



# Faith in 52

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

*Week 49: October 7th through October 13, 2013*

## For Individuals

(pages 257-264 of the book *I Believe in Love*, stopping at “That is purity: Mary, full of grace.”)

### **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:
  - Mary’s *fiat*: “Be it done unto me according to your word.” “He asks us to pronounce these words very often each day, which sometimes cost our feeble nature so much, with unreserved acceptance of the divine will, whatever it be—so often crucifying yet always to be held in adoration” (p. 260). Mediate upon the Annunciation, the moment when the Archangel Gabriel appeared to Mary and entreated her to receive the Incarnate Word of God in her womb. See yourself in the place of the Virgin. God wishes to do the impossible for and through you. Will you say “yes”? Will you give your *fiat* to the Lord as Mary did? Call to mind a particular cross, challenge or cause of suffering in your heart, and say these words repeatedly and slowly: “Be it done unto me according to your word.”
  - Christ promises: “Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God” (Mt 5:8). What does it mean to be pure of heart? Our Blessed Mother Mary had an Immaculate Heart that allowed her not only to look upon the face of Jesus on earth, and now in heaven, but to see God in every one of His children: “Mary was all love because she was completely pure” (p. 263). Ask Our Lady to peer into your soul, to see who you truly are, and to pierce your heart with her pure compassion. Like Jesus, Mother Mary finds a heaven in you. Will you allow her to lead you to Jesus?
  - Finish by saying the *Our Father* in a spirit of complete abandonment. ■

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## This Is Where I Have Always Been

If we think about Mary, we know that she has a place in God's saving plan, a home, where she was "chosen before the foundation of the world" to be the Savior's Mother, "to be holy and blameless before him" (Eph 1:4). Surely she never left that place as she became a person in time and lived out her entire existence on earth. When she comes to God on the day of her Assumption, she simply returns home to the place that was hers from the start, a place so familiar to her (for it is the revelation of her real being) that she instantly knows "this is where I have always been." And this takes place not merely as an idea or divine intention is finally realized; rather, it is because the deepest being of the Virgin Mother was always identical with this idea, and she thus experiences in her Assumption: this is where I always was....

We are not Mary. We do not yet correspond in this "foreign land" to God's conception of us as his child. Yet at the same time something of the completed mystery of Mary is already present in us. We do not know how deep a truth lies in the statement that Christ

"gave those who received him the power to become children of God" (Jn 1:12), not in a vague and figurative sense but in the fact that we are born by grace with him from God the Father....

Already here the chosen ones are carried over into the realm of God through the Word God inserts into their hearts.... Because we are already children of the Father and members of Christ and have the Holy Spirit in our hearts calling, "Abba, Father" (Rom 8:15), just as the Son called to the Father (Mk 14:36), our homecoming to the conception God has of us eternally is an arrival at the place from which we originated, at the place in which we have been eternally in our own most intimate truth and reality. Only from that place can we measure how far away we were while we wandered sinful and imperfect like the lost son of the parable, who finally set his sights on his father's house and was received therein by his father.

- from Fr. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *You Have Words of Eternal Life, Scripture Meditations*, Dennis Martin, Tr. (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1991). ■



*Annunciation (detail)*  
by Hans Memling

### Fruitful in Mary

God the Holy Ghost, being barren in God - that is to say, not producing another Divine Person - is become fruitful by Mary, whom He has espoused. It was with her, in her, and of her that He produced His Masterpiece, which is God made Man, and that He goes on producing daily, to the end of the world, the predestinate and the members of the Body of that adorable Head. This is the reason why He, the Holy Ghost, the more He finds Mary, His dear and inseparable spouse, in any soul, the more active and mighty He becomes in producing Jesus Christ in that soul, and that soul in Jesus Christ.

- from St. Louis Marie de Montfort, *True Devotion to Mary*, Fr. F. Faber, Tr. (Rockford, IL: TAN Books, 1985), §20. ■

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## For Group Sharing

(pages 257-264 of the book *I Believe in Love*, stopping at “That is purity: Mary, full of grace.”)

### **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.
- According to the author, what are the five “most beautiful jewels in the heart of Mary” (p. 257)? Discuss each of them.

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*Our Lady of Perpetual Help*  
in the Church of St. Alphonsus Liguori in Rome, Italy

### **The Icon of Our Lady of Perpetual Help**

He who first brought to the Most Pure Lady the News of Joy now shows beforehand the signs of the Passion; but Christ, clothed in mortal flesh and fearing death, is frightened at the vision. This then is the story of the picture of our Mother of Perpetual Help.

The Archangels come from Heaven carrying the Cross and nails, the spear and the lance. Christ, Who has taken upon Himself our entire human nature with all our emotions and weaknesses, is frightened at seeing such a vision. Trembling, He becomes afraid and seeks refuge in the arms

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- “Think of her (Mary), the wife of a carpenter, keeping the household, sweeping, going to the fountain, she, the Queen of Heaven” (p. 258). Do we value the vital and yet often hidden contributions of mothers and wives in their domestic duties? How beautiful is the title of homemaker! What does it mean to be a “homemaker”? Why do you think many women now seek work outside of the home?
- Mary seemed to delight in simplicity and self-effacement. Imagine Pentecost: “The Mother of God, the Spouse of the Holy Spirit who inflamed their hearts, was there, silent, in their midst” (p. 258). How hard is it for you to be silent? Do you listen when others are speaking or simply wait for your turn to speak? Can you be silent in prayer?
- According to the author, St. Therese did not equal Mary’s simplicity (p. 259)? Do you agree with his assumption that it is more difficult to cultivate meekness in the lay state than in religious life? Why or why not?
- “The loving abandonment of Mary is at the origin of our Redemption” (p. 260). In addition to the Annunciation, share with each other additional examples from Scripture in which Mary gave her *fiat*, i.e., abandoned herself to the will of God.
- “The abnegation of Mary appeared again in two separations from Jesus” (p. 261). When did these occur (p. 261-262)? Why is it so hard to say “goodbye”? Will there be any “goodbyes” in heaven?
- In addition to the Heavenly Father, Mary is the only other person of whom it could be said: “For Mary so loved the world as to give Her only-begotten Son.” What must it have been like for Mary to give up Jesus? What does it say about her ongoing relationship with humanity that she “delivered up her only Son” for us (p. 263)?
- “Two loves existed in Mary: the love of Jesus and the love of men” (p. 263). Why were these two loves not in conflict in the heart of Mary (p. 263)?

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

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

**H**ail Mary, full of Grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now, and at the hour of our death. Amen. ■

*The Icon of Our Lady of Perpetual Help* (Continued from page 3)

of His Mother. Christ, however, did not suffer alone. Always at His side as the Companion of His sorrow is His Mother. Mary as well as Christ suffered in advance the bitterness of the Passion. Shortly after Christ’s birth, the aged Prophet Simeon, while holding the Infant Savior in his arms, promised Mary a life filled with suffering. “Thy own soul a sword shall pierce,” he prophesied.

- from a sign in the National Shrine Grotto of Lourdes at Mount St. Mary’s University, Emmitsburg, MD. ■

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

- FRIDAY, Nov. 8th, 7-8 p.m., St. Peter McMahon Hall

#### **LAST Parish Dessert Potluck**

- FRIDAY, Nov. 8th, 8-9 p.m., Upper Room Library

