



Faith in 52

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

Week 36: July 8th through July 14th, 2013

For Individuals

(pages 195-200 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:
 - Look at the difference between a simple cross and a crucifix with Jesus’ body on it. The simple cross may unintentionally seem barren, lonely, and impersonal, but the crucifix is not empty: Christ suffers there for and with you. When you think about your personal distress and afflictions, “never look at the Cross without Jesus” (p. 195), but always share your anguish with Him. He wishes to share your pain. What are some of the crosses in your life? Relate them honestly to Jesus, and say to Him: *“I deserve a hundred times to suffer without You, Jesus, but it is with You that I want to suffer. With You, I accept all the crosses, all of them—if You will bear them with me. You can hide Yourself; You can make it look as though You are not there, as if I am bearing it all alone; I accept that on one condition: that You hide Yourself in my heart”* (p. 196).
 - St. Simon the Cyrenean helped Jesus carry His Cross. Mary and John stood at the foot of the Cross. They endured the horrors and pain of Calvary out of love for Jesus. Do not run away from the Crucified One; do not avoid your cross, as heavy as it may seem, for “He begs for our love, proven by suffering, in order to be able to say, ‘It is you who remained with me in the trial.’ How sweet it will be when we hear, for all eternity, these words from the lips of Jesus...” (p. 197). Hear Him say those words to you even now.
 - Finish by saying the *Our Father* in a spirit of complete abandonment. ■

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Maturity & Spiritual Greatness

Down through the centuries and generations it has been seen that *in suffering there is concealed* a particular power that draws a person interiorly close to Christ, a special grace. To this grace many saints, such as Saint Francis of Assisi, Saint Ignatius of Loyola and others, owe their profound conversion. A result of such a conversion is not only that the individual discovers the salvific meaning of suffering but above all that he becomes a completely new person. He discovers a new dimension, as it were, of *his entire life and vocation*. This discovery is a particular confirmation of the spiritual greatness which in man surpasses the body in a way that is completely beyond compare. When this body is gravely ill, totally incapacitated, and the person is almost incapable of living and acting, all the more do interior maturity and spiritual greatness become evident, constituting a touching lesson to those who are healthy and normal.

*To the suffering brother or sister
Christ discloses and gradually
reveals the horizons of the
Kingdom of God*

This interior maturity and spiritual greatness in suffering are certainly the *result* of a particular *conversion* and cooperation with the grace of the Crucified Redeemer. It is he himself who acts at the heart of human sufferings through his Spirit of truth, through the consoling Spirit. It is he who transforms, in a certain sense, the very substance of the spiritual life, indicating for the person who suffers a place close to himself. *It is he*—as the interior Master and Guide—*who reveals* to the suffering brother and sister this *wonderful interchange*, situated at the very heart of the mystery of the Redemption. Suffering is, in itself, an experience of evil. But Christ has made suffering the firmest basis of the definitive good, namely the good of eternal salvation. By his suffering on the Cross, Christ reached the very roots of evil, of sin and death. He conquered the author of evil, Satan, and his permanent rebellion against the Creator. To the suffering brother or sister Christ *discloses* and gradually reveals the horizons of the Kingdom of God: the horizons of a world converted to the Creator, of a world free from sin, a world being built on the saving



The Dead Christ Supported by an Angel
by Antonello da Messina

power of love. And slowly but effectively, Christ leads into this world, into this Kingdom of the Father, suffering man, in a certain sense through the very heart of his suffering. For suffering cannot be *transformed* and changed by a grace from outside, but *from within*. And Christ through his own salvific suffering is very much present in every human suffering, and can act from within that suffering by the powers of his Spirit of truth, his consoling Spirit.

- from Bl. John Paul II, *Salvifici Doloris: On the Christian Meaning of Human Suffering* (February 11, 1984), §26. ■

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For Group Sharing

(pages 195-200 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.

***Dig Deeply Into Christ!* by St. John of the Cross**

Though holy doctors have uncovered many mysteries and wonders, and devout souls have understood them in this earthly condition of ours, yet the greater part still remains to be unfolded by them, and even to be understood by them.

We must then dig deeply in Christ. He is like a rich mine with many pockets containing treasures: however deep we dig we will never find their end or their limit. Indeed, in every pocket new seams of fresh riches are discovered on all sides.

For this reason the apostle Paul said of Christ: *In him are hidden all the treasures of the wisdom and knowledge of God*. The soul cannot enter into these treasures, nor attain them, unless it first crosses into and enters the thicket of suffering, enduring interior and exterior labors, and unless it first receives from God very many blessings in the intellect and in the senses, and has undergone long spiritual training.

All these are lesser things, disposing the soul for the lofty sanctuary of the knowledge of the mysteries of Christ: this is the highest wisdom attainable in this life.

Would that men might come at last to see that it is quite impossible to reach the thicket of the riches and wisdom of God except by first enter-

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- How do you treat your loved ones who are suffering from depression, terrible pain, or loss? Is it easy to comfort them or hard? Why do you think this is so?
- “In the apostolate, the money to buy souls is suffering, accepted with love. Suppress the Cross in your life, and everything crumbles” (p. 195). Are you able to share with the group some of the crosses you experience in life? Have you ever tried to escape your cross? What happened as a result?
- How is the Cross an “occasion to prove to Jesus that we love Him” (p. 196)? What is the difference between love as an emotion and love as a choice?
- “He (Jesus) does not want us to consider as an evil the means by which He saved us” (p. 197). Do most people resent and reject the Cross and suffering? In what way can we say Jesus loved the Cross? Then, why should we love it?
- What is the difference between acquiescing to the Cross and accepting it? What was the attitude of the Saints towards the Cross, Saints like Paul, Andrew, Francis of Assisi, Teresa of Avila, etc. (p. 198)?
- How does the Cross help “us to detach ourselves from earth” (p. 198)?
- “A great cross, is very often, the prelude to a great grace” (p. 199). Have you witnessed this in your own life or in the lives of others? Have accidents, serious illnesses, or personal loss been a “source of a total conversion” (p. 199)?

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. ■

Dig Deeply... (Continued from page 3)

ing the thicket of much suffering, in such a way that the soul finds there its consolation and desire. The soul that longs for divine wisdom chooses first, and in truth, to enter the thicket of the cross.

Saint Paul therefore urges the Ephesians *not to grow weary in the midst of tribulations, but to be steadfast and rooted and grounded in love, so that they may know with all the saints the breadth, the length, the height and the depth – to know what is beyond knowledge, the love of Christ, so as to be filled with all the fullness of God.*

The gate that gives entry into these riches of his wisdom is the cross; because it is a narrow gate, while many seek the joys that can be gained through it, it is given to few to desire to pass through it.

- from *A Spiritual Canticle*
(Red. B, str. 36-37). ■



Next Eucharistic “Hour of Power” in English

- Saturday, August 3rd, 7-8 p.m.,
St. Peter McMahon Hall

Next Parish Dessert Potluck*

- Saturday, August 3rd, 8-9 p.m.,
Upper Room Library