



Faith in 52

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

Week 31: June 3rd through June 9th, 2013

For Individuals

(pages 180-182 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 prayer of prayers is the Mass” (p. 180). Why are some people daily communicants who attend Mass every day? Have you ever thought about doing this, or even to attend a couple of weekday Masses each week? What attracts you to the idea? What keeps you from doing it? Meditate upon the Mass: What is it exactly? Why is it “the dearest treasure of the apostolate” (p. 180)?
 - Are you distressed because members of your immediate or extended family have left the Catholic Faith, descended into habitual sin, or broken off relations? Think about each one of these individuals and let your heart be moved by love rather than indignation. What does the Savior desire for them? Pray to see them as Jesus sees them and let your tears mingle with those of the Christ. “Then keep your confidence in the infinite mercy of the Savior,” (p. 181) and pray: *“Jesus, you love them too much not to save them’.*” (p. 181). Never give up hope and never underestimate the power of your prayers in fostering reconciliation and in leading the lost back home.
 - Finish by saying the *Our Father* in a spirit of complete abandonment. ■



Agony in the Garden (detail) by Andrea Mantegna

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The Efficacy of Prayer

We are true worshippers and true priests. We pray in spirit, and so offer in spirit the sacrifice of prayer. Prayer is an offering that belongs to God and is acceptable to him: it is the offering he has asked for, the offering he planned as his own.

We must dedicate this offering with our whole heart, we must fatten it on faith, tend it by truth, keep it unblemished through innocence and clean through chastity, and crown it with love. We must escort it to the altar of God in a procession of good works to the sound of psalms and hymns. Then it will gain for us all that we ask of God...

Of old, prayer was able to rescue from fire and beasts and hunger, even before it received its perfection from Christ. How much greater then is the power of Christian prayer. No longer does prayer bring an angel of comfort to the heart of a fiery furnace, or close up the mouths of lions, or transport to the hungry food from the fields. No longer does it remove all sense of pain by the grace it wins for others. But it gives the armor of patience to those who suffer, who feel

pain, who are distressed. It strengthens the power of grace, so that faith may know what is gaining from the Lord, and understand what it is suffering for the name of God.

In the past prayer was able to bring down punishment, rout armies, withhold the blessing of rain. Now, however, the prayer of the just turns aside the whole anger of God, keeps vigil for its enemies, pleads for persecutors. Is it any wonder that it can call down water from heaven when it could obtain fire from heaven as well? Prayer is the one thing that can conquer God. But Christ has willed that it should work no evil, and has given it all power over good.

Its only art is to call back the souls of the dead from the very journey into death, to give strength to the weak, to heal the sick, to exorcise the possessed, to open prison cells, to free the innocent from their chains. Prayer cleanses from sin, drives away temptations, stamps out persecutions, comforts the fainthearted, gives new strength to the courageous, brings travelers safely home, calms the waves, confounds robbers, feeds the poor, overrules the rich, lifts



Christ on the Mount of Olives (detail) by Sandro Botticelli

up the fallen, supports those who are falling, sustains those who stand firm.

All the angels pray. Every creature prays. Cattle and wild beasts pray and bend the knee. As they come from their barns and caves they look out to heaven and call out, lifting up their spirit in their own fashion. The birds too rise and lift themselves up to heaven: they open out their wings, instead of hands, in the form of a cross, and give voice to what seems to be a prayer.

What more need be said on the duty of prayer? Even the Lord himself prayed. To him be honor and power forever and ever. Amen.

- from Tertullian, *Treatise on Prayer* (c. late 2nd Century). ■

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For Group Sharing

(pages 180-182 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 prayer of prayers is the Mass... it is the dearest treasure of the apostolate” (p. 180). What is the Mass? Do you assist at Mass out of

(Continued on page 4)

Intercessory Prayer in the Family & the Mass **St. Augustine Reflects on St. Monica’s Passing**

Because the day when she was to leave this life was drawing near – a day known to you, though we were ignorant of it – she and I happened to be alone, through (as I believe) the mysterious workings of your will. We stood leaning against a window which looked out on a garden within the house where we were staying, at Ostia on the Tiber; for there, far from the crowds, we were recruiting our strength after the long journey, in order to prepare ourselves for our voyage overseas. We were alone, conferring very intimately. Forgetting what lay in the past, and stretching out to what was ahead, we enquired between ourselves, in the light of present truth, into what you are and what the eternal life of the saints would be like, for eye has not seen nor ear heard nor human heart conceived it. And yet, with the mouth of our hearts wide open we panted thirstily for the celestial streams of your fountain, the fount of life which is with you.

This was the substance of our talk, though not the exact words. Yet you know, O Lord, how on that very day, amid this talk of ours that seemed to make the world with all its charms grow cheap, she said, “For my part, my son, I no longer find pleasure in anything that this life holds. What I am doing here still, or why I am still here, I do not know, for worldly hope has withered away for me. One thing only there was for which I desired to linger in this life: to see you a Catholic Christian before I

(Continued on page 4)

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(Continued from page 3)

obligation or out of love? Why is it better to say that we “assist at Mass” rather than we simply “attend” or “go to Mass”?

- “While you are suffering, wait in peace for the time of Jesus, the time chosen by Him to grant your request. He will perhaps make you wait a long time, precisely as a proof of your confidence” (p. 181). Why is it so difficult to be patient with God’s plan? Have there been occasions in your life in which your faithful prayers over many years eventually yielded the fruit of your intention? What would have happened had you ceased praying? In the end, what allowed you to persist in prayer?
- How does St. Augustine’s brief account of his mother’s death found in these pages explain all of the central themes of this section of *I Believe in Love*: Parents praying for their children’s faith? The centrality of the Mass? Perseverance in prayer? The power of intercessory prayer?
- “In order to redeem souls with the Savior, you must suffer with Him and like Him” (p. 181). What is the place of suffering in redemptive love? What do you think the author means when he says that “your Mass... will be of much more value if you are there at the foot of the Cross, or better still, on the Cross” (p. 181)?

STEP 4: CLOSING PRAYER

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

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to thy protection, implored thy help, or sought thine intercession was left unaided. Inspired by this confidence, I fly unto thee, O Virgin of virgins, my mother; to thee do I come, before thee I stand, sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petitions, but in thy mercy hear and answer me. Amen. ■

Intercessory Prayer... (Continued from page 3)

died. And my God has granted this to me more lavishly than I could have hoped, letting me see even you spurning earthly happiness to be his servant. What am I still doing here?”

What I replied I cannot clearly remember, because just about that time – five days later, or not much more – she took to her bed with fever...

We were bewildered with grief, but she looked keenly at us and said, “You are to bury your mother here”. I was silent, holding back my tears, but my brother said something about his hope that she would not die far from home but in her own country, for that would be a happier way. On hearing this she looked anxious and her eyes rebuked him for thinking so; then she turned her gaze from him to me and said, “What silly talk!” Shortly afterwards, addressing us both, she said, “Lay this body anywhere, and take no trouble over it. One thing only do I ask of you, that you remember me at the altar of the Lord wherever you may be”. Having made her meaning clear to us with such words as she could muster, she fell silent, and the pain of the disease grew worse.

- from the *Confessions of St. Augustine* (Lib. 9, 10-11: CSEL 33, 215-129). ■



Next Eucharistic “Hour of Power” in English

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

Next Parish Dessert Potluck*

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