



Faith in 52

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

Week 51: October 21st through October 27th, 2013

For Individuals

(pages 267-275 of the book *I Believe in Love*, stopping at "...I am going home.")

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:
 - The author remembers making his religious vows: "I said to Jesus, 'I am making my vows, but this is above all an act of confidence, because it is You who must keep them. I can never have the courage to bind myself—to make vows for the rest of my life. It is You who must keep them in me. It is You who will do everything.'" Consider the promises made by your godparents at your baptism, or the same promises you made at your Confirmation; think of your marriage vows or your vows to consecrated life; remember your promises at ordination; recall any act of consecration you have ever made to Mary or to become a member of a third order. Did you make these pledges in the spirit that the author made his? Revisit the many commitments you have made throughout your life and recommit yourself to them but using the language, the sentiment, and the fierce faith exhibited in the statement by the author. Ask Jesus for the grace to be who you are and to remain faithful to your promises.
 - In all of Scripture it is concisely revealed to St. John the Apostle that "God is love" (1 Jn 4:8). He who out of all the Apostles merited a natural death (Jn 21:20-23); he who was selected to care for Mary in Jesus' absence (Jn 19:26); he who ran to the tomb first (Jn 20:3-4); he who recognized the resurrected Christ before the other Apostles (Jn 21:7): What was the source of John's closeness to Christ? "The better he (St. John) knew Him (Jesus), the more he leaned upon His Heart; and the more he leaned upon His Heart, the better he knew Him" (p. 271). It can all be summed up in a simple gesture (Jn 13:23). Lay your head upon the Sacred Heart of Jesus and meditate upon the many examples of John's affection for Christ; may John's zeal for Jesus be yours.
 - Finish by saying the *Our Father* in a spirit of complete abandonment. ■

Faith in 52

Week 51: October 21st through October 27th, 2013

A True Friend

If Christ Jesus dwells in a man as his friend and noble leader, that man can endure all things, for Christ helps and strengthens us and never abandons us. He is a true friend. And I clearly see that if we expect to please him and receive an abundance of his graces, God desires that these graces must come to us from the hands of Christ, through his most sacred humanity, in which God takes delight.

Many, many times I have perceived this through experience. The Lord has told it to me. I have definitely seen that we must enter by this gate if we wish his Sovereign Majesty to reveal to us great and hidden mysteries. A person should desire no other path, even if he is at the summit of contemplation; on this road he walks safely. All blessings come to us through our Lord. He will teach us, for in beholding his life we find that he is the best example.

What more do we desire from such a good friend at our side? Unlike our friends in the world, he will never abandon us when we are troubled or distressed. Blessed is the one who truly loves him and always keeps him near. Let us consider the

glorious Saint Paul: it seems that no other name fell from his lips than that of Jesus, because the name of Jesus was fixed and embedded in his heart. Once I had come to understand this truth, I carefully considered the lives of some of the saints, the great contemplatives, and found that they took no other path: Francis, Anthony of Padua, Bernard, Catherine of Siena. A person must walk along this path in freedom, placing himself in God's hands. If God should desire to raise us to the position of one who is an intimate and shares his secrets, we ought to accept this gladly.

Whenever we think of Christ we should recall the love that led him to bestow on us so many graces and favors, and also the great love God showed in giving us in Christ a pledge of his love; for love calls for love in return. Let us strive to keep this always before our eyes and to rouse ourselves to love him. For if at some time the Lord should grant us the grace of impressing his love on our hearts, all will become easy for us and we shall accomplish great things quickly and without effort.

- from St. Teresa of Avila (*Opusc. De Libro vitae*, ap. 22, 6-7, 14). ■

Prayer of Abandonment by Bl. Charles de Foucauld

Father, I abandon myself into your hands; do with me what you will. Whatever you may do, I thank you: I am ready for all, I accept all. Let only your will be done in me, and in all your creatures. I wish no more than this, O Lord.

Into your hands I commend my soul; I offer it to you with all the love of my heart, for I love you, Lord, and so need to give myself, to surrender myself into your hands, without reserve, and with boundless confidence, for you are my Father. ■



Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane
(detail) by Paolo Veronese

Faith in 52

Week 51: October 21st through October 27th, 2013

For Group Sharing

(pages 267-275 of the book *I Believe in Love*, stopping at "...I am going home.")

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 was St. Peter's "great error" (p. 269)? On what occasions in Sacred Scripture did Peter succumb to this weak-

(Continued on page 4)



The Last Supper (detail) by Giotto

Real Friendship

by Dom Augustin Guillerand, O. Cart.

Real friendship is very rare, extremely rare in history, for it calls for natures that are already very lofty, and it elevates them still more.

Friendship with Jesus, however, is of a far more exquisite quality, and it brings to souls blessings that are infinitely superior. It consecrates friendships that are purely natural, and raises them up and endows them with a supernatural quality. That is why we should cultivate both at the same time.

Unfortunately, this second friendship is difficult, because the object of our love is not such as comes within the scope of our senses, and our relations with Jesus are bound to follow the way of spiritual things. These make little impression on us, just because they do not appeal to our senses.

(Continued on page 4)

Faith in 52

Week 51: October 21st through October 27th, 2013

(Continued from page 3)

ness? What saved him from going the way of Judas (p. 270)?

- Contrast the “two looks of Jesus in the Gospel: His look at Peter (Lk 22:61) and His look at the rich young man (Mk 10:17-22)...” (p. 269).
- St. John was the “Beloved Disciple” who laid his head upon Jesus’ chest at the Last Supper. “Why was St. John so audacious with Jesus?” (p. 271). What does the author think (p. 272-273)? What do you think? According to the author, “why was St. John the preferred” (p. 272)?
- Fr. Loew said: “The Christian life will never be anything other than a friendship of man with God” (p. 273). Would you say that Jesus is your friend? In what ways do you have a personal, intimate relationship with Christ? How has that relationship changed through the years?
- We are called to love our neighbor, but some friendships are built upon more than natural affections; they are built upon a shared faith. Does your love of Christ hurt your friendships, elevate them, or encourage them? What does it mean to be a friend?
- At the moment of death, Gaby Morlay, the actress, said: “I am not going away; I am arriving” (p. 275). What do her words mean? Do you fear death or do you believe it is the way back home? If you fear it, what specifically causes you worry? How does Christ wish to alleviate that anxiety?

STEP 4: CLOSING PRAYER

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

Hail 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. ■

Real Friendship (Continued from page 3)

One needs time to understand the things of the soul, and to experience the relations that souls can have with one another. How often do we not say: ‘I do not forget you; you are always in my thoughts.’ But do we reflect on the deep reality that lies beneath our words?

We do not understand, or rather we do not realize, that when two souls are united, they do not lie side by side like two bodies; they are really each in the other. And this is the principle of all love union, and in particular of that friendship which is the highest form of that union. Two friends become one, because their minds and their hearts are in perfect harmony, in the worship of the same truth and in the love of the same good. That community of love - note the word ‘community’ which means ‘common-unity’ and is very significant - increases our life twofold, and makes our being greater with all the greatness of the life of the one we love. That is how, when we love God and when we enter into these relations of friendship with Him, our life takes on a wideness which is measureless, and becomes eternal life.

- from *Where Silence is Praise*, A Monk of Parkminster, Tr. 1960, English Province of the Carthusian Order (Dimension Books, Inc., 1968). ■

Last Eucharistic “Hour of Power” in English

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

Last Parish Dessert Potluck

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