

Faith in 52

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

Week 20: March 18th through March 24th, 2013

For Individuals

(pages 125-130 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:
 - St. Veronica is famous for rushing to the aid of our Savior on His way to Calvary. She saw His particular suffering and attended to it. Pray about the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ: Ask the Lord to show you where He hurts the most, who in His Church needs your gift of compassionate love, your solidarity: *“An elementary principle of sound political organization, namely, the more that individuals are defenseless within a given society, the more they require the care and concern of others, and in particular the intervention of governmental authority”* (Bl. John Paul the Great, *Centesimus Annus* (1991), §10). Pray for the most defenseless in your midst.
 - Do you realize that everything in your life is a gift from the Most High God? Whether in apparent success or seeming failure, give gratitude to the Lord wholly and completely. *“The vacuum which humiliation makes in us when we receive it rightly is an emptiness which attracts Him irresistibly. He bends over the soul who loves its littleness and nothingness; He bends over it with an unspeakable love”* (p. 126-127).
 - In your shortcomings do you give in to *“rebellious discouragement”* and think *“I shall never succeed. I give up. It is useless”* (p. 129-130), or do you recognize your own weakness and, like a child, simply get back up, *“each time more determined to attain his goal”* (p. 130)? Pray for hope.
 - Finish by saying the *Our Father* in a spirit of complete abandonment. ■

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The Path of Humility

Happy are we if we do the deeds of which we have heard and sung. Our hearing of them means having them planted in us, while our doing them shows that the seed has borne fruit. By saying this, I wish to caution you, dearly beloved, not to enter the Church fruitlessly, satisfied with mere hearing of such mighty blessings and failing to do good works. *For we have been saved by his grace, says the Apostle, and not by our works, lest anyone may boast; for it is by his grace that we have been saved.* It is not as if a good life of some sort came first, and that thereupon God showed his love and esteem for it from on high, saying: "Let us come to the aid of these men and assist them quickly because they are living a good life". No, our life was displeasing to him. He will, therefore, condemn what we have done but he will save what he himself has done in us.

We were not good, but God had pity on us and sent his Son to die, not for good men but for bad ones, not for the just but for the wicked. Yes, *Christ died for the ungodly.* Notice what is written next: *One will hardly die for a righteous man,*

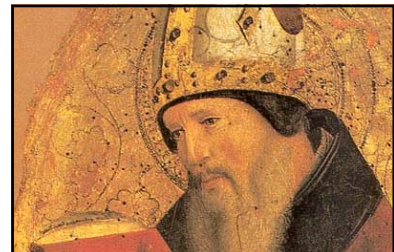
though perhaps for a good man one will dare even to die. Perhaps someone can be found who will dare to die for a good man; but for the unjust man, for the wicked one, the sinner, who would be willing to die except Christ alone who is so just that he justifies even the unjust?

And so, my brothers, we had no good works, for all our works were evil. Yet although men's actions were such, God in his mercy did not abandon men. He sent his Son to redeem us, not with gold or silver but at the price of his blood poured out for us. Christ, the spotless lamb, became the sacrificial victim, led to the slaughter for the sheep that were blemished – if indeed one can say that they were blemished and not entirely corrupt. Such is the grace we have received! Let us live so as to be worthy of that great grace, and not do injury to it. So mighty is the physician who has come to us that he has healed all our sins! If we choose to be sick once again, we will not only harm ourselves, but show ingratitude to the physician as well.

Let us then follow Christ's paths which he has revealed to

us, above all the path of humility, which he himself became for us. He showed us that path by his precepts, and he himself followed it by his suffering on our behalf. In order to die for us – because as God he could not die – *the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.* The immortal One took on mortality that he might die for us, and by dying put to death our death. This is what the Lord did, this the gift he granted to us. The mighty one was brought low, the lowly one was slain, and after he was slain, he rose again and was exalted. For he did not intend to leave us dead in hell, but to exalt in himself at the resurrection of the dead those whom he had already exalted and made just by the faith and praise they gave him. Yes, he gave us the path of humility. If we keep to it we shall confess our belief in the Lord and have good reason to sing: *We shall praise you, God, we shall praise you and call upon your name.*

- by St. Augustine of Hippo ■



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For Group Sharing

(pages 125-130 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.

- In the encyclical *Octogesima Adveniens* (1971), Pope Paul VI said that "in teaching us charity, the Gospel instructs us in the preferential respect due to the poor and the special situation they have in society: the most fortunate should renounce some of their rights so as to place their goods generously at the service of others" (§23). Where in Scripture do you see Christ Himself demonstrating a preferential option for the poor and lowly?
- The theologian R.R. Reno once commented: "Preferential option for the poor. A Christian who hopes to follow the teachings of Jesus needs to reckon with a singular fact about American poverty: Its deepest and most debilitating deficits are moral, not financial; the most serious deprivations are cultural, not economic. Many people living at the bottom of American society have cell phones, flat-screen TVs, and some of the other goodies of consumer culture. But their lives are a



The Resurrection of Jairus' Daughter
by Santi di Tito

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mess” (“The Preferential Option for the Poor,” *First Things*, June/July 2011). How is this statement right or wrong? Are there other forms of poverty besides financial poverty?

- “The humble man realizes that he does nothing good in the supernatural order by himself; that applause is bad for him” (p. 126). Some desperately crave accolades and some reject every compliment paid to them. What should we do when we are praised? What would Therese do?
- The genius of St. Thomas Aquinas, the grace of St. Teresa of Avila, etc.: the talents of the Saints “served especially to help them fulfill their special mission in the Church... they were saints in the measure to which they realized the gratuitousness of the gifts and their own fundamental poverty” (p. 128). With what skills has the Lord blessed you? What are you good at? Do you realize they are gifts from God? How do you use them to build up His Kingdom?
- “Have you noticed that to say to someone that he is simple is the praise which crowns all others?” (p. 130). Do we wish to be thought of as simple? What does it mean to be simple (p. 130)?

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*:

Hail, 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. ■

For God, Nothing Is Too Small by Donald DeMarco

St. Augustine once said that the three most important factors in the spiritual life are humility, humility, and humility. The virtue of humility, indispensable for graciousness, is an attribute of God and an imitable characteristic of Christ. Joseph Ratzinger, now Benedict XVI, in his *Introduction to Christianity*, cites a remark of the poet Hölderlin to capture the Christian image of the true greatness of God: “*Non coarctari maximo, contineri tamen a minimo, divinum est*” (“Not to be encompassed by the greatest, but to let oneself be encompassed by the smallest: That is divine”). For God, nothing is too small. As Ratzinger stated, “Precisely this overstepping of the greatest and reaching down into the smallest is the true nature of absolute spirit.” Teilhard de Chardin wrote poetically and rhapsodically about the cosmic Christ. Yet Christ is best understood not in relation to His cosmic grandeur or creative omnipotence, but in relation to His regard for the least of His little ones.

- Donald DeMarco is an author and professor at Holy Apostles College and Seminary in Cromwell, CT and Professor Emeritus at St. Jerome's University in Waterloo, Ontario. ■

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., McMahon Hall

*All attending are asked to bring a dessert or an appetizer to share that would feed at least 15 other people.