



Faith in 52

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

Week 46: Sept. 16th through Sept. 22nd, 2013

For Individuals

(pages 245-251 of the book *I Believe in Love*, stopping at the ☩ symbol)

STEP 1: OPENING PRAYER

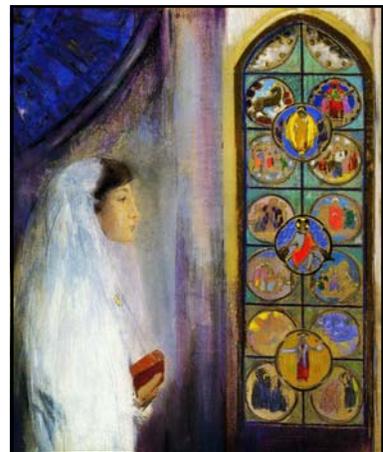
1. Speaking to the Holy Spirit, say: *“O Holy Spirit, soul of my soul, I adore You. Enlighten, guide, strengthen, and console me. Tell me what I ought to do and command me to do it. I promise to be submissive in everything that You ask of me, and to accept all that You permit to happen to me. Only show 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:
 - St. Therese said that “prayer is a movement of the heart, a simple look cast toward Heaven, a cry of recognition and love in the midst of trial as in the midst of joy; finally, it is something great and supernatural which expands my soul and unites me to Jesus” (p. 248). Is this your experience of prayer? Why or why not? Would you like to enter into this “little way” of prayer? Try praying with love rather than with a duty, an agenda, or a timetable in mind. Try looking at Jesus and Him looking at you (p. 246). What happens to your prayer when it is inspired by love?
 - “It is not usually during my prayers that they (graces) are most abundant, but rather in the midst of the occupations of the day” (p. 248-249). In what concrete ways and happenings today has the Lord loved you and made Himself present to you? Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you your known and unknown encounters with God. Hear Him say to you: “For you alone I would have instituted the Sacrament of my love” (p. 250).
 - Finish by saying the *Our Father* in a spirit of complete abandonment. ■



Portrait of Simone Fayet in Holy Communion by Odilon Redon

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The First Communion of St. Thérèse

The “beautiful day of days” finally arrived. The smallest details of that heavenly day have left unspeakable memories in my soul! The joyous awakening at dawn, the respectful embraces of the teachers and our older companions! The large room filled with snow-white dresses in which each child was to be clothed in her turn! Above all, the procession into the chapel and the singing of the morning hymn: “O altar of God, where the angels are hovering.”

I don’t want to enter into detail here. There are certain things that lose their perfume as soon as they are exposed to the air; there are deep spiritual thoughts which cannot be expressed in human language without losing their intimate and heavenly meaning; they are similar to “... the white stone I will give to him who conquers, with a name written on the stone which no one KNOWS except HIM who receives it.”

Ah! How sweet was that first kiss of Jesus! It was a kiss of love; I felt that I was loved, and I said, “I love You, and I give myself to You forever!” There were no demands made, no struggles, no sacrifices; for a

long time now Jesus and poor little Thérèse looked at and understood each other. That day, it was no longer simply a look, it was a fusion; they were no longer two, Thérèse had vanished as a drop of water is lost in the immensity of the ocean. Jesus alone remained; He was the Master, the King. Had not Thérèse asked Him to take away her liberty, for her liberty frightened her? She felt so feeble and fragile that she wanted to be united forever to the divine Strength! Her joy was too great, too deep for her to contain, and tears of consolation soon flowed, to the great consternation of her companions. They asked one another: “Why was she crying? Was there something bothering her?” – “No, it was because her mother was not there or her sister whom she loves so much, her sister the Carmelite.” They did not understand that all the joy of Heaven having entered my heart, this exiled heart was unable to bear it without shedding tears. Oh! No, the absence of Mama didn’t cause me any sorrow on the day of my First Communion. Wasn’t Heaven itself in my soul, and hadn’t Mama taken her place there a long time ago? Thus in receiving Jesus’

visit, I received also Mama’s. She blessed me and rejoiced at my happiness. I was not crying because of Pauline’s absence. I would have been happy to see her by my side, but for a long time I had accepted my sacrifice of her. On that day, joy alone filled my heart and I united myself to her who gave herself irrevocably to Him who gave Himself so lovingly to me!

In the afternoon, it was I who made the Act of Consecration to the Blessed Virgin. It was only right that I speak in the name of my companions to my Mother in heaven, I who had been deprived at such an early age of my earthly Mother. I put all my heart into speaking to her, into consecrating myself to her as a child throwing itself into the arms of its mother, asking her to watch over her. It seems to me the Blessed Virgin must have looked upon her little flower and smiled at her, for wasn’t it she who cured her with a visible smile? Had she not placed in the heart of her little flower her Jesus, the Flower of the Fields and the Lily of the valley?

- from St. Thérèse, *Story of a Soul: The Autobiography of Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, Third Edition*, trans. John Clarke, O.C.D. (Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 1996), p. 77-78. ■

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For Group Sharing

(pages 245-251 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.
- “Be an apostle of holy Mass and Communion” (p. 245) and “do everything in your power to see that the souls confided to your care have a Eucharistic life as complete and as total as possible” (p. 246). Have you ever invited someone to attend Mass or Eucharistic Adoration with you? What happened? How have you encouraged your family, friend, and co-workers to be more Eucharistic?
 - “‘He is there; He is there,’ repeated the Curé of Ars, pointing to the tabernacle” (p. 246). If we really believed that God is in the tabernacle, would it make any difference to our behaviors in church and in life?

Surest Way to Heaven

“Holy Communion is the shortest and surest way to Heaven,” said Pius X in an address to the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament. “There are others, innocence for instance, but that is for little children; penance, but we are afraid of it; generous endurance of the trials of life, but when they approach us we weep and pray to be delivered. Once for all, beloved children, the surest, easiest, shortest way is by the Holy Eucharist. It is so easy to approach the Holy Table, and there we taste the joys of Paradise.”

- from Francis Alice Monica Forbes,
Life of Pius X (New York: P. F. Kenedy &
Sons, 1918), p. 103. ■

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The Last Communion of St. Joseph Calasanz (detail) by Francisco Goya

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- “Leaving aside the prefabricated prayers which made her (St. Therese’s) head ache, she said, ‘I do it (prayer) like the children who do not know how to read. I simply say to God what I want to say to Him, without making beautiful sentences, and He always understands me’” (p. 247-248). Do you prefer memorized or spontaneous prayers? Why? What are the unique strengths in each of these two types of prayer?
- “His (Jesus’) greatest suffering ... was the ingratitude of men, especially their ingratitude toward the Sacrament of His love (the Eucharist)” (p. 249). In what habitual ways have we become indifferent to the Blessed Sacrament? What can we do to restore faith and awe in the Eucharist?
- How is the Eucharistic Host the perfect “model of the abandonment” preached by the author (p. 250)?

STEP 4: CLOSING PRAYER

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

May 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. ■

Daily Mass & Holy Communion by Pope Paul VI

It is desirable to have the faithful in large numbers take an active part in the sacrifice of the Mass each and every day and receive the nourishment of Holy Communion with a pure and holy mind and offer fitting thanks to Christ the Lord for such a great gift. They should remember these words: “The desire of Jesus Christ and of the Church to see all the faithful approach the sacred banquet each and every day is based on a wish to have them all united to God through the Sacrament and to have them draw from it the strength to master their passions, to wash away the lesser sins that are committed every day and to prevent the serious sins to which human frailty is subject.” (67) And they should not forget about paying a visit during the day to the Most Blessed Sacrament in the very special place of honor where it is reserved in churches in keeping with the liturgical laws, since this is a proof of gratitude and a pledge of love and a display of the adoration that is owed to Christ the Lord who is present there.

- from *Mysterium Fidei* (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Sept. 3, 1965), §66. ■

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