

Faith in 52

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

Week 38: July 22nd through July 28th, 2013

For Individuals

(pages 206-210 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:
 - “Jesus is filled with compassion for those who suffer. He has borne all our sufferings” (p. 207). Do you believe this? Do you believe He is saving you? Do you believe that God understands your afflictions? Do you believe that God is love even when He permits you to suffer? “In the present moment, throw yourself into the arms of Jesus, which are always open to receive you” (p. 210).
 - Are you a scrupulous person or suffer from self-resentment? Do you think you deserve more afflictions? “Must we ask for the Cross? No. Must we look for it? No again. Live the doctrine of abandonment... Accept with thanksgiving everything that happens to you. Say continually, ‘O Jesus, I thank You for everything’” (p. 208).
 - Finish by saying the *Our Father* in a spirit of complete abandonment. ■

The World Inverted

The wisdom of the world is exactly opposed to the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus says, “Blessed are the pure”; the world says, “Blessed are they who indulge in loose living.” Jesus says, “Blessed are those who weep”; the world says, “Blessed are those who laugh and amuse themselves.” Jesus says, “Blessed are the meek, the merciful”; the world says, “Blessed are those who impose themselves on others and dominate them.” Jesus says, “Blessed are the poor”; the world says, “Blessed are the rich.” Jesus says, “Blessed are those who suffer”; the world says, “Blessed are those who enjoy themselves.”

- from *I Believe in Love*, p. 206-207. ■

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How Precious the Gift of the Cross

How precious the gift of the cross, how splendid to contemplate! In the cross there is no mingling of good and evil, as in the tree of paradise: it is wholly beautiful to behold and good to taste. The fruit of this tree is not death but life, not darkness but light. This tree does not cast us out of paradise, but opens the way for our return.

This was the tree on which Christ, like a king on a chariot, destroyed the devil, the lord of death, and freed the human race from his tyranny. This was the tree upon which the Lord, like a brave warrior wounded in his hands, feet and side, healed the wounds of sin that the evil serpent had inflicted on our nature. A tree once caused our death, but now a tree brings life. Once deceived by a tree, we have now repelled the cunning serpent by a tree. What an astonishing transformation! That death should become life, that decay should become immortality, that shame should become

By the cross we, the sheep of Christ, have been gathered into one flock, destined for the sheepfolds of heaven.

glory! Well might the holy Apostle exclaim: *Far be it from me to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world!* The supreme wisdom that flowered on the cross has shown the folly of worldly wisdom's pride. The knowledge of all good, which is the fruit of the cross, has cut away the shoots of wickedness.

The wonders accomplished through this tree were foreshadowed clearly even by the mere types and figures that existed in the past. Meditate on these, if you are eager to learn. Was it not the wood of a tree that enabled Noah, at God's command, to escape the destruction of the flood together with his sons, his wife, his sons' wives and every kind of animal? And surely the rod of Moses prefigured the cross when it changed water into blood, swallowed up the false serpents of Pharaoh's magicians, divided the sea at one stroke and then restored the waters to their normal course, drowning the enemy and saving God's own people?

Aaron's rod, which blossomed in one day in proof of his true priesthood, was another figure



Christ on the Cross by Diego Velázquez

of the cross, and did not Abraham foreshadow the cross when he bound his son Isaac and placed him on the pile of wood?

By the cross death was slain and Adam was restored to life. The cross is the glory of all the apostles, the crown of the martyrs, the sanctification of the saints. By the cross we put on Christ and cast aside our former self. By the cross we, the sheep of Christ, have been gathered into one flock, destined for the sheepfolds of heaven.

- from Saint Theodore the Studite,
Oratio in adorationem crucis
(PG 99, 691-694. 695. 698-699). ■

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For Group Sharing

(pages 206-210 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 author provides an illustration of the contrast between the Beatitudes and the attitudes of the world (p. 206-207). Where do you see the world’s false beliefs operative in our

Love Jesus in the Passion **by St. Pio of Pietrelcina**

May your way of life be totally heavenly, we are bound to this as Christians.... Let us love Jesus in the Passion more than anything else. Let us often meditate on the suffering of the God-man and then it will not be long before the great desire to suffer more for love of Jesus is awakened in us. Love for the cross has always been the distinctive sign of chosen souls. Being burdened with the cross has always been a sign of predilection on the part of the heavenly Father for those souls....

Let us show ourselves to be worthy children of such a great Father. Jesus also invites us to climb to Calvary with him, so let us not refuse. Ascending the painful mount with Jesus will be a joy for us.

In the course of life, mortifications will not be lacking for us, either. Let us love them; let us embrace them with a cheerful soul, and let us always bless the good God in everything.

- from *Letters: Correspondence with His Spiritual Daughters (1915-1923)*, Vol. III, Fr. Gerardo Di Flumeri, O.F.M. Cap., Ed. (San Giovanni Rotondo, Italy: Our Lady of Grace Capuchin Friary, 1994). ■

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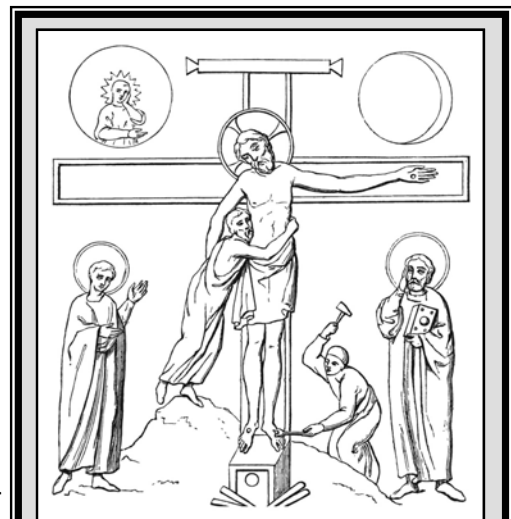
culture, your workplace, your school, your family, and in your own life?

- “The Beatitudes are preached too little” (p. 207). Is this true? How have you heard the Beatitudes explained from the pulpit? Are they misinterpreted? Have any preachers used them to affirm that “true happiness and suffering are inseparable” (p. 206)? Do you think fiancés and grieving families think of this intrinsic connection between felicity and the Cross when they so often choose the Beatitudes as the Gospel reading at their weddings and funerals?
- What is the “Jansenist notion of suffering” (p. 208)? How are we so “far, very far, from” that (p. 208)?
- “Must we ask for the Cross?” (p. 208). Some people think they deserve to suffer more than they do. Why do you think they feel this way? Is this a healthy line of thinking? How is the “doctrine of abandonment” the only fitting response to the reality of suffering (p. 208-209)?
- Why is it sometimes the hardest cross to “put up with yourself, with your thousand physical, intellectual, and moral miseries” (p. 209)? Why is regretting the failure to accept a cross with enthusiasm or to carry it generously as absurd as “to moan about having moaned and then to go on moaning!” (p. 210)? How should we respond to our moral and spiritual weaknesses “in the present moment” (p. 210)?

STEP 4: CLOSING PRAYER

1. When finished with the discussion, the entire group should conclude with the prayer *To Our Lady of Sorrows*:

O most holy Virgin, ● Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ: ● by the overwhelming grief you experienced ● when you witnessed the martyrdom, ● the crucifixion, and death of your Divine Son, ● look upon me with eyes of compassion, ● and awaken in my heart a tender commiseration for those sufferings, ● as well as a sincere detestation of my sins, ● in order that being disengaged from all undue affection ● for the passing joys of this earth, ● I may sigh after the eternal Jerusalem, ● and that henceforward all my thoughts and all my actions ● may be directed towards this one most desirable object. ● Honor, glory, and love to our divine Lord Jesus, ● and to you, oh holy and immaculate Mother of God. ● Amen. ■



When you see a poor wooden Cross, alone, uncared-for, and of no value... and without its Crucified, don't forget that that Cross is your Cross: the Cross of each day, the hidden Cross, without splendor or consolation..., the Cross which is awaiting the Crucified it lacks: and that Crucified must be you.

- from St. Josemaría Escrivá, *The Way*, #178. ■

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