



Faith in 52

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

Week 24: April 15th through April 21st, 2013

For Individuals

(pages 148-150 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:
 - We often assign motives to people’s actions without any facts whatsoever: “The imagination starts working; a thousand phantoms invade the mind; grievances multiply; all sorts of bad intentions are taken for granted” (p. 149). Such endless ruminating isolates us from the truth and always ends badly. Rather than ponder things endlessly to yourself and away from God, turn to Him and talk to Him about the situation. Try to cultivate this habit, always taking the opportunity to share your thoughts with God rather than stew on them alone. Never talk only to yourself again; try talking only to God... about everything.

On Charity to Neighbor

by St. Maximus the Confessor

A man is blessed if he can love all men equally. Moreover, if he truly loves God, he must love his neighbor absolutely...

Since he imitates God’s generosity, the only distinction he draws is the person’s need. He does not distinguish b/w a good man and a bad one, a just man and one who is unjust. Yet his own goodness of will makes him prefer the man who strives after virtue to the one who is depraved. ■



Detail from *Washing of the Apostles' Feet*
by Giovanni Agostino da Lodi

(Continued on page 2)

Faith in 52

Week 24: April 15th through April 21st, 2013

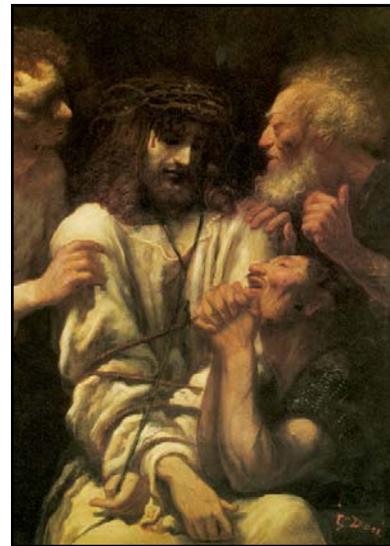
(Continued from page 1)

- “It is just and it is a joy to think about the goodness in our neighbor” (p. 149). Spend some time thinking about the virtues in your neighbor, especially those people that perturb you. Thank Jesus for these people and for the good things you have discovered in them.
- Finish by saying the *Our Father* in a spirit of complete abandonment. ■

Father, Forgive Them, For They Know Not What They Do

On this day Calvary presented an altogether different spectacle. Majestic and calm, as he had been before the tribunals of Caiphas, Herod, and Pilate, Jesus is silent. In vain do the chief priests and Scribes, exulting in their triumph, joke with one another as they sneeringly repeat: “He saved others; let him save himself. If he is the Christ, the King of Israel, the Chosen One, the Son of God, let him come down from the cross and we will believe in him.” In vain do the passers-by, misled by the priests, nod their heads and repeat: “Thou who destroyest the Temple and in three days buildest it up again, save thyself. If thou art the Son of God, come down from the cross.” Jesus is silent. Not a word of reproach, not a sigh, not a single plaint. The first word that he utters aloud is a word of pardon: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” In his capacity as advocate and intercessor he appeals to the mercy of his Father, urging

what can, in some measure, lessen the crime of the guilty: “They know not what they do.” Pronounced in such circumstances and in favor of such criminals, this word has seemed so strange that many ancient copyists have omitted it from the text of the Gospels; and many commentators, while accepting it, have restricted it, declining to understand it about the Saviour’s declared enemies. That the soldiers, blindly executing a sentence whose injustice they were incapable of appreciating, and the common people, led astray by their spiritual guides, may be worthy of pardon and excuse—let that pass; but that the rulers of the priests and of the Pharisees, who have so long been plotting the death of the Just One, who have forced the hand of Pilate to wrest from him a condemnation—that they know not what they do passes belief. And yet it is for them also that he intercedes with his Father. He who had commanded his



The Mocking of Christ
by Paul-Gustave Doré

own to love their enemies and to pray for their persecutors gives them an example in this supreme moment. And it is thus that his true disciples will understand it. The protomartyr, St. Stephen, and St. James the Less, when receiving the death stroke, will repeat the words of Jesus on the cross: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

- from Fr. Ferdinand Prat, S.J., *Jesus Christ: His Life, His Teaching, and His Work, Volume II* (1950), p. 384-385. ■

Faith in 52

Week 24: April 15th through April 21st, 2013

For Group Sharing

(pages 148-150 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.
- Do we live in a time that devalues personal responsibility, in which people do not accept blame for their actions? Where do you encounter such an attitude and how is it deleterious? Does admitting that there may be mitigating circumstances in people's bad behaviors

The Preeminence of Charity by Bl. Isaac of Stella

Why, brothers, are we so little concerned to seek one another's well-being, so that where we see a greater need, we might show a greater readiness to help and carry one another's burdens? For this is what the blessed apostle Paul urges us to do in the words: *Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ; and also: Support each other in charity.* For this surely is the law of Christ.

Why can I not patiently bear the weakness I see in my brother which, either out of necessity or because of physical or moral weakness, cannot be corrected? And why can I not instead generously offer him consolation, as it is written: *Their children shall be carried on their shoulders and consoled upon their knees?* Is it because I lack that virtue which suffers all things, is patient enough to bear all, and generous enough to love?

This is indeed the law of Christ, who truly *bore our weaknesses* in his passion and *carried our sorrows* out of pity, loving those he carried and carrying those he loved. Whoever attacks a brother in need, or plots against him in his weak-

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued on page 4)

Faith in 52

Week 24: April 15th through April 21st, 2013

For Group Sharing

(Continued from page 3)

necessarily remove all personal culpability or does it leave room for patience? "There are so many excuses to be found for the faults of others: their heredity, their education, their temperament, their interior trials, their physical state" (p. 149). In the end, Christ said, "Father, forgive them," but that's not all he said. Jesus said: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Lk. 23:34). Why did He say the latter part?

- St. Therese said that "we must treat them (our neighbors), even the most imperfect, with precautions like those that are taken for bodily ills... Yes, I feel that I must have as much compassion for the spiritual infirmities of my sisters as they have for my physical infirmities" (p. 149). How do you comfort those who are physically sick? Do you treat those who are morally or spiritually weak in the same way?
- For what do you think Jesus thirsted when, upon the cross, He said, "I thirst" (Jn. 19:28)? Did He receive whatever it was? Was He seeking relief or refreshment or was He actually seeking to drink away our sourness? "Swallow the bitterness, as Jesus swallowed the vinegar on Calvary, and know how to smile at those who cause you pain" (p. 150). Why is it so hard and so necessary to forgive "without limit" (p. 150)?

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. ■

The Preeminence of Charity (Continued from page 3)

ness of whatever sort, surely fulfills the devil's law and subjects himself to it. Let us then be compassionate toward one another, loving all our brothers, bearing one another's weaknesses, yet ridding ourselves of our sins.

The more any way of life sincerely strives for the love of God and the love of our neighbor for God's sake, the more acceptable it is to God, no matter what be its observances or external form. For charity is the reason why anything should be done or left undone, changed or left unchanged; it is the initial principle and the end to which all things should be directed. Whatever is honestly done out of love and in accordance with love can never be blameworthy. May he then deign to grant us this love, for without it we cannot please him, and without him we can do absolutely nothing, God, who lives and reigns forever. Amen. ■



Detail from *Pietà* by Carlo Crivelli

Next Eucharistic "Hour of Power" in English

- Saturday, May 4th, 7-8 p.m., St. Peter Church

Next Parish Dessert Potluck*

- Saturday, May 4th, 8-9 p.m., McMahon Hall