



Faith in 52

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

Week 23: April 8th through April 14th, 2013

For Individuals

(pages 141-148 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:
 - “Do not judge intentions. I assure you, it has happened to me that, having ascribed a bad intention to someone, I have later had the proof, neat and clear, that I was wrong, that he had something completely different in mind than what I thought. What a lesson! As much as you can, ascribe good intentions to your neighbor” (p. 145). Tell Jesus about someone that bothers you, that has hurt you. Does your assessment lie in the truth of facts or simply in judging their intentions? What good intentions can you assign the person, what good qualities can you see in him or her?

A Spiritual Exercise of Charity

by Fr. Jean C.J. d'Elbee

You have good qualities— great qualities. Are you not a marvel of creation, made in the image of God? You are a masterpiece of His love, wounded, disfigured by sin, but remade by the Redeemer, more beautiful than before—and at what a price! You are loved with a great love of predilection.

Elevate your thoughts to that level when you look at your brothers and sisters. Think of their souls and see especially their good qualities. Ask in your prayers to see the beauty of souls which surround you. A soul in a state of grace is the dwelling place of the Father and of Jesus, the temple of the Holy Spirit. It participates in the intimate life of the three Divine Persons. If I could see the splendor of such a soul, I would die from the vision. *Lord, increase my faith, so that, not stopping at externals but penetrating beyond them, I may know how to contemplate these divine realities.*

- from *I Believe in Love*, p. 143-144. ■

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- “To pardon an injustice received is to heal the wound in your own heart” (p. 148). Who do you need to forgive, both for their sake and your own?
- Finish by saying the *Our Father* in a spirit of complete abandonment. ■

His Friend is My Friend

Love of neighbor is thus shown to be possible in the way proclaimed by the Bible, by Jesus. It consists in the very fact that, in God and with God, I love even the person whom I do not like or even know. This can only take place on the basis of an intimate encounter with God, an encounter which has become a communion of will, even affecting my feelings. Then I learn to look on this other person not simply with my eyes and my feelings, but from the perspective of Jesus Christ. His friend is my friend. Going beyond exterior appearances, I perceive in others an interior desire for a sign of love, of concern. This I can offer them not only through the organizations intended for such purposes, accepting it perhaps as a political necessity. Seeing with the eyes of Christ, I can give to others much more than their outward necessities; I can give them the look of love which they crave. Here we see the necessary interplay between love of God

and love of neighbor which the First Letter of John speaks of with such insistence. If I have no contact whatsoever with God in my life, then I cannot see in the other anything more than the other, and I am incapable of seeing in him the image of God. But if in my life I fail completely to heed others, solely out of a desire to be “devout” and to perform my “religious duties”, then my relationship with God will also grow arid. It becomes merely “proper”, but loveless. Only my readiness to encounter my neighbor and to show him love makes me sensitive to God as well. Only if I serve my neighbor can my eyes be opened to what God does for me and how much he loves me. The saints—consider the example of Blessed Teresa of Calcutta—constantly renewed their capacity for love of neighbor from their encounter with the Eucharistic Lord, and conversely this encounter acquired its realism and depth in their service to others. Love of



Bl. Mother Teresa Loving Jesus

God and love of neighbor are thus inseparable, they form a single commandment. But both live from the love of God who has loved us first. No longer is it a question, then, of a “commandment” imposed from without and calling for the impossible, but rather of a freely-bestowed experience of love from within, a love which by its very nature must then be shared with others. Love grows through love. Love is “divine” because it comes from God and unites us to God; through this unifying process it makes us a “we” which transcends our divisions and makes us one, until in the end God is “all in all” (1 Cor. 15:28).

- from Pope Benedict XVI's *God is Love: Deus Caritas Est* (2006), §18. ■

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For Group Sharing

(pages 141-148 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.
- What is the Church's principle of solidarity (see *On the Principle of Solidarity* on this page)? How does Jesus explain it in Luke 10:25-37?
 - What are the two great commandments of the Lord (Mt. 22:36-40)? How are the two connected? Why is "love of the Lord" the first of the two? "In order to love one another, love the Lord; plunge yourselves into His Heart, and draw love for others out of this abyss of charity" (p. 142).
 - "Do not start thinking, 'I would like to be a hermit. I would commit fewer sins against charity'" (p.

On the Principle of Solidarity

by Bl. John Paul II

Solidarity is not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people, both near and far. On the contrary, it is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say, to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all.

- from *On Social Concern: Sollicitudo rei Socialis* (1987), §38.

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.

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For Group Sharing

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143). Have you ever had this fleeting thought? Why is it a false escape?

- Why do “we have a tendency to become obsessed by the faults of those around us” (p. 144)? How does reminding ourselves that we often “have even worse faults” help us become more loving (p. 144)?
- Jesus says: “Stop judging, that you may not be judged” (Mt. 7:1). Does this mean that we cannot judge people’s actions or that we must tolerate all evils? To what kind of “judging” is Jesus referring? “Do not put final labels on others, as if no correction were possible. Shun definitive labels, especially with children” (p. 145).
- How did Therese react and respond to fellow sisters who were less appealing or irritating (p. 145-146)? In what does perfect charity consist (p. 146)?
- In loving people, is there room for fraternal correction, practical counsel, objective critiques, and even some forms of anger (p. 147-148)?

STEP 4: CLOSING PRAYER

1. When finished with the discussion, the entire group should conclude with the *Regina Caeli* or *Queen of Heaven*:

Queen of Heaven, rejoice, alleluia. • For He whom you did merit to bear, alleluia. • Has risen, as he said, alleluia. • Pray for us to God, alleluia.

V. Rejoice and be glad, O Virgin Mary, alleluia.

R. For the Lord has truly risen, alleluia.

Let us pray. O God, who gave joy to the world through the resurrection of Thy Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, grant we beseech Thee, that through the intercession of the Virgin Mary, His Mother, we may obtain the joys of everlasting life. Through the same Christ our Lord. ■

On the Principle of Solidarity (Continued from page 3)

In this way what we nowadays call the principle of solidarity, the validity of which both in the internal order of each nation and in the international order I have discussed in the Encyclical *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, is clearly seen to be one of the fundamental principles of the Christian view of social and political organization. This principle is frequently stated by Pope Leo XIII, who uses the term “friendship”, a concept already found in Greek philosophy. Pope Pius XI refers to it with the equally meaningful term “social charity”. Pope Paul VI, expanding the concept to cover the many modern aspects of the social question, speaks of a “civilization of love”.

- from *On the Hundredth Anniversary of Rerum Novarum: Centesimus Annus* (1991), §10. ■



Christ and the Adulteress by Lorenzo Lotto

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