



Faith in 52

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

Week 26: April 29th through May 5th, 2013

For Individuals

(pages 156-162 of the book *I Believe in Love*)

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:
 - Tell Jesus about those persons in your life who are hard to love. Afterwards, pray: *“Jesus, to love my neighbor as You love me is impossible with my poor heart so small, so narrow, so mean. Therefore, in giving me this precept, You must give me Your own Heart, to fulfill it”* (p. 157). *“Jesus, meek and humble of heart, give me Your Heart to love my neighbor”* (p. 159).
 - Meditate on your own death: the wake, the funeral, etc. What do you believe people will say about you when you are dead? Do these imagined comments truly reflect who you are? What do you wish they would say about you as they pass by your coffin? How can you bridge the gap between what you aspire to be and who you are? Tell Jesus what you need.
 - Review the Spiritual and Corporeal Works of Mercy found in this handout on pages two and four respectively. Ask the Holy Spirit to assist you in remembering any times when you executed or received a Corporeal and/or Spiritual Work of Mercy? What happened? Imagine yourself there again. Where was the Lord loving you in this exchange?
 - When in the past have you felt the tug of the Holy Spirit but failed to commit an act of Spiritual or Corporeal Mercy? Ask the Lord to bring about a greater good for the specific people you ignored or failed than if you had never neglected them in the first place.
 - Finish by saying the *Our Father* in a spirit of complete abandonment. ■

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Perfect Friendship

But the warning is this: do not ask from any human being that which God only can give. I grant you that God gives himself through human beings and unites himself through human relationships, provided the people involved realize their human relationships as a mutual giving and receiving of Christ-life and the Holy Spirit, and do nothing to frustrate this. But God does not give himself wholly through any one friend, lover, husband or what not: I mean rather that although every real friendship is a mutual Christ-giving, no one friend can give God to you so perfectly as completely to satisfy and fill your need for his love.

Human elements enter into every human relationship, and disturb the serenity of them all sometimes. You see, we all tend to ask from the other human being things that God alone can give and we can only attain by a mutual and conscious turning to God together, and accepting from God together whatever suffering is the condition of love—and of course suffering in some measure is the condition of all love and every love...

God's love for those we love is



The Meeting of St. Anthony and St. Paul
by Sassetta (Stefano di Giovanni)

infinitely greater than our own, and it is as well to remember it, and to remember it especially when he allows things to happen which threaten both their happiness or safety, and ours.

And it is also the ultimate reason why, despite the Christ-giving element in our relationships, they can never be perfect here. There must be empty places left in our hearts, because the final happiness of both depends upon God himself possessing us completely: once that is achieved, heaven can begin for both, and in heaven of course, unlike here,

our friendships will take part, not only imperfectly, in God, but perfectly.

That, however, won't happen here; so, while thanking God for the joy and miracle of your new friendships, do not demand perfection of them, and do not be disappointed when trials arise. Actually, but for the failure of other relationships in your life, and for the suffering you have had through them, which, by the by, you have borne with magnificent fortitude and sweetness, but for those things you would not now be ready, fashioned as it were by the hammer of God.

- from Caryll Houselander, *The Letters of Caryll Houselander: Her Spiritual Legacy*,
Maisie Ward Ed. (Sheed & Ward
Publishers: 1965). ■

Spiritual Works of Mercy

- To instruct the ignorant
- To counsel the doubtful
- To admonish the sinner
- To comfort the sorrowful
- To forgive injuries
- To bear wrongs patiently
- To pray for the living and the dead

“He said to them, ‘Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature’” (Mk. 16:15). ■

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For Group Sharing

(pages 156-162 of the book *I Believe in Love*)

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 Matthew 25:31-46, Jesus is clear that we will be judged by our charity or lack thereof (p. 158-159). What does He mean? Can we enter into Heaven

Love of God & Love of Neighbor by Father Jean-Nicolas Grou, S.J.

Hold it as an impossible thing that anyone who is not interior can attain to the perfect accomplishment of this precept of love for our neighbor, because, to do it perfectly, we must die in such a manner to our own spirit and our own will, that we may be guided entirely by the spirit of Jesus Christ and be animated by his charity. Otherwise, the occasions of wounding this charity, at all events slightly, present themselves incessantly; self-love, however little may remain of it, still has power to influence the heart; it still leads away and corrupts our judgment, rules over our affections, and does all this perhaps in a manner that is imperceptible to us. Now, in those persons who are not really interior, although they are supposed to be pious and holy, there is always a depth of self-love, which they know nothing about, which makes them blind and unjust with regard to their neighbor. And I must even add that in many cases the duties of charity are so delicate and refined that, without a supernatural light, it is impossible to distinguish them clearly or appreciate them justly; that these duties are so difficult to fulfill, that we have need to do so properly, of a virtue far above the common; and finally,

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For Group Sharing

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without loving our neighbor and our enemy here below?

- Review the Spiritual and Corporeal Works of Mercy found in this handout on pages two and four respectively. In which of these activities have you taken part in the last week? The last month? The last year? Describe these experiences of charity to the group and speak of any graces you or those served received.
- “It is in the degree to which you change yourself that everything around you will change” (p. 160). How does the author believe this change will take place (p. 160)? Does the state of a person’s interior life affect those around him?
- Do we have an obligation to care actively for our neighbor? Pope John XXIII said, “Let each one feel himself responsible for the realization of the common good in all sectors of social life” (p. 161). Who then is our neighbor?
- Discuss which social injustices “prevent you from sleeping” (p. 161). Why do these issues affect you so? What can be done to alleviate them?
- How does “the doctrine of abandonment” help you to love your neighbor and your Lord (p. 161-162)?

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. ■

Love of God & Love of Neighbor (Continued from page 3)
that they sometimes require sacrifices, which can only be made by those who are accustomed to die entirely to themselves.

- from *Manual for Interior Souls: A Collection of Unpublished Writings* (United Kingdom: Burns Oates & Washbourne Ltd., 1892). ■

Corporeal Works of Mercy

- To feed the hungry
- To give drink to the thirsty
- To clothe the naked
- To shelter the homeless
- To visit the sick
- To visit the imprisoned
- To bury the dead

“Then they will answer and say, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or ill or in prison, and not minister to your needs?’ He will answer them, ‘Amen, I say to you, what you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me.’ I And these will go off to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life” (Mt. 25:44-46). ■



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