



# Faith in 52

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

*Week 21: March 25th through March 31st, 2013*

## For Individuals

(pages 130-135 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:
  - At the wedding of Cana, Mary does not order Jesus to perform His first miracle but tells the attendants to “do whatever he tells you” (Jn. 2:5). How does this simple instruction reveal the heart of the Gospel? In 1942, Bl. Teresa of Calcutta made a private vow to God “to give to God anything that He may ask, ‘Not to refuse Him anything’” (*Mother Teresa: Come Be My Light* 2007, p. 32). Meditate upon these words. Do you refuse Jesus anything? Do you do whatever He tells you? Humbly ask the Lord to make up for your failings and to inspire your heart with joyful obedience, never to refuse Him anything.



*The Marriage at Cana* by the Master of the Retable of the Reyes Católicos

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- “We owe obedience to God, to the Holy Church, and to the hierarchy” (p. 132). Are there any wounds between you and Christ’s Church that need healing? Does anything keep you from fully embracing the Church—her teachings and her very being—as a spouse embraces his beloved? Does anything keep you from being in full communion with the Mystical Body of Christ? Ask the Lord for greater trust in the goodness of His Church and docility before her teachings.
- As you read this section of the book are you tempted to think: “I have so much self-love; I am not submissive; I always have thoughts of pride... I am what you say we must not be” (p. 134)? Are such thoughts true? Do you just have a proud nature or are you actually a proud person? “The truly proud person is the one who takes pleasure in his pride, who sees no evil in it... This is not the case with you, who do not consent to it, especially since you believe in Jesus, who repairs, who purifies, who permits evil only in order to draw from it greater good” (p. 135). Give to the Lord even the humiliation of being tempted to pride but without consenting to it.
- Finish by saying the *Our Father* in a spirit of complete abandonment. ■

### Called to Obedience

God is asking for an act of obedience, that we may come closer to him who did always the will of his Father. He is asking for patience, that we may come to him who bore all our infirmities without complaint. He is suggesting some particular act of charity, that we may come into the arms of him whose name is Love (1 Jn. 4:8). He is offering an opportunity for meekness and humility, that we may deepen our communication with Jesus, who is meek and humble of heart. He is asking this act of self-despoliation that we may be stripped of all things, with-

out support, without alleviation. This is what we mean by “call.” Not a call to do this or to do that, to suffer this or to give up that, but always a call to come to God.

Thus, we come to pray, “In the hour of my death, call me,” knowing that he will, and for the same reason that he has called me all during my life: that I may come to him. We shall be able to make that final decision to say, “Yes! yes! I choose his hour for my death, so that I may come to you,” if we have prepared for it by a lifetime of understanding what it means to be called. Do we

not see this even in our dealings with one another? If I call one of you, it is for a reason, maybe even the dearest of reasons: just that I want to see you! And when God calls us, it is for a reason, particularly in that dearest final call, which will be made because he just wants to see us. We can help one another remember, by our manner of living, that God has always the same elemental reason for each of his calls, whether in life or in death: that we may come to him.

- by Mother Mary Francis, former abbess of the Poor Clare Monastery of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Roswell, NM. ■

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## For Group Sharing

(pages 130-135 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.
- St. Frances de Sales said that "we all have a natural inclination to command, and a great aversion to obey; and yet, it is certain that it is more to our advantage to obey than to command. It is for this reason that perfect souls have so great an affection for obedience, and find in it all their delight" (*A Year with the Saints* 1891, p. 197). Why is obedience so difficult? Does our culture praise obedience as a virtue or disregard it?
  - Some fear St. Paul's teaching that "wives should be subordinate to their husbands as to the Lord" (Eph. 5:22), but this passage is not a justification for violence towards women. Earlier in the letter, St. Paul commands both husbands and wives to "be subordinate to one another out of reverence for Christ" (Eph. 5:21), and he tells husbands to "love your wives, even as Christ loved the church and handed himself over for her" (Eph. 5:25). Both husbands and wives, then, are to be mutually submissive to each other and be willing to die for each other. So why do we recoil at words like "subordination," "submission," and "obedience"? Is there



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any other path to holiness than “becoming obedient to death” (Phil. 2:8)?

- “God speaks to us in two ways: He speaks in the intimacy of the mind and heart by interior lights, by touches of His grace, by good inspirations, and by holy desires, and He speaks externally by visible legitimate authority. If there is a conflict between the two, which must take precedence?” (p. 133). What do you think? What does the author advise? What is “visible legitimate authority”?
- God chose to transmit His Revelation through intermediaries, lowly human beings, through a Church; why is this a miracle “much greater than if God had decided to guide us directly” (p. 133)? What does it say about the Lord’s faith in us and our capacity to be His image in the world? “Things have the appearance of operating humanly; but they are actually all the more divine” (p. 133).
- What does the author see as the difference between a proud person and a person who has a proud nature (p. 134-135)? Why is it so important to realize the difference between mere temptations and willful sin? How could it “be a very fruitful humiliation to recognize your pride without consenting to it” (p. 135)?

### 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. ■

### Obedience Alone by St. Maximillian Kolbe

**B**ecause God’s glory shines through most brightly in the salvation of the souls that Christ redeemed with his own blood, let it be the chief concern of the apostolic life to bring salvation and an increase in holiness to as many souls as possible. Let me briefly outline the best way to achieve this end - both for the glory of God and for the sanctification of the greatest number. God, who is infinite knowledge and infinite wisdom, knows perfectly what is to be done to give him glory, and in the clearest way possible makes his will known to us through his vice-regents on Earth. It is obedience and obedience alone that shows us God’s will with certainty... This is the path of wisdom and prudence, this is the one way by which we can come to give God the highest glory. After all, if there had been another, better way, Christ would certainly have shown it to us, by word and by example. But in fact sacred Scripture wraps up his entire long life in Nazareth with the words and he was obedient to them and it shows the rest of his life to have been passed in similar obedience - almost as an instruction to us - by showing how he came down to Earth to do the Father’s will. ■

### 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