



Faith in 52

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

Week of General Review: July 1st through July 7th, 2013

For Individuals

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. This week we take a break from assigned reading to offer a review of seminal, past assignments and prayer exercises. Associated page numbers in *I Believe in Love* are listed with each exercise and topic.
2. Other reflections have been provided in this handout to remind you of the core themes of *I Believe in Love*.

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 believe that God can "bring good out of evil and even... a greater good than if there had been no evil" (p. 91)? What keeps you from fully trusting in God's power and goodness? Make an act of faith to trust in Jesus completely. [Week 14]
 - Have you been deeply hurt by someone? "Pray for that person, trying to put your whole heart into it. Do not pray only for his conversion—that would be irony—but that he may receive as much good as you wished him evil in spite of yourself" (p. 152). Courageously say with Christ: "I love him who has hurt me, and I shall do my very best to show him that!" (p. 152). [Week 25]
 - 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. [Week 32]
 - Finish by saying the *Our Father* in a spirit of complete abandonment. ■

Resignation to the Will of God

Nothing that happens to us is contrary to the will of Providence, and everything that is sent to us by God is for our good and the salvation of our soul. Even if it does not seem beneficial at the present moment, we shall understand later that it is willed by God, and not what we ourselves desire, that is useful to us ... This is why we should offer thanks for all this to God.

- from St. Nilus Sorsky, a Russian Orthodox monk of the 15th Century. ■

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You Are Loved: The Moment of Conversion

Pentecost was an event in the subjective order, an experience. The shift, from the slave-heart full of fear to the filial heart, brimming with love, is not something that can happen without the one to whom it happens being aware of it; it is not the kind of heart transplant that is done under general anesthetic! On the contrary, the experience of the love of God was one of overwhelming intensity for the apostles: to be loved by God, and to love God in return! They were literally inundated, “baptized,” in love. That was what moved them so much that they were beside themselves, to such an extent that people thought them drunk (see Acts 2:13). The sudden change in the apostles cannot be explained in any other way; it was the fire of divine love itself that flared up in them. What they did on that occasion are the sort of things that only love moves one to do. The apostles, as the martyrs would be later on, were in effect “drunk,” but “drunk on love that came to them through the finger of God which is the Holy Spirit.” Drunk because “drenched in the torrent of divine delights”; drunk with that sober inebriation that

does sins to death and gives life to the heart...

Every time someone has a genuine, strong experience of the Spirit, the most vivid memory of the moment that the person retains is of an intense perception of the Father's love. Witnessing to this, someone said: “All my life long, I had felt unloved. The next day, that feeling vanished entirely. I felt myself immersed in a new experience of the love of God, and from that day it has never left me.”

This is the most beautiful moment of any creature's life: to know that one is loved, personally, by God, to feel oneself lifted to the bosom of the Trinity and to find oneself in the flood of love that flows between Father and Son, enfolded in their love, sharing their passionate love for the world. And all of this in one instant, without any need to think about it or for words to say it.

“Amazing condescension of the Creator toward the creature, signal grace, inconceivable benevolence, the greatest of motives for the creature to trust the Creator, sweet closeness shared, delight of mutual



Pentecost (detail) by El Greco

knowing; we come to find ourselves clasped in the embrace and sharing the kiss of Father and Son, and that is the Holy Spirit; united to God with the same love that unites Father and Son, made holy in him who is the very holiness of the Two. To rejoice in such a great good, to have the sweet experience of it, as far as it is possible in this troubled and deceptive lifetime: that is to experience what it is truly to be alive” (William of Saint Thierry, *Mirror of Faith*).

- from Fr. Raniero Cantalamessa, O.F.M.Cap., *Come, Creator Spirit: Meditations on the Veni Creator* (Liturgical Press: May 15, 2003), p. 144-146. ■

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For Group Sharing

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: PRAYERFUL DISCUSSION

1. This week we take a break from assigned reading to offer a review of seminal, past assignments and prayer exercises. Associated page numbers in *I Believe in Love* are listed with each exercise and topic.
 2. Other reflections have been provided in this handout to remind you of the core themes of *I Believe in Love*. If desirable, the articles in this particular handout can be read aloud. After any public reading of this handout, someone should facilitate the group 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.
- “You could say that you were in some way a need of His Heart” (p. 12). Share with each other some occasions in which you have felt wanted, accepted, or desired? What were those experiences like? What do you think it means that you are a “need of His Heart?” [Week 2]
 - What does the author mean when he says: “I am not telling you, ‘You believe too much in your own wretchedness.’ We are much more wretched than we ever realize. But I am telling you, ‘You do not believe enough in merciful love’” (p. 29). [Week 5]
 - The author says that the Lord often doesn’t grant our first prayers in order to permit greater trials, in order to push and strengthen our confidence (p. 50). How is this true? Can you see how this could be done out of love? [Week 9]
 - Jesus certainly does not will or want us to sin, but even such evils do not prevent Him from fulfilling His plan. Share some examples in which the Lord brought out good from the bad. Do you believe that the Lord can bring an even greater good from terrible situations than if the evil had not occurred (p. 59-60)? What kind of faith in God does such a belief require? [Week 10]
 - In all of our efforts, why must we never “worry over the re-

Made of Love

Because of its rebellion against God, here are the devils, holding this sheep as their own possession. Then along comes God’s infinite goodness and sees the sheep’s sorry state, its ruin and damnation. He knows he cannot use wrath or war to entice it away from them. Supreme eternal Wisdom doesn’t want to do it that way, even though the sheep has wronged him (for humankind, by its rebel-

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- sults” (p. 88) or be consumed by our failures (p. 88, 91)? How should we respond to our failures and apparent successes (p. 89)? What “spoils everything” and “paralyzes...His providential action on us” (p. 89)? [Week 14]
- “O Jesus, I thank You for everything” (p. 111). The author hopes that “if you were to retain nothing but that (prayer) from this retreat, it would be a great thing” (p. 112). Why is perpetual gratitude to God essential to the Christian life and a prayer that “reaffirms your disposition of love for Him in total abandonment” (p. 111)? [Week 17]
 - “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? [Week 28]
 - “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)? [Week 31]

STEP 3: CLOSING PRAYER

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

Mary, Mother of Christians, pray for us.
Amen. ■

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lion in disobedience, was deserving of infinite punishment). No, he finds a delightful way - the most sweet and loving way possible; for he sees that the human heart is drawn by love as by nothing else, since it is made of love. This seems to be why human beings love so much, because they are made of nothing but love, body and soul. In love God created them in his own image and likeness, and in love father and mother conceive and bring forth their children, giving them a share in their own substance. So God, seeing that humankind is so quick to love, throws out to us right away the hook of love, giving us the Word, his only-begotten Son. He takes on our humanity to make a great peace...

This Word played life against death and death against life in tournament on the wood of the most holy cross, so that by his death he destroyed our death, and to give us life he spent his own bodily life. With love, then, he has so drawn us and with his kindness so conquered our malice that every heart should be won over. For a person can show no greater love (he said so himself) than to give his or her life for a friend. And if he praises the love that gives one's life for a friend, what shall we say of the consummate blazing love that gave his life for his enemy? For through sin we had become God's enemies. Oh, gentle loving Word, with love you recovered your little sheep, and with love gave them life. You brought them back to the fold by restoring to them the grace they had lost.

- from St. Catherine of Siena, Doctor of the Church and Dominican stigmatist and papal counselor, d. 1380. ■

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