



Faith in 52

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

Week 30: May 27th through June 2nd, 2013

For Individuals

(pages 174-180 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:
 - Speak to your Savior in the following words: *“Jesus, I unite myself to the wonders You work in me. I know for certain that I love You today more than yesterday and that tomorrow I shall love You more than today, because I have opened my heart to Your grace, which is a torrent which ceaselessly engulfs me and continually transforms me into Yourself and spreads out to others’.”* (p. 175).
 - “Carry a great apostolic spirit into your prayers. Pray to obtain mercy for souls. Jesus could have saved men without us. He did not will to do it that way” (p. 176). You have an invaluable role in the salvation of others through your heartfelt love, prayers, and sacrifices. Do not underestimate the power of these hidden acts: *“A soul which loves can obtain pardon for a thousand criminals’.”* (p. 177). “Thank Him every day for the souls which you save, without knowing it, by your acts of love” (p. 174-175).
 - Are you sometimes distressed by the state of the world and even the “evident traces of human weakness” within the Church herself (p. 177)? Do not let such understandable concerns lead you into despair or doubt; rather, allow them to inspire you “with a greater desire to save unfaithful souls” (p. 177). Turn to Jesus as He turns to you, and pray as St. Paul did: “Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ on behalf of his body, which is the church” (Col. 1:24).
 - Finish by saying the *Our Father* in a spirit of complete abandonment. ■

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Desire to Be a Saint

Why should our praise and glorification, or even the celebration of this feast day (All Saints Day) mean anything to the saints? What do they care about earthly honors when their heavenly Father honors them by fulfilling the faithful promise of the Son? What does our commendation mean to them? The saints have no need of honor from us; neither does our devotion add the slightest thing to what is theirs. Clearly, if we venerate their memory, it serves us, not them. But I tell you, when I think of them, I feel myself inflamed by a tremendous yearning.

Calling the saints to mind inspires, or rather arouses in us, above all else, a longing to enjoy their company, so desirable in itself. We long to share in the citizenship of heaven, to dwell with the spirits of the blessed, to join the assembly of patriarchs, the ranks of the prophets, the council of apostles, the great host of martyrs, the noble company of confessors and the choir of virgins. In short, we long to be united in happiness with all the saints. But our dispositions change. The Church of all the first followers of Christ awaits us, but



Christ Glorified in the Court of Heaven (detail) by Fra Angelico

we do nothing about it. The saints want us to be with them, and we are indifferent. The souls of the just await us, and we ignore them.

We should not only want to be with the saints, we should also hope to possess their happiness.

Come, brothers, let us at length spur ourselves on. We must rise again with Christ, we must seek the world which is above and set our mind on the things of heaven. Let us long for those who are longing for us, hasten to those who are waiting for us, and ask those who look for our coming to intercede for us. We should not only want to be with the saints, we should also hope to possess their happiness. While we desire to be in their company, we must also earnestly

seek to share in their glory. Do not imagine that there is anything harmful in such an ambition as this; there is no danger in setting our hearts on such glory.

When we commemorate the saints we are inflamed with another yearning: that Christ our life may also appear to us as he appeared to them and that we may one day share in his glory...

Therefore, we should aim at attaining this glory with a wholehearted and prudent desire. That we may rightly hope and strive for such blessedness, we must above all seek the prayers of the saints. Thus, what is beyond our own powers to obtain will be granted through their intercession.

- from St. Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sermo 2: Opera omnia*, Edit. Cisterc. 5 (1968), p. 364-368. ■

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For Group Sharing

(pages 174-180 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.
- "Some are astonished when they see the number of unbelievers, the number of pagans, of impious and impenitent sinners in the world, compared with that of the faithful. There is a surprising disproportion there which is hard to explain" (p. 176). Why does the author think that "Divine Providence has permitted this" situation (p. 176-178)? What does Pius XII, in *Mystici Corporis Christi*, say on the matter (p. 177)? Does this state of affairs dispense any need to be a "leaven among the masses" and to Christianize worldly institutions (p. 177)?
 - "Do not ask only for the return of sinners, but that good people will become very good, and that the very good will become saints. Do not ask for the conversion of souls, but for the perfection of souls" (p. 178). Sometimes we become complacent and believe ourselves to be safely situated in a kind of neutral territory between God and hell, but there is no neutral zone or buffer state when it comes to the spiritual life: Either we are moving towards God or away from Him; there is no in between. In which direction are you moving?
 - A priest once asked his parishioners during his sermon to raise their hands if they believed in God. All of them put up their arms. He asked them if they believed in the Church. Again their hands went up. He asked them who wanted to go to heaven. Unsurprisingly, everyone held their arms high in

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the air. Then the priest asked them who wanted to go to heaven right now and immediately nearly every hand lowered. Why do you think the people dropped their hands? What keeps people from desiring to become Saints more than anything else? Leon Bloy, the 19th century French intellectual, said that “there is only one tragedy in the end, not to have been a saint.” What do you think of this statement?

- “Evil displays itself; good remains unknown” (p. 179). Does this bear out in your own experience? Which is featured most in the daily news?
- “Why did Mary remain on earth after the Ascension before going to be reunited with her Son in Heaven” (p. 179)? What does the author think (p. 179-180)? How important is “the apostolate of silence in prayer, suffering, and love” (p. 179)?
- Where would you be now were it not for the prayers of others? Do you ever think about the Saints, angels, and people, both unknown and familiar, who are offering sacrifices, prayers and love for you and your salvation? Do you attribute to them the good you are able to do (p. 180)?

STEP 4: CLOSING PRAYER

1. When finished with the discussion, the entire group should conclude with the *Magnificat*:

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, ● my spirit rejoices in God my Savior ● for He has looked with favor on His lowly servant. ● From this day all generations will call me blessed: ● the Almighty has done great things for me, ● and holy is his Name.

He has mercy on those who fear Him ● in every generation. ● He has shown the strength of His arm, ● He has scattered the proud in their conceit.

He has cast down the mighty from their thrones, ● and has lifted up the lowly. ● He has filled the hungry with good things, ● and the rich He has sent away empty.

He has come to the help of His servant Israel ● for He remembered His promise of mercy, ● the promise He made to our fathers, ● to Abraham and His children forever. ● Amen. ■

The Hidden Apostolate

Every believer in this world of ours must be a spark of light, a center of love, a vivifying leaven amidst his fellow men. And he will be this all the more perfectly, the more closely he lives in communion with God in the intimacy of his own soul.

- from Bl. Pope John XXIII, *Peace on Earth: Pacem in Terris* (April 11, 1963), ¶164. ■



The Visitation at St. Peter Church, Omaha, NE

Next Eucharistic “Hour of Power” in English

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

Next Parish Dessert Potluck*

- Saturday, July 6th, 8-9 p.m., Upper Room Library