



# Faith in 52

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

**Week 19: March 11th through March 17th, 2013**

## For Individuals

(pages 121-125 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:
  - The definition of the word humiliate, according to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, is “to reduce to a lower position in one’s own eyes or others’ eyes.” When have you humiliated others? When have you refused to be humbled? Pray: *“Lord, grant that I may decrease so that You may increase.”*
  - “We spoke of His (Jesus’) follies of love. Why were they follies of love? Because they were follies of humility and annihilation” (p. 122). Where have you encountered such seemingly reckless, selfless love? Where and through whom has the Lord revealed His own “follies of love” for you? Have you received and responded to such love or rejected it outright?
  - “I assure you that it will help you more than anything else when you are forsaken, wrongly judged, calumniated, or rejected to think of His (Jesus’) humiliations” (p. 123). Have you been betrayed or deeply hurt? Ponder the many times in Jesus’ life when He was poorly treated, belittled, and abandoned: at the inn in Bethlehem, from His relatives in Nazareth, during the washing of the Apostles’ feet, during the washing of Judas’ feet, the agony in the Garden, the betrayal by His people, His suffering and Passion, even the tininess and unassuming aspect of the Eucharistic Host. Look at how small Christ is willing to become so that you might grow large in grace. Thank Jesus for all He endured for you, and give Him the hurtful episodes in your life: They bring you closer to Him.
- Finish by saying the *Our Father* in a spirit of complete abandonment. ■

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## She Loved Much (Luke 7:36-50)

We could say that Jesus preferred the company of sinners. Though not in love with sin, time and time again He willingly associates with His lost sheep: the tax collectors, the adulterers, the unclean, and even the self-righteous Pharisees, for are they not the most lost of all? To all of them He desires the restoration of their innate dignity: to be children of God. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the story of the sinful woman.

Christ, at dinner with the publican Simon, receives an unusual visitor: “a sinful woman in the city who learned that he was at table in the house of the Pharisee” (Lk. 7:37). The woman brought with her “an alabaster jar of costly perfumed oil” (Mt. 26:7) that “she broke” (Mk. 14:3) and “stood behind him at his feet weeping and began to bathe his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them, and anointed them with the ointment” (Lk. 7:38).

You would think her display of affection might engender admiration or humility among its beholders, but Simon recoils in disgust and says: “If this man were a prophet, he would know who and what sort of



woman this is who is touching him, that she is a sinner” (Lk. 7:39). This woman does not even merit a name; her name is simply “sinner,” and she is dejected for it. Simon and his cronies are hardened of heart,

and they and even the disciples scoff at the folly of her actions: “They were indignant and said, ‘Why this waste?’” (Mt. 26:8). She not only “wastes” this expensive perfume upon Christ but shatters the costly jar in which it came.

This nameless woman, so vilified in her community and by her own transgressions, risks public humiliation to approach her Lord, and she gives Him everything. She gives Him her repentance, her shame, her heart, and He returns her dignity: “Amen, I say to you, wherever this gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be spoken of, in memory of her” (Mt. 26:13) because “she has shown great love” (Lk. 7:47). Great love—pure love, total love, love with abandon—has made her heroic and conquered her fears: She washed Jesus’ feet with her tears and He cleansed her soul from every sin and falsehood (Lk. 7:48).

Jesus “gives Himself totally to the humble and the small. He surrenders to them. Not only does He not resist them, but He cannot refuse them anything” (p. 124-125). Ah, the “follies of love” (p. 122). ■

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## For Group Sharing

(pages 121-125 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 mentions the story in which St. Francis of Assisi and his little Brother Leo approach the monastery (p. 121-122). What plagues the

### **“Death” Must Not Trouble Us**

by St. Ambrose

The Apostle tells us: *The world is crucified to me, and I to the world.* We are to understand that this death by crucifixion takes place in this life, and that this death is a blessing. So he goes on to urge us to bear the death of Jesus with us in our bodies, for whoever bears the death of Jesus in his body will bear also in his body the life of the Lord Jesus.

Death must be active within us if life also is to be active within us. “Life” is life after death, a life that is a blessing. This blessing of life comes after victory, when the contest is over, when the law of our fallen nature no longer rebels against the law of our reason, when we no longer need to struggle against the body that leads to death, for the body already shares in victory.

It seems to me that this “death” is more powerful than “life.” I accept the authority of the Apostle when he says: *Death is therefore active within us, but life also is active within you.* Yet the “death” of this one man was building up life for countless multitudes of peoples! He therefore teaches us to seek out this kind of death even in this life, so that the death of Christ may shine forth in our lives — that blessed death by which our outward self is destroyed and our inmost self renewed, and our earthly dwelling crumbles away and

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## For Group Sharing

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thoughts of Brother Leo? How does St. Francis respond to the situation?

- What are some occasions in the life of Jesus in which He was willingly humiliated (p. 122-123)? How did He behave in those circumstances? Why did He allow Himself to be treated so?
- One of our favorite things to do is to complain and to argue. Why do we protest so much? What excuses, assumptions, and rationalizations do we employ to justify such behaviors (p. 124)? St. Paul tells us to “do everything without grumbling or questioning” (Phil. 2:14). Is that possible? What would allow us to live in such peace and freed from the need to grouse and complain?
- When the Lord told us that “the greatest among you must be your servant” (Mt. 23:11), do you think He really meant this? What would your life look like if you desired to be last, to be least, to be the servant of all? What would your whole family, the world itself, look like if it followed suit?

### **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. ■

**“Death” Must Not Trouble Us** (Continued from page 3)  
a home in heaven opens before us.

The person who cuts himself off from this fallen nature of ours and frees himself from its chains is imitating death. These are the bonds spoken of by the Lord through Isaiah: *Loose the bonds of injustice, untie the thongs of the yoke, set free the oppressed and break every yoke of evil.*

The Lord allowed death to enter this world so that sin might come to an end. But he gave us the resurrection of the dead so that our nature might not end once more in death; death was to bring guilt to an end, and the resurrection was to enable our nature to continue for ever.

“Death” in this context is a passover to be made by all mankind. You must keep facing it with perseverance. It is a passover from corruption, from mortality to immortality, from rough seas to a calm harbor. The word “death” must not trouble us; the blessings that come from a safe journey should bring us joy. What is death but the burial of sin and the resurrection of goodness? Scripture says: *Let my soul die among the souls of the just;* that is, let me be buried with the just, so that I may cast off my sins and put on the grace of Christ with them, in their bodies and in their souls. ■

### **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