



# Faith in 52

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

*Week 37: July 15th through July 21st, 2013*

## For Individuals

(pages 200-206 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:
  - Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you your particular crosses. They may seem onerous, but, despite your instincts to the contrary, choose to believe that they are a gift. Hear and meditate upon the Lord saying to you: *“Do you will to accept a thorn from my own crown, stained with my Blood? Do you will to accept a particle of my Cross? It is in love that I offer it to you; it is in love that I give it to you; it is in love that I impose it upon you. If you accept, with joy, this gift of my wounded heart, you permit me to shower my graces upon you”* (p. 202). Smile that you have been chosen to love.
  - Have you ever thought about the crosses that those around you bear, not out of envy or competition but out of heartfelt concern? Spend time praying about the crosses others carry: *“The crosses of parents, the crosses of apostles, the crosses of priests, the crosses of bishops, the crosses of the Pope,”* to name a few (p. 203-204).
  - *“The Crucified is never found without the Cross, and neither is the Cross found without the Crucified. It always bears Jesus. I press it to my breast to press Him at the same time to my heart”* (p. 204). Do you have a crucifix in your home? Usually it remains on the wall and is rarely kissed, held, or embraced. Consider touching it often. While you pray or at night when you prepare for sleep, hold that crucifix pressed to your heart and say: *“With You I do not fear any cross”* (p. 204).
  - Finish by saying the *Our Father* in a spirit of complete abandonment. ■

# Faith in 52

Week 37: July 15th through July 21st, 2013

## Through My Cross

The Divine Redeemer wishes to penetrate the soul of every sufferer through the heart of his holy Mother, the first and the most exalted of all the redeemed. As though by a continuation of that motherhood which by the power of the Holy Spirit had given him life, the dying Christ conferred upon the ever Virgin Mary a *new kind of motherhood*—spiritual and universal—towards all human beings, so that every individual, during the pilgrimage of faith, might remain, together with her, closely united to him unto the Cross, and so that every form of suffering, given fresh life by the power of this Cross, should become no longer the weakness of man but the power of God.

However, this interior process does not always follow the same pattern. It often begins and is set in motion with great difficulty. Even the very point of departure differs: people react to suffering in different ways. But in general it can be said that almost always the individual enters suffering with a *typically human protest* and *with the question "why"*. He asks the meaning of his suffering and seeks an answer to this

question on the human level. Certainly he often puts this question to God, and to Christ. Furthermore, he cannot help noticing that the one to whom he puts the question is himself suffering and wishes *to answer him* from the Cross, *from the heart of his own suffering*. Nevertheless, it often takes time, even a long time, for this answer to begin to be interiorly perceived. For Christ does not answer directly and he does not answer in the abstract this human questioning about the meaning of suffering. Man hears Christ's saving answer as he himself gradually becomes a sharer in the sufferings of Christ.

The answer which comes through this sharing, by way of the interior encounter with the Master, is in itself *something more than the mere abstract answer* to the question about the meaning of suffering. For it is above all a call. It is a vocation. Christ does not explain in the abstract the reasons for suffering, but before all else he says: "Follow me!". Come! Take part through your suffering in this work of saving the world, a salvation achieved through my suffering! Through my Cross. Gradually, *as the*



*The Deposition (detail) by Gerard David*

*individual takes up his cross*, spiritually uniting himself to the Cross of Christ, the salvific meaning of suffering is revealed before him. He does not discover this meaning at his own human level, but at the level of the suffering of Christ. At the same time, however, from this level of Christ the salvific meaning of suffering *descends to man's level* and becomes, in a sense, the individual's personal response. It is then that man finds in his suffering interior peace and even spiritual joy.

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

# Faith in 52

Week 37: July 15th through July 21st, 2013

## For Group Sharing

(pages 200-206 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.
- “In order to know God as He knows Himself, to love Him as He loves Himself, we must be purified like gold in the crucible; we must have the

### **Resemble the Cross** by Cardinal Jean Daniélou

Between the heathen world and the threefold God there is only one link, and that is the cross of Christ. Yet when we move into this no-man’s land and try afresh to twitch the threads that link the heathen world and the threefold God, should we still be surprised that we can only do it in the cross of Christ? We must make ourselves resemble this cross, bear it within ourselves, “always carrying in the body the death of Jesus,” as Saint Paul says of the preacher of the faith (2 Cor 4:10). This feeling of being torn asunder, which is a cross to us, this inability of our heart to carry within itself simultaneously love of the most holy Trinity and love of a world alienated from the Trinity, is precisely the death agony of the only begotten Son, an agony he calls on us to share. He who bore this division within himself in order to abolish it within himself, and who could only abolish it because he had previously borne it within himself—he reaches from one end to the other. Without leaving the bosom of the Trinity, he stretches out to the ultimate limit of human misery and fills the whole space in between. This stretching out of Christ, symbolized by the four directions of the cross, is the mysterious expression of our own dismemberment and makes us like him.

- from *Introduction to Christianity* by Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, J. R. Foster, Tr. (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1990). ■

(Continued on page 4)

# Faith in 52

Week 37: July 15th through July 21st, 2013

(Continued from page 3)

wedding garment washed in the Blood of the Lamb, but washed also in the blood of our souls, which is our tears" (p. 201). The need for spiritual purification assumes the existence of Purgatory. What do Catholics mean by the dogma of Purgatory? How does that purification necessary to obtain Heaven begin even in this world through penance (p. 201)?

- "We see it (the cross) as a just chastisement, a consequence of our infidelities. Rising a bit higher, we accept it as an expiation of our faults. Rarely do we rise to the point of seeing in it Jesus' attentiveness, His gentleness, a proof of His tenderness" (p. 202). Do you generally regard your sufferings as a fruitless experience, a punishment for sins, a means of atoning for them, or as a gift of Jesus' love? In which direction does the author think our hearts and minds should move regarding our pains (p. 202)?
- "The Cross is a priceless means for the saving of souls" (p. 203). How does your suffering, freely-accepted, help others to be redeemed? Do people believe that their suffering has any meaning or merit?
- Rarely do we contemplate the crosses that others bear in our midst (p. 203-204). What are some of the particular crosses carried by the people in your life? If those people are present, explain to them how you think they suffer and console them, offering them your care and understanding. Does it make us more compassionate and patient towards them when we acknowledge and consider the loads they personally bear?
- Should we be angry with ourselves that we make countless plans to evade suffering (p. 204)? Why doesn't the author think so?

## **STEP 4: CLOSING PRAYER**

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

"I am suffering and I am happy to suffer • because it is a gift of Your love; • but in exchange, give me souls. • I am sure that You give me the souls • of those I love who do not love you... • I am sure that You give them to me • in exchange for these sufferings. • I join with You in paying the ransom, • advancing the money. • Jesus, You will not be outdone in generosity" (p. 203).  
• Amen. ■



*Christ's Side Pierced with a Lance (detail)*  
by Peter Paul Rubens

When I am overtaken by fear of God, the Cross is my protection; when I stumble, it is my help and my support; when I engage in combat, my prize; when I conquer, my crown. The Cross is for me a narrow path, a narrow way - Jacob's ladder, which angels ascend and descend, at the top of which the Lord is to be found.

- from an Easter homily from the 2nd century. ■

## **Next Eucharistic "Hour of Power" in English**

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

## **Next Parish Dessert Potluck\***

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