

Appendix booklet for the 2007 - 2008 Guidelines

# Communities with young children



Faith and Light

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# Introduction

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*Dear Friends,*

*Since the setting up of the first communities welcoming families with their young children, several leaders have been requesting that the Guidelines take more account of the need for craft and play activities adapted to the age group (toddler to teenager) and specific sharing time for the parents.*

*Having myself been part of this sort of community, I know all the problems of the coordination team in adapting the Guidelines to suit the needs of everyone. How do you make it so that the sharing time, which is so important for the parents and friends, is not turned into a crèche for the children? How do you fully experience 'Faith and Light' without becoming a catechesis group or nursery class? How do you create a 'network' throughout the world, between all the communities welcoming young children in a privileged way... The editorial team for the general Guidelines have already made several attempts, all of which have failed due to the lack of concrete experience of its members. And also because it seemed such an enormous task to us!*

*Today, with great joy, we are launching this 'trial balloon' as an appendix to the general Guidelines. Father Jacques Cuche<sup>1</sup> has spent part of his summer working for us! Thanks to his wealth of experience, we are able to now propose this document to you. Someone had to throw themselves into it ... Thank you Father Jacques for having dared to! Here is the fruit of his labour. We await all your comments, suggestions and criticisms... so necessary to go forward next year! (See evaluation sheet page 39.)*

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<sup>1</sup> Ordained a priest at Easter 1946, Father Jacques Cuche, canon, has taken successive charge of three Parisian parishes over twenty five years. Twenty years ago, he founded a Faith and Light community at Notre Dame de l'Assomption in Passy. Today, he is chaplain to three communities with young children, having contributed to the creation of two of them.

*Communities with young children are a treasure in Faith and Light, beyond a treasure. Parents have such a need not to be left alone after the birth of their disabled child. They have such a need for support, exchange and help in the awareness and education of their child... 'Faith and Light' can carry them to this place of friendship, listening, compassion, gentleness and kindness. What a blessing for the brothers and sisters to discover that they are not alone. Others are experiencing the same suffering and joy as them. Naturally, there are beautiful communities where children and adults with a handicap and their relatives, from various generations, have found their place.*

*Even if they are different in some ways, generally, these communities are like all the others. We are there, disabled children, parents, brothers, sisters, friends and chaplain. We do not do things to help the children, but we are together with them. Thus, the mimes, prayer time and celebration times are experienced together and this permits the creating and deepening of the links within the community and within each family.*

*It is also our great hope that this appendix will help give rise to new communities welcoming young children. That it will spur parents or friends (especially young people from 18 to 35 years old), priests or ministers... to dash and commit themselves with confidence. Also, do not hesitate to spread this booklet around. Today, more so than in the past, 'Faith and Light' must respond to the loneliness and anxiety of such parents faced with the arrival of a disabled child, to feel they are accompanied in his/her growth, to be helped to discover the infinite value, the gifts and the vocation of their toddler whatever his/her limitations.*

*With all my heart, I wish each and every one of you a beautiful year of joy and peace, in the tenderness of Jesus.*

Corinne Chatain  
General Secretary

## **“Let’s go!”**

### Testimony

*Laetitia, our fourth child was born with Down’s syndrome. For six months all I did was cry. Even through our love, we didn’t have the words to be able to share our suffering. Difficult years went by, even with the support of our family and friends, due to the very serious health problems that Laetitia has. Then I remembered of a Faith and Light pilgrimage, but it was totally inconceivable for us to join a community with disabled adults. We were just beginning to accept little by little the Downs syndrome of our little girl Laetitia, but to think forward to her adulthood was unbearable.*

*Other relatives who had got in touch with a community welcoming adults, had felt a big gap during the meeting (activities, concerns...) and were embarrassed because their young daughter was considered like a star.*

*A few parents in the same situation and some friends got together to think about the possible creation of a small community with young children. We were all looking for a place to chat about our lives with our disabled children, a place where we could talk about our children as a whole being and not just about their health problems or their I.Q. We were looking for a place where we could express in confidence and friendship all our difficulties and our refusals, and also a place where we could grow alongside others, through others by sharing our hope. A place where the brothers and sisters could share with others their sufferings and joys. A place of faith where each person would feel accompanied by He for whom all things are possible, when for us, everything is impossible.*

*I went right ahead! Today, this place exists, it is our small community. We have been meeting regularly in our young chaplain’s parish. With deep moments of sharing and prayer, the fiesta time is a joyous chaos of God’s children.*

*There are still too few communities with young children across the world. Many young parents, subject to all kinds of pressure around them, often completely isolated, are waiting to find a place such as this. So, go on: “Open the doors wide and let Christ in”!*

Annick  
(France)

# Preliminary Remarks

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## 1. Specific times and times together

The various activities proposed for all the children and the suggestions for sharing themes between the parents of the children have been considered and developed in the spirit of the 2007–2008 Guidelines for the movement. Reading them remains vital. It is still necessary to refer to them. It is our way of making it known that, far from being a 'free electron', our community belongs to the 'Faith and Light' movement.

The fact that a specific time is planned for the children as well as for the adults reinforces the importance of the activities together: songs, games, dances, mimes, prayer...

## 2. Time for preparation

The more the activities have been carefully prepared by one or more leaders, the more the children will enjoy taking part. It is vital that the activity leader(s) (who can vary from one meeting to another) has planned everything necessary for the smooth running of the activity.

## 3. Small groups of children

There is always a great benefit in dividing the children into small groups so that each disabled child, far from being 'drowned' amongst the others (brothers and sisters and children of friends) is always put first. Aren't they the community's reason for being? The brothers and sisters and children of friends will then be invited to suggest helping the other children who will perhaps have a problem with cutting out, drawing and colouring... However, it seems preferable that the brother or sister of a disabled child is in a different group to his/her sibling. They live together all week and it is also good that they meet with other children.

#### 4. Patience, humility, confidence

Caution! Enough time should always be given for the children to express themselves in their own way, and we should continue to learn, with patience and humility, to read their lips and their look.

#### 5. Sharing time between parents

Whilst the children do the proposed activity with the friends, it is vital that the parents have a sharing time preceded by a 'nourishment' for the heart and spirit, given by the chaplain or leader. From this word, in friendship and confidence, the parents can deepen this word and express their hopes and their joy, their suffering and their concerns. It is an important time because several parents maintain that this is the only time they can say what they hold closest to their heart and which, too often, isn't understood, even by those closest to them. This exchange must be the light that illuminates the way in the days to come.

As many friends as possible are invited to this sharing time. We have to be careful that it is not always the same ones who lead the children's activities each time so that all can listen and express themselves.

#### 6. Evaluation

When the coordination team meets, it is vital, amongst other things, to assess the specific times:

- ▶ Are the disabled children, the youngest as well as the oldest, interested?
- ▶ Is each child able to take part? A little, moderately or a lot?
- ▶ What needs to still be and carry on being improved so that each child can progress, even by a small amount?

The sharing time between adults should also be assessed:

- ▶ Were the questions adapted?
- ▶ Was there good stimulation?
- ▶ Was the 'nourishment' sufficient for regaining strength and going along the daily road more confidently?
- ▶ ...



## 7. The chaplain

The role of the chaplain in a community with young children is even more necessary than in other communities. Do not hesitate to tell him how important his presence, even part-time, in the coordination team meeting is. During the community meeting, his word and leadership of a celebration, whenever possible, are a great support for the parents and children as a presence of Jesus.

This participation of the chaplain in the life of the community is all the more essential, as within this community, the children can prepare to receive the sacraments.

Have a good journey!

After each meeting, can we takeover giving thanks to the Lord on our own account: "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent, and revealed them to little children". (Luke 10,21)

Father Jacques Cuche

*P.S. It goes without saying that all your comments, observations and criticisms will be welcome: we have to constantly help each other, in a brotherly way, so that we can progress together. It is greatly hoped that next year, a small team with an ecumenical dimension can be set up, which, unfortunately was not possible this year.*

## ***The community, a great song of joy***

*(Guidelines, pages 7-13)*

However small our community, it belongs to the large 'Faith and Light' movement, which was created at Lourdes in 1971 and is established across the whole world with more than 1500 communities.

Let us set sail in our boat to experience this year.

### Children's time

- On cardboard, a friend has drawn a large boat and made provision for the placing of silhouettes of community members, those already there and those who will hopefully join us throughout the year...
- A few children are invited to colour in the boat and the waves around it.
- Each child cuts out (or has cut out with him/her or for him/her) his silhouette and that of one or two other members of the community. They colour them in and write the name on it.
- He/she sticks a passport photo on the head of the silhouette (on the invitation letter, each person will have been asked to bring along this photo).
- At the request of the leader, each child goes up and puts his/her silhouette in the boat as well as that of his/her parents and friends.  
On the drawing of the boat, some empty spaces will have been kept for the silhouettes of people who we hope will join us throughout the year.
- Two children, who know numbers, are invited to write '1971' on the boat. A friend explains the reason for this date.
- Other children colour in the letters prepared in advance that make up the words 'Faith and Light'. A letter is given to each child. At the call of his/her name, he/she comes and sticks his/her letter on the boat. When the last letter is stuck on, we can start singing: *'Friends, let's sing our joy'*.

How is this boat going to go forward? It needs a sail that a friend has taken the trouble to prepare in advance. This friend installs the sail.

But without the wind, the sail cannot drive the boat onwards. To drive the 'Faith and Light' boat onwards, the wind is the breath of the Holy Spirit. 'Faith and Light', our community, is us. Our community is also God with us: we thank Him for our community through a song of thanksgiving.

## Sharing time between adults

Proposals for sharing and question themes (choose one of the three themes):

- 1) Are there still places where we do not feel welcome with our disabled child, such as before the first pilgrimage to Lourdes in 1971? (*Cf Guidelines page 7, §1*)

But do we also know places where we joyfully observe some progress in making our children more welcome just as they are?

How can these 'blocked' situations be evolved?

Alone? With others? Who?

Are we aware of the importance of 'Faith and Light' in this recognition of our children's self-respect, so that they all have their place in society and the Church?

How can we be part of this breakthrough?

- 2) Is our community a place where each person, child, parent and friend feels completely welcome, listened to, respected and valued?

In which area(s) should we be making an effort so that each person feels even more welcome?

Do we not have to continually progress?

How can we make our community more welcoming in order to make other families want to join us?

- 3) We belong to a movement<sup>2</sup>. Do we know what unites us beyond the borders?

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<sup>2</sup> Perhaps it would be a good idea to give each person the map showing the locations of Faith and Light throughout the world. It can be downloaded and printed from [www.foietlumiere.org](http://www.foietlumiere.org) : 'Who are we?', 'Guidelines'.

Throughout the world, all the 'Faith and Light' communities experience the same spirituality inspired by the Gospel.

Perhaps it is an opportunity to ask ourselves:

- In the community, is it really this spirituality that stimulates us?
- In the family, is this spirituality a support in our daily life?
- Do we know the 'Faith and Light' prayer? (*See page 33*). It allows us to pray with each other and for each other.
- Throughout the world, the communities adhere to the same movement Charter. Do we know it? It would be good at each meeting to read together the extract of this Charter that is given to us each month in the Guidelines.



## ***The community, founded on the disabled person***

At the heart of our communities: the disabled child  
(Guidelines, pages 14-20)

*'You are precious and honoured in my sight'* said the Lord (Isaiah 43/4)

*'The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance but the Lord looks at the heart'* (I Samuel 16/7)

*'This is my secret: it is only with the heart that one can see rightly. What is essential is invisible to the eye.'* (The Little Prince)

Each person must learn to look beyond what they see to discover the true, often hidden, beauty of others.

### Children's time

There are three proposed activities to choose from:

#### ▶ First proposed activity

Mime the fable: 'the guenon, the monkey and the nut'

- A young guenon finds a nut still in its green husk.
- She puts it in her mouth and grimaces: it is bitter. She throws it away in disgust.
- Her mother gently teases her and explains to her that the green husk has to be removed.
- The guenon follows her mother's advice; she removes the husk and bites into the nut. She cries out: she has broken a tooth!
- Again, her mother teases her. She explains to her that it is also necessary to break the nutshell.
- The guenon follows her mother's advice; she breaks the shell and discovers that the nut is excellent.

▶ Second proposed activity (*Cf General Guidelines, page 17*)

The friends have brought in various fruits whose outside appearance may surprise us: a marked banana, watermelon, a kiwi fruit, a nut, a chestnut with its barbs, an almond...

We open them and admire how beautiful they are, so astonishing and different inside, as are each of us: the core of an apple is heart-shaped; the watermelon shows a red, juicy and sweet flesh; the kiwi fruit reveals a striking green behind its dreary skin; the fresh almond so difficult to open and peel, offers a white and tender heart...

We peel them to make a fruit salad to have for tea or the meal. It will be excellent!

We can research together and tell of a beautiful thing that we have discovered in the heart of another child and/or our parents, a friend of the community.

▶ Third proposed activity (*Cf General Guidelines page 7*)

Mime Bernadette's story. We can get inspiration from the small illustrated booklet about Bernadette produced by 'Ombres et Lumière'<sup>3</sup>. In 1858, a fourteen year old girl in fragile health was living in Lourdes. She was called Bernadette. She did not know how to read or write. She did not even know her catechism. Bernadette did not go to the town's school. Her parents were very poor; her father was unemployed. In order to be able to buy bread for her family, she collected the bones of small animals and sold them to a rag and bone man.

People made fun of her; they called her all sorts of names.

Thus, it was to this young girl that the Holy Virgin chose to appear! Mary did not look upon Bernadette in the same way as the inhabitants of Lourdes! Mary saw the very pure heart of Bernadette. She saw how Bernadette knew full well to pray with all her heart and how well she looked after others.

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<sup>3</sup> Downloadable and printable from [www.foietlumiere.org](http://www.foietlumiere.org), 'Who are we?', 'Guidelines' or can be ordered from the International Secretariat: 3, rue du Laos 75015 Paris, France.

Bernadette is like the big sister of all those who do not know how to read nor write but who love Jesus with all their heart.

This is why 'Faith and Light' likes to make its pilgrimage to Lourdes.

## Sharing time between adults

- Through which events have we gradually discovered the wealth, beauty and unique place of our disabled child?  
More than any other person, our child is seeking a relationship. And he/she experiences all his/her relationships very intensely.  
Thus the Holy Trinity is a relationship. That is why our child is so close to God.
- Have we also discovered the specific 'vocation' of our disabled child within our family? Our parish? Our Church? Our society?
- Through our child, have we discovered our specific vocation as parents of a disabled child?
- Are we able to bear witness before those who watch us live and are sometimes astonished?

We could conclude by reading again and meditating on the text of St Paul to the Corinthians: I Cor 1/ 27-28.

When the community meets together, we could sing this song which takes up the text: *'There is madness in the world...'*



***The community,  
everyone is important, everyone is a gift***

*(Guidelines, pages 20-25)*

Everyone is important within the community.

Everyone is necessary to the life of the community.

Everyone is a 'gift' for all the community.

When a member is not there, the whole community suffers.

### Children's time

*Before the meeting, a friend has enlarged and copied a photo of the whole community, in the largest format possible. This copy will be cut up to make a puzzle. It would be ideal to divide this puzzle into 4, 6 or 8 parts so that everyone can take part in putting it back together. You will also need to have a piece of cardboard the same size as the puzzle to stick the pieces on to.*

The children divide into small groups.

Each group receives an envelope containing a certain number of puzzle pieces and makes up the part of the puzzle which has been given to them.

When all the groups have finished making up their part, the different parts are put together. The community appears, all completely reunited.

If anyone is absent (children or adults) remove their silhouette: the puzzle looks like a piece of material with moth holes in it. Everyone is important in the community; we miss those who are absent!

What can each of us bring to the community? Think, in small groups, about the responsibility that each person can take on:

- welcome each arrival,
- hand out song sheets or other documents
- take part in laying the table or tidying up,
- bring birthday cakes for tea or dessert,
- play a musical instrument,
- ...
- give a smile, it is the most important thing!



## Sharing time between adults

This meeting should allow us to realise if everyone really has their place in the community.

A community is living when all its members are active and playing a part.

First of all, put together a list of all the responsibilities essential to the smooth running of the community.

Secondly, each person is entrusted with a responsibility which suits their availability and talents. For example (this list is by no means exhaustive):

- sending of a card that has been signed by everyone to those who are absent from the meeting,
- celebrating birthdays,
- in charge of small equipment : coloured paper, scissors, glue, coloured pencils...
- in charge of the crockery: plates, glasses, place settings, table cloth, serviettes...
- in charge of the community 'newspaper' with supporting photos,
- sending of invitation to meeting letter,
- in charge of liturgy, prayer objectives, readings, collections...
- in charge of songs,
- in charge of information that needs distributing,
- in charge of finances,
- in charge of contacting those who are absent,
- ...

We could read together and meditate on:

- either I Corinthians 12/ 12-21 '*We are parts of the Body of Christ*'
- or I Peter 2/5 '*We are the living stones to construct the Church*'.



December

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## ***The community, place of sharing***

*(Guidelines, pages 26-31)*

### Children's time

In December, with the approach of Christmas, in communities with children, we like to make a Nativity each year, it is a favourite time. How do we renew this moment?

Each child makes either a shepherd, a sheep, a donkey, an ox, him/herself or a person from the community.

The figure can be made from modelling clay, salt dough, clay or even a cut-out silhouette... Each character or animal is carefully coloured in, painted or varnished. Write his/her name underneath or on the back.

When the community meets together for prayer time, each person will place his/her character in the Nativity.

Before leaving, we will give each character to a member of the community so that he/she can place it in their Nativity at home.

And me, I shall receive one that someone else has made. Then, he/she will think of me and pray for me! And I will think of him/her and pray for him/her!

This is how we experience the sharing.

Perhaps, with this 'spontaneous' exchange, it would be deemed more expedient to draw lots for the Nativity characters. In this instance, a friend calls each person in turn by name. Another friend takes one of the figures in the Nativity, with their eyes closed, and gives it to the person called.

### Sharing time between adults

In those days, the Virgin Mary and her cousin Elisabeth both had an unexpected pregnancy:

Mary was a young girl from Nazareth, distressed by the angel's announcement.

Elisabeth was a woman of a certain age, more than astonished at having noticed that she was pregnant.

These two women had the unexpectedness of God in their life.

At the time of the visitation of the Virgin Mary to her cousin Elisabeth, what could they have shared together? In sensing that due to the circumstances of the 'unusual' conception of their child, this child would have a vocation, a special mission.

We read again:

- the annunciation to Mary (Luke 1/ 26-38)
- the annunciation to Zechariah (Luke 1/ 8-21)
- The meeting between Mary and Elisabeth (Luke 1/39-56)
- The circumcision of John the Baptist (Luke 1/ 67- 79)

The reaction of both of them in the face of this encroachment of God into their life in this 'extraordinary' way, could this enlighten us on the future and vocation of the disabled child whom we have welcomed?

This sharing can allow us a very personal exchange on our parental experiences.

## All together

In the General Guidelines, it is proposed to do a mime of the Visitation. In a community with children, it may be preferable to relive (mime) the Nativity and focus the prayer on Christmas<sup>4</sup>. (See page 34: 'Bring the Gospel to life').



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<sup>4</sup> So that a Gospel mime has all its spiritual significance, it is imperative that the person who directs and leads this mime has read and re-read this Gospel text to completely absorb it. It is impossible to have a quality mime when the leader has looked at it at the last minute. It sometimes happens that more time is spent on planning what the different characters will wear than reflecting on the text itself.

## ***The community, at the heart of the Church*** *(Guidelines, pages 32-38)*

### Children's time

A friend has drawn a large, cross-shaped church.

In this church, there are various people

- Small children, young ones and bigger ones,
- Boys and girls,
- Young parents and grandparents,
- People from Africa and Asia,
- People or children in wheelchairs or with crutches or with a cane and alert, well people,
- Priests and laymen,
- Members of Faith and Light communities throughout the world<sup>5</sup> and/or our own community
- ...

From various magazines, (which friends will have made a point of bringing in), the children cut out photos representing these various people that we find at church. The children stick these various people in the church, having taken great care to leave the heart of the church empty.

Who are we going to put in this heart of the Church where the alter with the cross is usually found?

In September 1996, Pope John Paul II told us: '*Take your place at the heart of the Church*', '*You have in the Church, the Body of Christ, a chosen place*'.

Why? Because in the Church, it is our mission to be witnesses to the tenderness of God.

So, the children stick the photos of Faith and Light or their own photo in the heart of the Church.

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<sup>5</sup> We can use the 'Family Album', or the CD of photos intended for the Announcing and Sharing Days, available from the International Secretariat: 3 rue du Laos 75015 Paris, France.

## Sharing time between adults

Gradually, we have discovered the wealth of our disabled child.

- Through him/her, we have another approach to the essential values: which ones?
- How can we share this life-changing discovery with other families? Especially those families still cut off from the world following the birth of their disabled child.
- Can we invite a new family to the Festival of Light next month? Because 'A community is always a missionary' (Cf General Guidelines, page 77 § 4).
- How can we share in Church, this 'mystery' of real suffering which is gradually transformed into serenity and peace?
- Can we actually experience this sharing by taking part in parish life with our disabled child, especially at the Sunday gathering?

Perhaps this is the time to reflect on the mission of the priest who should help our integration into the Church? (Cf General Guidelines, page 33 § 6).



***The community,  
place of celebration and feast***

*Celebration of our movement "Faith and Light "  
(Guidelines, pages 39-44)*

Children's time

The children as well as the friends and two parents are going to prepare a mime of the Presentation of the infant Jesus at the Temple by his parents (Luke 2/ 22-38) that we celebrate today, the Festival of Light.

- There is the Virgin Mary (a mum) carrying her child,
- Saint Joseph (a dad), carrying two small doves,
- Simeon, the old man,
- Anna, the widow who spends all day praying in the Temple.

The other children and friends will also be in the Temple, very discreet and amazed witnesses to this extraordinary tale.

When we meet together for the mime, the parents themselves will also become witnesses to this event.

At the end of the mime, we solemnly light the community's candle. Each person will receive a lit candle in a holder. We are all like Simeon and Anna, friends of Jesus. He reminds us of our mission: to be the light.

Sharing time between adults

We read the canticle of Simeon and the words that he addresses to Mary, Luke 2/29-35.

- Do we see ourselves in the words of Simeon?
- When and how have we been aware that our disabled child was a 'sign of division'? With Mary, we have suffered.
- In the Gospel, we are able to find different passages where Jesus is a 'sign of contradiction' for some people.

- When and how have we been aware that our child was also a 'Light'? Did he/she come to us to praise the Lord?
- With whom have we been able to praise the Lord?
- In our society, so quick to get rid of children in whom we discover a disability, can we bear witness to the 'light' that our child brings to us?



### ***The community, place where you learn to forgive***

Give and receive forgiveness  
(Guidelines, pages 45-51)

Easter is celebrated on 23 March this year. It would seem expedient that the community meeting in March takes this into account.

### Children's time

The paralysed man cured by Jesus (Luke 5 / 18-26).

A friend enlarges the drawing of the paralysed man carried by his friends to Jesus and makes several copies to allow reflection in several small groups (see photocopy page 35).

We study this drawing at length and colour it in:

- a man is laid on a stretcher,
- he cannot walk to go and meet Jesus who is expecting him,
- some friends take the time to carry him up to Jesus,
- Jesus looks at this paralysed man,
- what does Jesus say to him? *'Stand up, pick up your stretcher and walk. Your sins are forgiven.'*

Draw a 'bubble' coming from the lips of Jesus with the Lord's words in it: *'Your sins are forgiven'*.

- What does the paralysed man do?  
He stands up. He dances with joy: why? Because he is cured AND because he is forgiven.

Often, we are like this paralysed man: we can't go towards Jesus who is calling us. We have a bag that is way too heavy to carry.

- In front of us, there is a large bag.
- Each person tries to pick it up and walk with it. However, it is so heavy that none of us can pick it up and walk to the meeting with Jesus.



- Open the bag.  
Each of the children and friends pulls a large stone from the bag and keeps it with them. Each stone has a picture on it representing anger, refusal to share, savagery, greed, sulkiness, bad character ... (This assumes that the coordination team or other members have prepared everything in advance.)
- All the stones have been taken out.  
The bag is empty... The bag is light. I can run to meet Jesus!
- Today, who will lighten my heart that is heavy with my sins?
- Today, on behalf of Jesus, the Priest can also say to me: *'all your sins, all your spitefulness are forgiven in the name of Jesus'*.
- When will we go to see a priest so that he can forgive us in Jesus' name?

## Sharing time between adults <sup>6</sup>

- Our child has been baptised. Perhaps he/she has taken their first communion and now takes communion quite often. But when?
- How does he/she receive the 'forgiveness of the Lord', the sacrament of reconciliation?
- How can we prepare our child to receive this sacrament, of course, whilst respecting his/her privacy? Doubtless, it is good to have contact with a priest who knows disabled people, but there again, it is vital to respect our child's choice.
- Let us share our experiences as parents
- What does 'sin' mean to us?
- What can 'sin' be to our child?  
Sin is first and foremost a lack of love, a refusal to love which is shown in deeds, behaviour and defined attitudes.

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<sup>6</sup> The questions proposed here are essentially addressed to parents from a Catholic or Orthodox background. Each community will adapt the questions according to its own denomination.

April

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## ***The community, founded on prayer***

*(Guidelines, pages 52-56)*

### Children's time

Each child and friend has been invited to bring along something that he/she finds very beautiful. He/she shows the item that he/she has chosen to bring. We lay these treasures out so as to highlight what has been brought by each person. We look... We admire.

Like St Francis, we give thanks to God for all these beautiful things (Cf General Guidelines, page 82).

- What is the most beautiful thing in the world? Is it the Love with which mum/dad love me? And also my brothers and sisters?
- How do I know that mum/dad love me?
- Each person cuts out a heart upon which he/she writes (or has written) the name of mum and dad.

More than mum/dad, God loves me.

- How do I know this? God has given His Son. Jesus, the Son of God, has given His life for us. The Father resurrected His son and will resurrects with Him.
- On a very large heart, which is that of God, we come and place the heart of our mums and dads.
- We sing: '*The love of God is so marvellous...*'
- We can also pray 'The Lord's Prayer' with actions (see page 36).

### Sharing time with the adults

- Could each person say what their favourite prayer is and why? 'The Lord's Prayer', 'the Hail Mary', 'the Magnificat', a Psalm, a prayer

discovered in a journal, during a pilgrimage, a request prayer, a thanksgiving prayer, a prayer calling for help or adoration...

- Which places or songs help our prayer?

This sharing can be difficult but it will be more enriching if each person has reflected on it previously.

- How do we start our children praying?
  - How do we make their life of prayer increase at the same time as our own?
  - Do we know the songs and music to which they are responsive?
  - Is it important for our child to have a 'prayer corner'?
  - Are the 'rites' as important to them?
- Let's share our parental experience.

Obviously, this reflection is linked to the age of our child. The initiation of a 4 or 5 year old child is different to the guidance of a 15 year old teenager!

*At page 39, you will find a questionnaire of evaluation of this booklet. Thank you for filling in this form and return it to us by post before April 15th, 2008. The small team is looking forward to all your suggestions!*



May

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### ***The community, one spirit, one body***

We make a large family

*(Guidelines, pages 57-62)*

#### Children's time

A friend has drawn a very large leaf, a vine with numerous vine shoots, its leaves but without wine grapes (see page 38).

Each person cuts out (or has cut out for them) a beautiful wine grape and colours it in (green, gold, purple). He/she writes (or has written) the name of a member of the community on a small piece of cardboard and this is then glued on to his/her grape. When his/her name is called, that person comes up and attaches his/her grape to one of the vine shoots.

Together, we look for events that have made our community grow.

A brother or sister writes the event brought to mind on the trunk of the vine.

We all take the time to look at and admire this beautiful vine.

- But what is it that is so vital for this beautiful vine to bear beautiful wine grapes? It is the sap which circulates through the trunk to the vine shoots.

For each Christian, for the Church, for each 'Faith and Light' community, the sap is the life of Jesus Christ, it is the Holy Spirit.

- To show this circulation of sap, a friend traces a red track which covers the whole vine, from the trunk to the grapes.

The apostles prayed, gathered around the Virgin Mary, so that the Holy Spirit, the life of Jesus in His Church, would come, (Acts 1/12-15).

Each person chooses his/her favourite from five or six images that bring to mind the descent of the Holy Spirit on the apostles. We place these images beside the vine.

And we sing a song to the Holy Spirit.

## Sharing time between adults

- We are invited to share incidents where belonging to the community has been important for us,
- Which ones have made our belonging to the community grow? To the 'Faith and Light' movement?
- Today, what could help the community become still more of a body driven by the same spirit, a real family?



## ***The community, a path of growth***

*(Guidelines pages 63-69)*

It is the end of the year, time to take stock: have we grown during this year?  
Each one of us? And the community?

### Children's time

Each child has been invited to bring a photo of him/her, when he/she was still a baby and their most recent photo.

In small groups, we compare these two photos: what changes! I have grown!

- But what does 'to grow' mean?
- Is it only my body which has grown?
- I draw (or someone helps me to draw) my silhouette.
- Today, are there things that I can do, that I couldn't as a baby? For example: I manage to walk by myself, eat by myself, get dressed (almost) by myself, make myself understood, write letters, draw, colour without going over the lines, put on my favourite CD s all by myself, do some errands by myself... What else?

*Obviously, this reflection requires a lot of tact so as not to hurt the children who struggle with their disability. If the child has a severe disability, his/her parents can perhaps tell us about the new gesture that he/she has learnt a small cry that signifies something that he/she wishes...*

- But has my heart grown?
- Do I love more?
- Do I love people more? Who?
- Do I love Jesus more and better? Am I better at praying, when I receive communion, do I prepare better for my meeting with Jesus?
- What is more important: my body which is growing OR my heart which is loving more and better?

I draw a heart that is either bigger or smaller and I stick it in its place on my silhouette.

I write (or have written for me) on a petal (that the friends have prepared beforehand) the names of people that I love more and better. By putting together all the petals, they form a flower. And all our flowers form a bouquet that we place in the prayer corner.

## Sharing time between adults

It is time to take stock, in accordance with the questions proposed in the General Guidelines, page 66. The results of this will be read by the coordination team to prepare for 2008-2009.

Perhaps the older ones of the brothers and sisters could be invited to also do this same exercise but between them?



### ***Holiday time***

*(Guidelines, pages 70-75)*

Not everyone has left on 'holiday' yet.

What does the word 'holiday' mean to parents with disabled children? A lot of children are still in their specialist establishments, which in Europe only close at the end of July. Why don't two or three communities with children get together for some free recreation time, organise a large picnic... Obviously, it will perhaps be more difficult to find available friends so that this recreational outing is also a respite time for the parents.

Anyway, be imaginative in how you spend this friendship time whilst waiting to meet again in September. What should we devise, introduce so that we stay in touch over this long summer break? Sending of cards? Outings with three or four?





## ***Faith and Light Prayer***

Jesus, you came into our world,  
to reveal the Father to us, your Father and our Father.

You came to teach us to love one another.

Give us the Holy Spirit, according to your promise,  
so that he will make us

instruments of peace and unity,  
in this world of war and division.

Jesus, you have called us to follow you  
in a community of Faith and Light.

We want to say « yes » to you.

We want to live a covenant of love  
in this big family you have given us,  
where we can share our sufferings and difficulties,  
our joys and our hope.

Teach us to accept our wounds, our weakness,  
so that your power may be revealed.

Teach us to find you in all our brothers and sisters,  
especially in those who are the weakest.

Teach us to follow you in the way of the Gospel.

Jesus, come and live in us and in our communities  
as you lived first in Mary.

She was the first to welcome you.

Help us to be faithfully present, with her, at the foot of the cross,  
near the crucified of the world.

Help us to live your Resurrection.

Amen.

## ***'Bring the Gospel to life'***

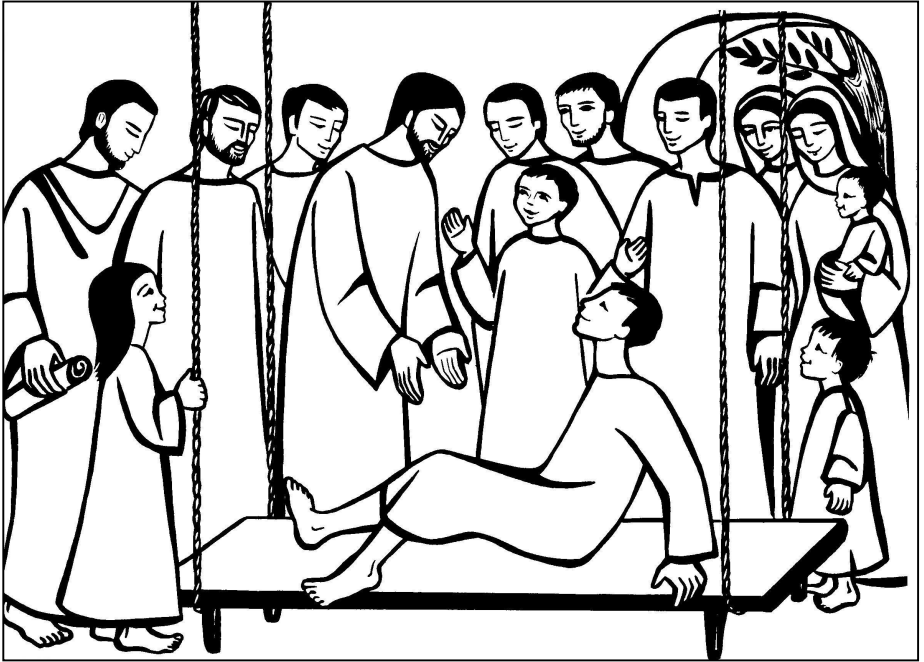
The mime is quite specifically a very accessible mode of expression to children who have a disability. They capture in their being what cannot be understood with words. We notice more and more that mime can help give life to the Gospel.

In the community, the mime isn't theatre. We are not actors. We want to bring the Gospel to life as a true story that is happening now. We want it to be understood and experienced inwardly. Sometimes, we know these texts well but they have not penetrated our heart. We haven't felt what they are saying to us today. For example, by bringing the Nativity to life, we know that today Jesus is still present amongst us.

It is good and desirable that all of those who do a mime be chosen from amongst all the components of our community: disabled child, parents, friend, chaplain. The ideal is that each person is able to mime a person so that no-one remains a 'spectator' but that all of us are 'witnesses'!

- It is of course preferable to choose one passage of the Gospel or a single parable which will thus give its full value.
- We take sufficient time to prepare it carefully.
- The chaplain or leader or a member of the coordination team says a few words on the passage that is going to be mimed so as to fully prepare our hearts.
- During the mime, someone slowly reads the chosen text.
- Some very short and simple lines can possibly be said, very clearly, by those doing the mime, or by other readers...

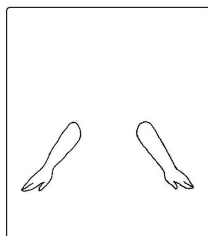
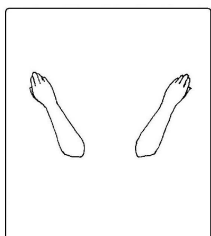
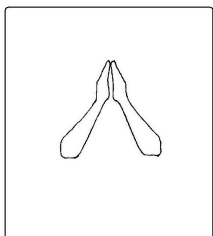
## *Drawing of the paralysed man*<sup>7</sup>



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<sup>7</sup> Extract from 'I meet Jesus', Paulist Press, page 49.

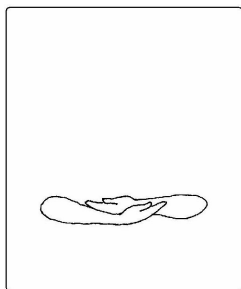
# ***The Lord's Prayer with actions***



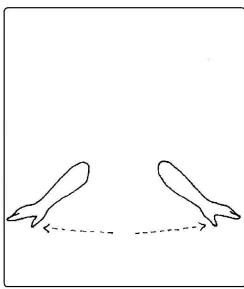
Our Father, who art in Heaven,

hallowed be thy name,

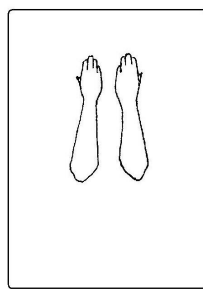
thy kingdom come.



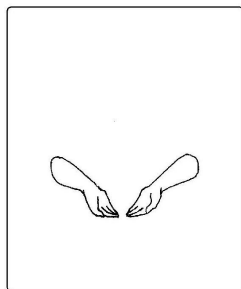
Thy will be done,



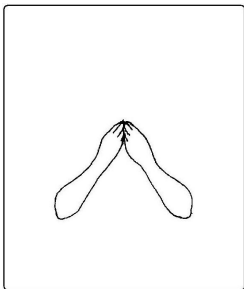
on earth



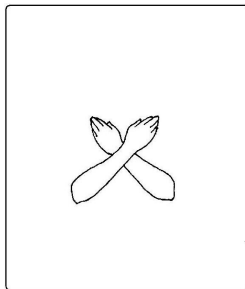
as it is in heaven. |



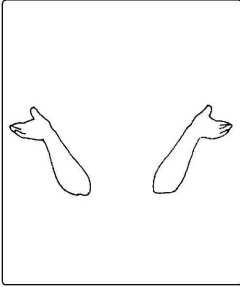
Give us this day



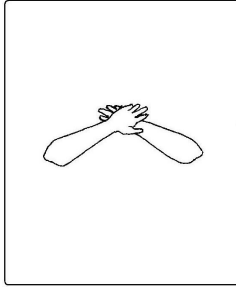
our daily bread.



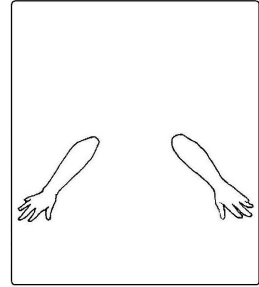
And forgive us our trespasses,



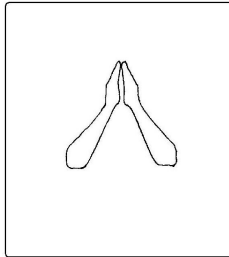
As we forgive those who  
trespass against us



and lead us not into temptation,



but deliver us from evil.



Amen !

**Bunch of grapes and vine<sup>8</sup>**



<sup>8</sup> Extract from 'I meet Jesus', Paulist Press, page 52.

## **Evaluation of the booklet**

Please return to the International Secretariat 3, rue du Laos 75015 Paris France, before 15 April 2008

- Does this booklet meet all your requirements?
- What do you like most?

- What do you find less good?

- Your suggestions :

Name of my community:

First name and name of leader:

Address:

Country:

Thank you very much!

“Let the little children  
come to me”

Mc 10,14

