



Faith in 52

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

Week 28: May 13th through May 19th, 2013

For Individuals

(pages 166-167 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:
 - “Souls are on the way to perdition—what anguish! Think of these souls for whom the Savior has suffered so much, has poured out all His Blood. Such souls, made for happiness, risk being lost forever in Hell, being fixed, like Satan, in the hatred of Him who is nothing but love” (p. 166). Pray for those in your midst who seem to be living in Hell, especially those caught up in habitual or hardened sin. Pray that Heaven might find them and free them.
 - Those suffering from despair often confuse their very being with the misery they endure. In such confusion they can be tempted to think that their existence is a “curse” that must be escaped, but the true curse is not their life but death; what they are experiencing is a taste of Hell. God desires us to have joy and for that joy to be complete (Jn. 15:11); He does not want you to be in Hell any more than you do. If you suffer from despair, depression, or rage, ask the good Lord for the grace to choose your life, to love your life, to live your life and to live it to the full. Know and believe that your existence is a blessing; firmly renounce all temptations and false ideas to the contrary.
 - Finish by saying the *Our Father* in a spirit of complete abandonment. ■



The Last Judgment (detail)
by Hans Memling

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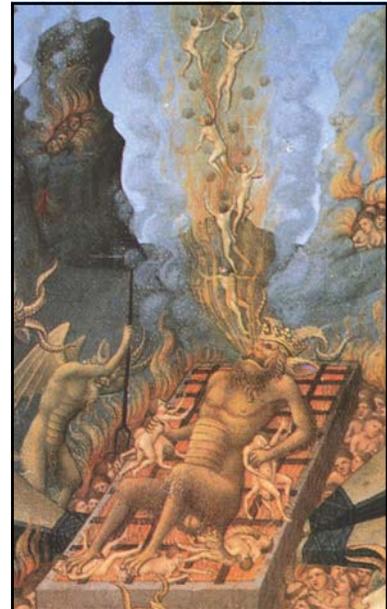
What the Hell? (I'm Kidding on the Title)

Time and again, as I go about the work of evangelization, I encounter from both believers and non-believers, a fierce objection to the doctrine of Hell. In its most radical form, it runs something like this: how could a God who is described as infinitely good create, sustain, and send people to a place of everlasting torment?...

... It might be wise to note first that Hell is hardly an ecclesiastical invention of the middle ages. In point of fact, "Gehenna" and the "everlasting fire" are mentioned frequently by Jesus himself, and the existence of Hell is confirmed by our greatest theologians and spiritual teachers from ancient times to the present day. And one can find a pithy defense of the doctrine in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* from 1992. The belief is so persistent, I would argue, because it is a corollary of two other essential beliefs, namely, that God is love and that we are free. Let me say a word about each of these. For Catholic theology, love is not something that God does or one attribute among many that God happens to have. Rather, love is what God is. To

will the good of the other as other is the very nature, substance, and essence of God. Accordingly, God doesn't love some and hate others; he doesn't fall in and out of emotional states, sometimes loving and sometimes hating. To use Jesus' own metaphor, he is like the sun that shines on the good and the bad alike. God doesn't love us because we've been morally upright; rather, whatever moral goodness we have is the result of God having loved us. This is the principle, basic to all Biblical thought, of the primacy of grace.

...God made human beings in his own image and likeness, which is to say, he endowed them with mind and will and thereby invited them to respond to his love, not simply by the goodness of their being but by the integrity of their freedom. He wanted them to have the opportunity to participate personally in the love that he is. But this freedom carried with it, necessarily, a shadow, namely, the possibility of abuse. We who have been made in God's image, can decide not to live in accord with that image; we who have been invited to answer God's love



Tundal's Hell, from *Trés Riches Heures* by the Limbourg Brothers

with our love can answer it instead with resistance... As C.S. Lewis put it, "the door to Hell is always locked from the inside," for it is always our perverse freedom, and not the divine choice, that locks us away from God...

Therefore, if there are any people in Hell (and the church has never obliged us to believe that any human is in that state), they are there, not because God capriciously "sent" them, but because they absolutely insist on not joining in the party.

- from Rev. Robert Barron, *Word on Fire* website (Oct. 2, 2009). ■

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For Group Sharing

(pages 166-167 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 Lost Sheep by St. Augustine of Hippo

The straying sheep you have not recalled; the lost sheep you have not sought. In one way or another, we go on living between the hands of robbers and the teeth of raging wolves, and in light of these present dangers we ask your prayers. The sheep moreover are insolent. The shepherd seeks out the straying sheep, but because they have wandered away and are lost they say that they are not ours. “Why do you want us? Why do you seek us?” they ask, as if their straying and being lost were not the very reason for our wanting them and seeking them out. “If I am straying”, he says, “if I am lost, why do you want me?” You are straying, that is why I wish to recall you. You have been lost, I wish to find you. “But I wish to stray”, he says: “I wish to be lost”.

So you wish to stray and be lost? How much better that I do not also wish this. Certainly, I dare say, I am unwelcome. But I listen to the Apostle who says: *Preach the word; insist upon it, welcome and unwelcome*. Welcome to whom? Unwelcome to whom? By all means welcome to those who desire it; unwelcome to those who do not. However unwelcome, I dare to say: “You wish to stray, you wish to be lost; but I do not want this”. For the one whom I fear does not wish this. And should I wish it, consider his words of reproach: *The straying sheep you have not recalled; the lost sheep you have not sought.*

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For Group Sharing

(Continued from page 3)

- “Remember that a place exists where a soul can no longer say, ‘Jesus, I have confidence in You; save me’” (p. 166). Do you believe in Hell? What is it? Why don’t preachers and people talk about the real possibility of Hell anymore? Can a person, because of their choices, already be in a kind of hell even in this mortal coil?
- “It depends upon us whether more or fewer are saved” (p. 166). Do you think people realize that they play an essential role in the salvation of others? Is the salvation of souls the driving force behind your activities, even charitable works? If not, what would your endeavors look like if it were?
- “Think of the ignorance, the indifference of the masses who are without Christ, either in life or death... Think of the millions of pagans who cover the world in greater numbers each day... Imagine the many baptized who lack a supernatural outlook...” (p. 167). What are you doing to evangelize them, to help save them?
- St. Francis of Assisi said: “Love and cause to be loved the Love which is not loved” (p. 167). What does this saintly instruction mean?

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. ■

The Lost Sheep (Continued from page 3)

Shall I fear you rather than him? Remember, we must all present ourselves before the judgment seat of Christ.

I shall recall the straying; I shall seek the lost. Whether they wish it or not, I shall do it. And should the brambles of the forests tear at me when I seek them, I shall force myself through all straits; I shall put down all

hedges. So far as the God whom I fear grants me the strength, I shall search everywhere. I shall recall the straying; I shall seek after those on the verge of being lost. If you do not want me to suffer, do not stray, do not become lost. It is enough that I lament your straying and loss. No, I fear that in neglecting you, I shall also kill what is strong. Consider the passage that follows: *And what was strong you have destroyed*. Should I neglect the straying and lost, the strong one will also take delight in straying and in being lost.



The Annunciation to the Shepherds
by Boucicaut Master n.d.

- from *Sermo* 46, 14-15: CCL 41, 541-542. ■

Next Eucharistic “Hour of Power” in English

- Saturday, July 6th, 7-8 p.m., St. Peter Church

Next Parish Dessert Potluck*

- Saturday, July 6th, 8-9 p.m., McMahon Hall