



# Faith in 52

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

Week 27: May 6th through May 12th, 2013

## For Individuals

(pages 163-166 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:
  - “The supreme law of the Church is the salvation of souls (*salute animarum, quae in Ecclesia suprema lex semper lex esse debet*),” (*Code of Canon Law*, Can. 1752). Like Jesus, do you “thirst” for the salvation of souls (p. 165)? What keeps you from caring about the eternal destiny of your neighbor? Ask the Lord right now to awaken in your heart His own desire to save souls, to rescue them, and to see them arrive safely home.
  - Father Mateo said, “An apostle is a chalice full of Jesus which overflows onto souls” (p. 165). Meditate on these words. Every time you receive Holy Communion, you drink from the living fountains flowing from Christ’s open side. Every time you evangelize, show mercy, and love your neighbor, you are “poured out like a libation” (2 Tim. 4:6). Beseech the Lord to fill you with His Divine Life, especially when receiving the Eucharist.
  - Finish by saying the *Our Father* in a spirit of complete abandonment. ■

**D**ear friends, do not be afraid to take up this challenge: be holy men and women! Do not forget that the fruits of the apostolate depend on the depth of spiritual life, on the intensity of prayer, on continual formation and on sincere adherence to the Church’s directives. Today I repeat to you... that if you are what you should be—that is, if you live Christianity without compromise—you will set the world ablaze.

- from a Homily by Bl. John Paul II on the  
Jubilee of the Apostolate of the Laity  
(Nov. 26, 2000). ■

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## The Christian in the World

Christians are indistinguishable from other men either by nationality, language or customs. They do not inhabit separate cities of their own, or speak a strange dialect, or follow some outlandish way of life. Their teaching is not based upon reveries inspired by the curiosity of men. Unlike some other people, they champion no purely human doctrine. With regard to dress, food and manner of life in general, they follow the customs of whatever city they happen to be living in, whether it is Greek or foreign.

And yet there is something extraordinary about their lives. They live in their own countries as though they were only passing through. They play their full role as citizens, but labor under all the disabilities of aliens. Any country can be their homeland, but for them their homeland, wherever it may be, is a foreign country. Like others, they marry and have children, but they do not expose them. They share their meals, but not their wives.

They live in the flesh, but they are not governed by the desires of the flesh. They pass their days upon earth, but they are citizens of heaven. Obedi-

ent to the laws, they yet live on a level that transcends the law. Christians love all men, but all men persecute them. Condemned because they are not understood, they are put to death, but raised to life again. They live in poverty, but enrich many; they are totally destitute, but possess an abundance of everything. They suffer dishonor, but that is their glory. They are defamed, but vindicated. A blessing is their answer to abuse, deference their response to insult. For the good they do they receive the punishment of malefactors, but even then they rejoice, as though receiving the gift of life. They are attacked by the Jews as aliens, they are persecuted by the Greeks, yet no one can explain the reason for this hatred.

To speak in general terms, we may say that the Christian is to the world what the soul is to the body. As the soul is present in every part of the body, while remaining distinct from it, so Christians are found in all the cities of the world, but cannot be identified with the world. As the visible body contains the invisible soul, so Christians are seen living in the world, but their religious life remains

unseen. The body hates the soul and wars against it, not because of any injury the soul has done it, but because of the restriction the soul places on its pleasures. Similarly, the world hates the Christians, not because they have done it any wrong, but because they are opposed to its enjoyments.

Christians love those who hate them just as the soul loves the body and all its members despite the body's hatred. It is by the soul, enclosed within the body, that the body is held together, and similarly, it is by the Christians, detained in the world as in a prison, that the world is held together. The soul, though immortal, has a mortal dwelling place; and Christians also live for a time amidst perishable things, while awaiting the freedom from change and decay that will be theirs in heaven. As the soul benefits from the deprivation of food and drink, so Christians flourish under persecution. Such is the Christian's lofty and divinely appointed function, from which he is not permitted to excuse himself.

- from a Letter by Diognetus  
(Nn. 5-6; Funk, 397-401). ■



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## For Group Sharing

(pages 163-166 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.
- The Catholic Church is the largest charitable organization in the world. Discuss some of the corporeal works of mercy carried out by the Church.

### **The Lay Apostolate**

The laity are gathered together in the People of God and make up the Body of Christ under one head. Whoever they are they are called upon, as living members, to expend all their energy for the growth of the Church and its continuous sanctification, since this very energy is a gift of the Creator and a blessing of the Redeemer.

The lay apostolate, however, is a participation in the salvific mission of the Church itself. Through their baptism and confirmation all are commissioned to that apostolate by the Lord Himself. Moreover, by the sacraments, especially holy Eucharist, that charity toward God and man which is the soul of the apostolate is communicated and nourished. Now the laity are called in a special way to make the Church present and operative in those places and circumstances where only through them can it become the salt of the earth. Thus every layman, in virtue of the very gifts bestowed upon him, is at the same time a witness and a living instrument of the mission of the Church itself “according to the measure of Christ's bestowal” (Eph. 4:7).

Besides this apostolate which certainly pertains to all Christians, the laity can also be called in various ways to a more direct form of cooperation in the apostolate of the Hierarchy. This was the way certain men and

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## For Group Sharing

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In your opinion, do we do as good a job providing for the needs of the soul? What holds us back from more directly inquiring about and attending to the spiritual state of those receiving material assistance? Though not mutually exclusive, which is more important to provide: physical relief or spiritual salvation?

- Pope Paul VI stated: "You know well that it is the task of the whole Church to continue to develop the mission of salvation of all whom Christ entrusts to her. This task belongs not only to the hierarchy, but to the laity also, by virtue of their membership in the Mystical Body of Christ, and of their participation in His mission and His royal priesthood" (p. 164; Discourse of April 12, 1964). Like Pope Paul VI, the documents of Vatican II clearly explain that the laity are called as much as the priests and consecrated men and women to evangelize the world. Why did the Council Fathers feel the need to emphasize this particular point? What was going on in the world and in the Church at the time? Do the laity understand the importance of their mission now? What still creates confusion? How do you personally share in this mission?
- Jesus boldly proclaims: "I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing" (Jn. 15:5). How is the fruitfulness of our apostolate dependent upon our own interior relationship with Jesus?

### **STEP 4: CLOSING PRAYER**

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

**Q**ueen 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. ■

**The Lay Apostolate** (Continued from page 3)

women assisted Paul the Apostle in the Gospel, laboring much in the Lord (cf. Phil. 4-3; Rom. 16:3 ff.). Further, they have the capacity to assume from the Hierarchy certain ecclesiastical functions, which are to be performed for a spiritual purpose.

Upon all the laity, therefore, rests the noble duty of working to extend the divine plan of salvation to all men of each epoch and in every land. Consequently, may every opportunity be given them so that, according to their abilities and the needs of the times, they may zealously participate in the saving work of the Church.

- from Pope Paul VI, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (Lumen Gentium)* (Nov. 21, 1964), §33. ■



The Vine and the Lamb

A mosaic from the Dormition Abbey in the Holy Land

### **Next Eucharistic "Hour of Power" in English**

- Saturday, June 1st, 7-8 p.m., St. Peter Church

### **Next Parish Dessert Potluck\***

- Saturday, June 1st, 8-9 p.m., McMahon Hall