should not become utterly dejected if we are not given what we ask for, despairing of God’s mercy towards us: it might be that what

we have been asking for could have brought us some still greater affliction, or it could have brought us the kind of good fortune that brings corruption and ruin. In such cases, it is clear that we cannot know how to pray as we ought.

Hence if anything happens contrary to our prayer, we ought to bear the disappointment patiently, give thanks to God, and be sure that it was better for God’s will to be done than our own. The Mediator himself has given us an example of this. When he had prayed, *My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass me by*, he transformed the human will that was in him because he had assumed human nature and added *Nevertheless, let it be as you, not I, would have it.* Thus, truly, *By the obedience of one man many have been made righteous.*

- Taken from St. Augustine’s *Letter to Proba.* ■

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## For Group Sharing

(pages 98-106 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 makes “certain persons in the world... true saints” (p. 98)?
  - Abandonment to Jesus’ will produces peace, “but the peace will, perhaps, not be felt; it will be the peace of which St. Paul speaks, ‘which surpasses all understanding’” (p. 99). How is this peace of Christ “not as the world gives” (John 14:27)?
  - Is abandonment a mere form of passivity, “quietism or fatalism” (p. 88), “simply one of letting things be” (p. 99)? How does the author respond (p. 99, 88)?
  - If “faith... does not consist solely in believing in the mystery of the Holy Trinity or in the Real Presence in the tabernacle, in never doubting a dogma of the Holy Church” (p. 100), then what is it? What is a sufficient faith, a deeper faith (p. 100)?
  - We are often troubled when our prayers are seemingly unanswered. We speak not of self-indulgent prayers but the benign supplications for such lofty things as the healing of our loved one or the conversion of a sinner. What did Jesus tell “St. Gertrude, who asked Him to heal one of her friends” (p. 100)? How is the story of St. Monica’s intercession for her son, St. Augustine, further proof that God knows best (p. 101-102)? “God refused to grant St. Monica the prayer she prayed on that day, in order to grant her the prayer she prayed every day” (p. 102). What was Monica’s

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“prayer on that particular day” in comparison with “her prayer of every day” (p. 102)? When in your life has the Lord unrequited your specific prayers so that He might grant you a greater good, your or another’s true happiness? When has Jesus allowed “you to catch a glimpse of the whole golden chain, the marvelous succession of events” that He has worked for you (p. 105)?

- When we lack faith and trust, “there is a remedy, so great is the mercy of the Heart of Jesus. It is to offer Him with confidence... our lack of confidence, and to offer Him with peace our lack of peace. Nothing is irreparable with Jesus” (p. 105-106). “Do you not believe that if you pray in this way, with such a faith, such a reliance on love, Jesus will always give you what is best both for you and for those you love” (p. 104)?

### **STEP 4: CLOSING PRAYER**

1. When finished with the discussion, the entire group should conclude with the *Ave, Regina Caelorum* or *Hail, O Queen of Heaven*:

**H**ail, O Queen of Heaven. • Hail, O Lady of Angels. • Hail! thou root, hail! thou gate, • from whom unto the world, a light has arisen. • Rejoice, O glorious Virgin, • lovely beyond all others; • farewell, most beautiful maiden, • and pray for us to Christ.

V. Allow me to praise thee, O sacred Virgin.

R. Against thy enemies give me strength.

Let us pray: Grant unto us, O merciful God, a defense against our weakness, that we who remember the holy Mother of God, by the help of her intercession, may rise from our iniquities, through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

### **He Had Pity on Me** by Msgr. Luigi Giussani



*The Road to Calvary* by Lorenzo Lotto

**T**his is the point: God was moved by our nothingness. Not only that, God was moved by our betrayal, by our crude, forgetful, and treacherous poverty, by our pettiness. Like a father and mother who cry with emotion, a cry that is totally determined by the desire for the child’s good, the child’s destiny. It’s compassion, pity, passion. He had pity on me.

- Msgr. Giussani is the founder of the ecclesial movement *Communion and Liberation*. ■

### **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.