



# Faith in 52

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

*Week 45: September 9th through September 15th, 2013*

## For Individuals

(pages 241-245 of the book *I Believe in Love*, ending at "...united to that of the altar.")

### **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:
  - St. Therese says that she receives Communion "not as a person who desires to receive His visit for my own consolation, but on the contrary, for the pleasure of Him who gives Himself to me. It is not in order to remain in the golden ciborium that He comes down each day from Heaven, but in order to find another heaven, the heaven of our souls, made in His image, the living temple of the adorable Trinity" (p. 242). Meditate upon that: Jesus finds in you another heaven. "If you only knew how Jesus hungers for you, how He burns with desire to come into your heart, how impatient He is to come down to you, bridging all distance between you and Him" (p. 243). Do not stop Him from loving you and say to Him: "Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and 'I will become truly a heaven for You'" (p. 242).
  - Consider bringing a small notebook with you to every Sunday Mass and take 2 minutes immediately after Mass to jot down one thing that struck you, e.g., an image or line from the homily or readings, a chant or liturgical prayer, a particular work of sacred art or a devotional item in the church, etc. Use this note as the starting point for your prayers during the week. In this way the graces of Mass will pervade your daily life. Say to Jesus: "I want all my life to be centered on the altar of the Mass, to depend on it, and to culminate in it, to be a thanksgiving and a preparation for my daily Mass—all my life, all my days, all the beatings of my heart" (p. 245).
  - Finish by saying the *Our Father* in a spirit of complete abandonment. ■

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## Saved by a Lamb

On the roof of a Catholic Church in Werden, Germany, one can see the stone carving of a lamb. There is a story behind that stone. A man was working on the roof of this church when his safety rope broke and he pitched headlong into the churchyard below. The yard was cluttered with huge stones. But the man was not hurt seriously. Between two of the blocks a lamb was nibbling grass. The man fell on the lamb, crushing it to death, and breaking what would have been a fatal fall.

In gratitude that workman carved a lamb out of a stone and placed it on the roof. It was a gracious way of expressing his thanks to the dumb animal that had unknowingly saved his life.

Much deeper and more meaningful is our gratitude to Jesus, the Lamb of God, for saving us from the eternally fatal fall from grace. Willingly and lovingly Christ gave His life that we might live. That is what St. John is talking about when he calls out in today's Good News: "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world."

His hearers could understand,



*The Crypts of Lucina: The Good Shepherd (3rd century) from the Catacombs of St. Callistus, Rome*

because in the Old Testament lambs were frequently used in sacrifice. They were figures of Jesus Christ who was to take away all the sins of all the world. Calling Christ a Lamb expresses the fact that He is the One to be sacrificed, the One who would reconcile God with man, a theme of this Holy Year.

These figures of the Old Law were fulfilled in the New. Not only in today's Good News is Christ called a Lamb. St. Peter also speaks of Christ as a Lamb (1 Peter 1:19). In the Apocalypse St. John calls the Son of God a Lamb at least twenty-seven times. He points Christ out as the Lamb that was slain for all the sins of men of all

tribes and nations. He also emphasized the truth that this Lamb is the true Son of God, that He strengthens His followers, that He conquers Satan.

Ever since Scripture times the Catholic Church has pictured Christ as a Lamb, especially in the catacombs and the great basilicas of Rome. A lamb is also noted for its innocence, its meekness, its patience, its purity, precious qualities of Christ, the Lamb without stain. No wonder we followers of Christ constantly call upon Him under the sweet and simple title—Lamb of God. In a few moments, just before Communion, we will sing out: "Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world, have mercy on us." Sing to Him with all your heart.

That workman in Werden, Germany, carved a grateful memorial to the lamb that had unwittingly saved his life. How much more grateful we should be as we offer Mass, the living memorial to the Lamb who willingly and lovingly gave His all for you and me. God bless you.

- Credited to a homily from Msgr. Arthur Tonne, p. 11; see also *The Lutheran Witness*, Wm. Dallmann, Ed., Vol. XI, "Saved by the Lamb", p. 157 (Baltimore, MD: Harry Lang, June 7th, 1892-May 21st, 1893). ■

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## For Group Sharing

(pages 241-245 of the book *I Believe in Love*, ending at "...united to that of the altar.")

### **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.
- "Receive Communion not only for yourself, in order to have this immense grace, but for Jesus..." (p. 241). How is receiving Communion actually a gift to Jesus (p. 241)? More than anywhere, where does Jesus wish to be (p. 241)?

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### **The Body of Christ Gives Life** **by St. Cyril of Alexandria**

"I am dying for all men", says the Lord. "I am dying to give them life through myself and to redeem the whole human race through my humanity. In my death, death itself will die and man's fallen nature will rise again with me. I wanted to be like my brothers in every respect, so I became a man like you, a descendant of Abraham". Understanding this well Saint Paul says: *As the children of a family share the same flesh and blood, he too shared our human nature so that by his death he could destroy the power of the devil, the prince of death.* Death itself and the prince of death could be destroyed only by Christ, who is above all, giving himself up as a ransom for all.

And so, speaking as a spotless victim offering himself for us to God the Father, Christ says in one of the psalms: *You desired no sacrifices or offerings, but you have prepared a body for me. You took no pleasure in holocausts or sin offerings. Then I said, "Behold, I am coming".* He was crucified for all, desiring his one death for all to give all of us life in him. It was impossible for him to be conquered by death; nor could he who by his very nature is life be subject to corruption. Yet we know that

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*Agnus Dei (The Lamb of God)* by Francisco de Zurbarán

(Continued from page 3)

- Before we receive Holy Communion at Mass the congregation chants or speaks the *Lamb of God (Agnus Dei)* prayer. Recite it together by memory. Why is the lamb associated in Scripture and Tradition with the removal of sins, “mercy,” and “peace”? How is Jesus the “lamb of God”?
- St. Margaret Mary told Jesus that she was prepared to walk barefoot upon fire itself “in order not to miss a single Communion” (p. 244). How dedicated are you to the reception of Holy Communion?
- “Your day, because you will have willed it, must be a thanksgiving for the Mass you attended that day and a preparation for the Mass you will attend the next day” (p. 245). How can you make Mass “the center of your day” (p. 244)? Have you ever stopped off at a church or chapel spontaneously to pray after school, work, etc.? What was it like? Why did you do it? How do Eucharistic Adoration and other devotions help us to prolong graces from and prepare us for the Mass?

#### **STEP 4: CLOSING PRAYER**

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

**M**ay the Heart of Jesus, in the Most Blessed Sacrament, be praised, adored, and loved with grateful affection, at every moment in all the tabernacles of the world, even until the end of time. Amen. ■

*The Body of Christ...* (Continued from page 3)

Christ offered his flesh for the life of the world from his own prayer, Holy Father, protect them, and from his words, *For their sake I consecrate myself*. By saying that he consecrates himself he means that he offers himself to God as a spotless and sweet-smelling sacrifice. According to the law, anything offered upon the altar was consecrated and considered holy. So Christ gave his own body for the life of all, and makes it the channel through which life flows once more into us. How he does this I will explain to the best of my ability.

When the life-giving Word of God dwelt in human flesh, he changed it into that good thing which is distinctively his, namely, life; and by being wholly united to the flesh in a way beyond our comprehension, he gave it the life-giving power which he has by his very nature. Therefore, the body of Christ gives life to those who receive it. Its presence in mortal men expels death and drives away corruption because it contains within itself in its entirety the Word who totally abolishes corruption.

- from the *Commentary on the Gospel of John*  
(Lib. 4, 2: PG 73, 563-566). ■

#### **Next Eucharistic “Hour of Power” in English**

- Saturday, October 5th, 7-8 p.m., St. Peter McMahan Hall

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

- Saturday, October 5th, 8-9 p.m., Upper Room Library