



Faith in 52

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

Week 32: June 10th through June 16th, 2013

For Individuals

(pages 182-185 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:
 - Do you suffer from chronic pain or illness? Meditate upon and receive the graces of the following truth: *“Jesus looks at you with more love than the others, because you suffer. Offer your sickness to save souls. He will listen to you because you are nailed to your bed, a little as He was on His Cross. He will listen to you, because He is moved with compassion for you”* (p. 182). Did you ever realize what a unique treasure you are to Jesus? What a prize your suffering might be? How close it places you to the Lord? How effective it might be for the conversion of your soul and the souls of others?
 - When encountering a humiliation, an inconvenience, or a pain, try saying to the Lord deliberately and joyfully: *“If, by lifting my little finger, I could change my situation and be relieved immediately, I would not lift my little finger, because it is You who have chosen this for me. You are wiser than I; You love me more than I love myself; I will let You do it. All is well”* (p. 185). Accept what the Lord has allowed.
 - Finish by saying the *Our Father* in a spirit of complete abandonment. ■



Christ after the Flagellation Contemplated by the Christian Soul (detail) by Diego Velázquez

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The Value of Suffering

Saint Paul speaks of such joy in the Letter to the Colossians: "I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake" (88). A source of joy is found in the *overcoming of the sense of the uselessness of suffering*, a feeling that is sometimes very strongly rooted in human suffering. This feeling not only consumes the person interiorly, but seems to make him a burden to others. The person feels condemned to receive help and assistance from others, and at the same time seems useless to himself. The discovery of the salvific meaning of suffering in union with Christ *transforms* this depressing *feeling*. Faith in sharing in the suffering of Christ brings with it the interior certainty that the suffering person "completes what is lacking in Christ's afflictions"; the certainty that in the spiritual dimension of the work of Redemption he is serving, like Christ, *the salvation of his brothers and sisters*. Therefore he is carrying out an irreplaceable service. In the Body of Christ, which is ceaselessly born of the Cross of the Redeemer, it is precisely suffering permeated by the spirit of Christ's sacrifice that is *the irreplaceable mediator and au-*

thor of the good things which are indispensable for the world's salvation. It is suffering, more than anything else, which clears the way for the grace which transforms human souls. Suffering, more than anything else, makes present in the history of humanity the powers of the Redemption. In that "cosmic" struggle between the spiritual powers of good and evil, spoken of in the Letter to the Ephesians (89), human sufferings, united to the redemptive suffering of Christ, *constitute a special support for the powers of good*, and open the way to the victory of these salvific powers.

And so the Church sees in all Christ's suffering brothers and sisters as it were a *multiple subject of his supernatural power*. How often is it precisely to them that the pastors of the Church appeal, and precisely from them that they seek help and support! The Gospel of suffering is being written unceasingly, and it speaks unceasingly with the words of this strange paradox: the springs of divine power gush forth precisely in the midst of human weakness. Those who share in the sufferings of Christ preserve in their



The Raising of Lazarus, with a Couple Praying (detail) by Geertgen Tot Sint Jans

own sufferings a very special *particle of the infinite treasure* of the world's Redemption, and can share this treasure with others. The more a person is threatened by sin, the heavier the structures of sin which today's world brings with it, the greater is the eloquence which human suffering possesses in itself. And the more the Church feels the need to have recourse to the value of human sufferings for the salvation of the world.

- from Bl. John Paul II, *Salvifici Doloris: On the Christian Meaning of Human Suffering* (February 11, 1984), §27. ■

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For Group Sharing

(pages 182-185 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.
- Is the author correct that suffering is a kind of richness (p. 182)? Why is that hard to say to a soul in misery, or to receive in the midst of anguish? Is it because we do not fully believe it?
 - When you visit those suffering intensely, what can you say to them? "You must not bluntly tell someone who is not a saint and who trembles under the weight of trial ... 'You only have to abandon yourself to the will of God' ... However, you must

God is Heaven

The Solemnity of the Assumption... impels us to lift our gaze to Heaven; not to a heaven consisting of abstract ideas or even an imaginary heaven created by art, but the Heaven of true reality which is God himself. God is Heaven. He is our destination, the destination and the eternal dwelling place from which we come and for which we are striving.

- from a homily by Pope Benedict XVI (August 15, 2008). ■



Assumption of the Virgin (detail) by F. Botticini

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always bear in mind that little by little, with a thousand light touches of tact, that is the point at which you must arrive" (p. 184-185).

- Are you aware of the countless "workers who, at the price of their arduous toil and sweat, assure you a well-being and comfort which you do not deserve" (p. 183)? Is the prevalent contemporary attitude of entitlement reconcilable with the Christian life and the Church's teachings on Social Doctrine? The final blessing of matrimony reads: "May you always bear witness to the love of God in this world so that the afflicted and the needy will find in you generous friends, and welcome you into the joys of heaven." How should we behave if it is the afflicted and the needy who will be our celestial judges?
- "People do not dare speak of Heaven anymore" (p. 184)? Is this your experience? What is Heaven? How important is it to be discussed, meditated upon, and sought?

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. ■

Temporal Concern

by Pope Paul VI

We profess our faith that the Kingdom of God, begun here below in the Church of Christ, is not of this world, whose form is passing away, and that its own growth cannot be confused with the progress of civilization, of science, and of human technology, but that it consists in knowing ever more deeply the unfathomable riches of Christ, to hope ever more strongly in things eternal, to respond ever more ardently to the love of God, to spread ever more widely grace and holiness among men. But it is this very same love which makes the Church constantly concerned for the true temporal good of mankind as well. Never ceasing to recall to her children that they have no lasting dwelling here on earth, she urges them also to contribute, each according to his own vocation and means, to the welfare of their earthly city, to promote justice, peace and brotherhood among men, to lavish their assistance on their brothers, especially on the poor and the most dispirited. The intense concern of the Church, the bride of Christ, for the needs of mankind, their joys and their hopes, their pains and their struggles, is nothing other than the great desire to be present to them in order to enlighten them with the light of Christ, and join them all to Him, their only Savior. It can never mean that the Church is conforming to the things of this world, nor that she is lessening the earnestness with which she awaits her Lord and the eternal Kingdom.

- from *Solemni Hac Liturgia: Credo of the People of God* (June 30, 1968), §27. ■

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