

Dear friends in Christ:

I am asking that you read an excerpt from the book by Fr. Jean D'ElBée, I Believe in Love and answer the questions I have inserted in bold type. For the next 2 sessions of the Upper Room I am going to introduce you to what I believe is the one of the best compositions on the Eucharist. While you will not read the whole chapter, you will get a sense for the depth of understanding from Elbée and learn more from him than I could convey to you. Please close the Upper Room with a Divine Mercy Chaplet.

In Christ;

Fr. David

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I want to speak to you now about the spirit of being a victim. The word *victim* frightens us, as if it foreboded unhappiness, bitter and despairing suffering. But the victim of love does not suffer as one suffers who has not given everything. The two are as different as day and night. The victim will always be love's privileged one. If only you knew the joy with which Jesus fills everything when we have given Him everything! The way He adds pure joys when there is sorrow, the way He metes out suffering and happiness with the delicacy of the most tender and compassionate Father, the most loving Friend! If you only knew! But often He lets it be neither seen nor felt beforehand, in order that we may receive merit from the very first step. If, before delivering ourselves up, we were to realize all the happiness we would find in this total gift of self, we would not gain the least merit. So Jesus hides it, that we may merit by confident generosity.

**"The victim will always be love's privileged one" – Does this resonate with you? How or Why?**

To unite ourselves to the Mass, to offer the Sacrifice, to consume the Victim, is to say that we would like to be victims with Him. Our Communion at Mass assimilates us to the Divine Victim. Although mystical members of the immolated Body, most Christians do not realize clearly enough that they participate in the Redemption in the measure to which they associate themselves with the divine immolation by personal immolation.

In *Mediator Dei*, Pius XII said, even before the Council:

But if the oblation whereby the faithful in this Sacrifice offer the divine Victim to the heavenly Father is to produce its full effect, they must do something further: They must also offer themselves as victims....In this way every element in the Liturgy conspires to make our souls reflect the image of the divine Redeemer through the mystery of the Cross, so that each one of us may verify the words of St. Paul: "With Christ I hang upon the Cross; and yet I am alive; or rather, not I; it is Christ who lives in me." We thus identify ourselves with Christ as victim for the greater glory of the Eternal Father ....This being so, nothing could be more right and just than that of all of us, together with our divine Head, who suffered for us, should immolate ourselves to the Eternal Father .... "Through Him, and with Him, and in Him, is given to you, God the Father Almighty, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all honor and glory forever and ever." And as the people answer "Amen," let them not forget to offer themselves and their anxieties, their sorrows, their troubles, their miseries, and their needs, in union with their divine Head crucified.

**Have you heard my homily about placing on the altar your life and all concerns both happy and sad? Discuss this practice in light of what you just read.**

What does the Pope mean when he asks all Christians to immolate themselves as victims with the divine Victim of Calvary and of the Mass? How are we to accomplish this desire of the Pope, which is simply the desire of Jesus Himself?

We can distinguish two kinds of victims: those who offer themselves to justice and those who offer themselves to love. Those of the first kind desire to satisfy the justice of God by paying for sinners. They are characterized by a call to suffering. Like St. Margaret Mary, they see themselves with all sinners as criminals and deliver themselves to all kinds of anguish in order to appease divine justice. "I do not wish to live any longer," says the saint, "except in order to have the happiness of suffering. My lot will therefore be to remain on Calvary until the last breath, desiring to be immolated on the altar of the Heart of Jesus, purified, consumed in the ardor of His flames."

**Just to be clear, somebody look up the word "immolate" on your phone and share with the group.**

Needless to say, this offering presupposes a tremendous love. I think that until little Thérèse, the offering as victim was always made, with varying nuances, in this same spirit.

But St. Thérèse found another way to offer herself, another way to immolate herself and die a victim. This "discovery of love" is something divinely beautiful. She sees the Heart of Jesus overflowing with tenderness and mercy for poor sinners, for all men; from this Heart escape floods of love which Jesus the Savior cannot contain any longer. But reject it; they raise the rampart of their indifference, of their contempt, and even of their hatred, so that the saving flood will not reach them.

What a disappointment this is for Jesus, who is burning to pour out His love and cannot do it; there is the King, begging for love, begging for hearts which He can fill with His merciful tenderness, and finding none - having a heart overflowing with loving goodness, a longing to share it, and finding no one who wants to receive it. Love came to His own, and His own did not want to have anything to do with Him. His heart was crushed from the inside, so to speak, by the love which He could not pour out. So His little victim presented herself: I want this love which men reject. I open my heart wide to this divine love; let it invade me, let it burn me, let it consume my heart completely. Thus I shall console my divine Savior. Thus I shall die a victim of love, immolated in this ocean of flames.

"O my God," cries little Thérèse, "will there be nothing but Your justice to receive sacrificial victims from the holocaust? Does not Your merciful love need them also? On all sides that love is misunderstood, rejected; the hearts on which you desire to lavish it turn instead towards creatures, seeking happiness among them instead of throwing themselves into Your arms and accepting Your infinite love.

"O my God! Will Your rejected love remain within Your heart? It seems to me that if You found souls offering themselves as sacrificial victims to Your love, You would consume them rapidly; You would be happy not to restrain at all the floods of infinite tenderness that are in You. If your justice desires to be satisfied, although it is extended only on earth, how much more does Your merciful love desire to enkindle souls, since Your mercy is extended even unto the heavens! O my Jesus, let me be this happy victim; consume Your victim in the fire of Your divine love!"

**Wasted suffering, rejected grace, hearts unreceptive to Divine Mercy - discuss the reality of the balance that exists in the spiritual world when bad things happen to good people and these suffer with grace. Refer to what you just read.**

Then a marvelous thing happens: when this love which men refuse has passed through the heart of little Thérèse and other victims like her, consume them, men are no longer able to refuse it! By being a victim of love, she becomes an apostle of love.

Here again we find the essential truth that the primary apostolate is that of prayer and suffering, of immolation of self by love and in the holocaust in union with Jesus in Gethsemane and on Calvary. Thus sinful man is not forgotten. Little Thérèse was essentially an apostle. "I understood that only love makes the members of the Church act, that if love were ever extinguished, apostles would no longer announce the Gospel, martyrs would refuse to pour out their blood. I understood that love embraces all vocations, that love is all."

### **"Love makes us act" - Discuss**

She recognized in this love the "twofold love" which contains in its unity the love of God and the love of neighbor. She made her own the words of the Cantic of Canticles, "Draw me: we will run after You to the odor of Your ointments." "Just as a torrent, throwing itself impetuously into the ocean, sweeps with it everything that lies in its path, so, O my Jesus, the soul which plunges itself into the boundless ocean of Your love draws along with itself all that it possesses."

The love of God cannot "consume" the soul unless this conflagration spreads more and more. Sin is not only expiated, but truly repaired: it is destroyed, effaced in the soul of the sinner by the infusion of grace, by the fire of love.

See what perfect reparation such an offering brings about! I have mentioned that the great sin of which our Lord complained more than any other to St. Margaret Mary was ingratitude, lack of love. The great reparation, therefore, is love – confident love, since the most cruel ingratitude is distrust.

How are we to make this offering real, and live it practically? The most perfect victims are those who let themselves be immolated by Jesus the High Priest in perfect abandonment, letting Him choose the tests, the crosses, the trials, and also the consolations and joys. It is by all the things He chooses for them that His love burns and consumes the hearts which have given themselves to Him. Let Him be sure of your smile. To be a victim is to smile. Total abandonment – "O Jesus, I thank You for everything" – that is enough. Jesus will immolate you in His own way. He will be the Priest of the host which you will have willed to be in His hands.

### **Discuss your understanding of the importance of gratitude in your relationship to the Holy Trinity.**

I emphasize this point because often I have been told, "I offered myself, but what must I do now?" Let Jesus do it! All your life, then, becomes a Mass in which you are the host and Jesus the Priest. You have thrown yourself into the fire, and the fire consumes you continually: yourself and your miseries.

We must "make a deal" with Him, give Him *carte blanche*. In Heaven He will recall to us the details of our life of love with Him, forgotten by us, but engraved in His Heart; our small and great pacts with Him – especially the great pact of perfect abandonment. Sister Geneviève (Céline) writes, "The soul which offers itself to love does not ask for suffering, but, in delivering itself up entirely to the designs of love, it accepts all that Providence permits for it of joys, labor, trials, and it counts on infinite mercy for everything."

Finally, one last thought: what should you do in your incapacity, your powerlessness to make reparation, from which you suffer like all the saints? Offer Jesus His own Heart, His own love, the only means by which you can fulfill your immense desire to love Him.

When St. Margaret Mary found herself at a loss as to what more to do to give Him reparation which would be worthy of Him, to thank Him, she offered Him His own Heart, His own love.

It is always great wisdom to substitute Jesus for ourselves. He desires only that. He came to earth for that. We can offer something infinite to an infinite love: the very heart of infinite love. Make reparations with the Heart of Jesus - He is yours - and always with and through Mary, who makes perfect reparations through her pierced Immaculate Heart. Jesus gave us His Heart and the heart of His Mother: they are our divine treasure. *Jesus, I have much to give You; I have everything to give You; I have something infinite to give You: Your own love, Your Heart, and the heart of Your Mother, which is also mine.*

**Is there any kind of love like this love? A love through which we can offer His Love back to Him? Do you understand this? Is there a similar experience to help our understanding?**