



# Faith in 52

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

*Week 18: March 4th through March 10th, 2013*

## For Individuals

(pages 115-121 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:
  - “Nothing great ever comes about without great desires” (p. 115). What are your greatest desires? Are they for worldly things, for relationships, for happiness, or do you feel indifferent? “In order to rise out of mediocrity and lukewarmness, renew your desires” (p. 116). Beg the Lord for the desire to love Him, or, if that is too difficult, beseech Him for the desire to desire to love Him. Begin where you are and ask the Lord to inflame your heart. Do you not know how much He desires you? What shall be your response? “Tell Jesus that you thirst—that your thirst for Him!” (p. 116).
  - Discouragement is the weapon of the Enemy. “Do not fall into this snare. Rather, renew your desires with the tremendous confidence that I preached to you in the first conferences: renew them on a foundation of profound humility” (p. 118).
  - Prayerfully read Matthew 19:13-15 in which Jesus reprimands His disciples for keeping children away from Him and tells them that the “kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these (children).” Imagine yourself a little child before Jesus. What is Christ like? Does anything keep you from approaching the Lord? Do the stinging words of the disciples still echo in your heart? Or do you feel at ease and to run to him? How do real children react before a parent or someone they love? What must you do to become a “little child” (Mt. 18:4)?
  - Finish by saying the *Our Father* in a spirit of complete abandonment. ■

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Week 18: March 4th through March 10th, 2013

## Desire for God

**G**rant me to know and understand, Lord, which comes first. To call upon you or to praise you? To know you or to call upon you? Must we know you before we can call upon you? Anyone who invokes what is still unknown may be making a mistake. Or should you be invoked first, so that we may then come to know you? But how can people call upon someone in whom they do not yet believe? And how can they believe without a preacher?

But scripture tells us that those who seek the Lord will praise him, for as they seek they find him, and on finding him they will praise him. Let me seek you then, Lord, even while I am calling upon you, and call upon you even as I believe in you; for to us you have indeed been preached. My faith calls upon you, Lord, this faith which is your gift to me, which you have breathed into me through the humanity of your Son and the ministry of your preacher.

How shall I call upon my God, my God and my Lord, when by the very act of calling upon him I would be calling him into myself? Is there any place within me into which my God might come? How should the

God who made heaven and earth come into me? Is there any room in me for you, Lord, my God? Even heaven and earth, which you have made and in which you have made me – can even they contain you? Since nothing that exists would exist without you, does it follow that whatever exists does in some way contain you?

But if this is so, how can I, who am one of these existing things, ask you to come into me, when I would not exist at all unless you were already in me? Not yet am I in hell, after all but even if I were, you would be there too; for if I descend into the underworld, you are there. No, my God, I would not exist, I would not be at all, if you were not in me. Or should I say, rather, that I should not exist if I were not in you, from whom are all things, through whom are all things, in whom are all things? Yes, Lord, that is the truth, that is indeed the truth. To what place can I invite you, then, since I am in you? Or where could you come from, in order to come into me? To what place outside heaven and earth could I travel, so that my God could come to me there, the God who said, I fill heaven and

earth?

Who will grant it to me to find peace in you? Who will grant me this grace, that you should come into my heart and inebriate it, enabling me to forget the evils that beset me and embrace you, my only good? What are you to me? Have mercy on me, so that I may tell. What indeed am I to you, that you should command me to love you, and grow angry with me if I do not, and threaten me with enormous woes? Is not the failure to love you woe enough in itself?

Alas for me! Through your own merciful dealings with me, O Lord my God, tell me what you are to me. Say to my soul, I am your salvation. Say it so that I can hear it. My heart is listening, Lord; open the ears of my heart and say to my soul, I am your salvation. Let me run towards this voice and seize hold of you. Do not hide your face from me: let me die so that I may see it, for not to see it would be death to me indeed.

- Taken from St. Augustine's *Confessions* (Lib 1,1-2,2.5,5: CSEL 33, 1-5). ■



# Faith in 52

Week 18: March 4th through March 10th, 2013

## For Group Sharing

(pages 115-121 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.
- The author, professor, and Holocaust survivor, Elie Wiesel once said that "the opposite of love is not hate, it's indifference. The opposite of art is not ugliness, it's indifference. The opposite of faith is not heresy, it's indifference. And the opposite of life is not death, it's indifference." Do you agree? Why are mediocrity and lukewarmness deadly to the soul (p. 116)?
  - "To desire to love is already love. A great desire to love is already a great love" (p. 117). How can the desire to love already be a sign of love?

#### **To the Childlike**

**by Father Jean-Nicolas Grou, S.J.,**

A child has no dissimulation, no concealment. As soon as he is capable of deceit he is no longer a child. In like manner, nothing can equal the openness and candor of the spiritual child. He does not compose his exterior; his recollection has nothing constrained about it; his actions, his conversations, his manners, everything in him is simple and natural; when he says anything, he really thinks it; when he offers anything, he wishes to give it; when he promises anything, he will keep his promise. He does not seek to appear different to what he really is, nor to hide his faults; he says what is good and what is evil of himself with the same simplicity, and he

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## For Group Sharing

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- In 1954 Pope Pius XII commented about the “fervor and admiration of everyone toward St. Therese of the Child Jesus” (p. 119). Why do you think St. Therese is still so inspirational to so many?
- “If the proud person could only see how ridiculous he is...” (p. 120). In the classic story of the *Emperor’s New Clothes* by Hans Christian Andersen, two tailors swindle a vain emperor into wearing a new outfit made of fabric that appears “invisible” to all those unfit for their offices. There is, in fact, no such fabric, but the king and others, not wishing to look foolish, pretend to “see” the clothes. As the king walks among his subjects in his “new clothes,” it is only a small child who escapes all pretensions and shouts: “But he isn’t wearing anything at all!” Jesus said that “unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven” (Mt. 18:3). What do you think Jesus meant by this statement? In what ways should we become like little children?
- “Face-to-face with God, we have not a single right, yet this expression *my rights* comes so easily” (p. 120). What results from a philosophy or feeling of “entitlement”?

### 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. ■

To the Childlike (Continued from page 3)

has no reserve whatever with those to whom he ought to disclose the state of his soul.

A child shows his love with artless innocence: everything in him expresses the feelings of his heart, and he is all the more touching and persuasive because there is nothing studied about him. It is the same with the spiritual child, when he wishes to show his love for God and his charity for his neighbor. He goes to God simply, without preparation; he says to God without set formulas or choice of words all that his loving heart suggests to him; he knows no other method of prayer than to keep himself in the presence of God, to look at God, to listen to him, to possess him, to tell him all the feelings with which grace inspires him, sometimes in words, but more often without speaking at all.

- Fr. Jean-Nicolas Grou, S.J., was a 19th century French Jesuit priest and a beloved spiritual master. ■



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

- Saturday, April 6th, 7-8 p.m., St. Peter Church

### Next Parish Dessert Potluck\*

- Saturday, April 6th, 8-9 p.m., McM. Hall