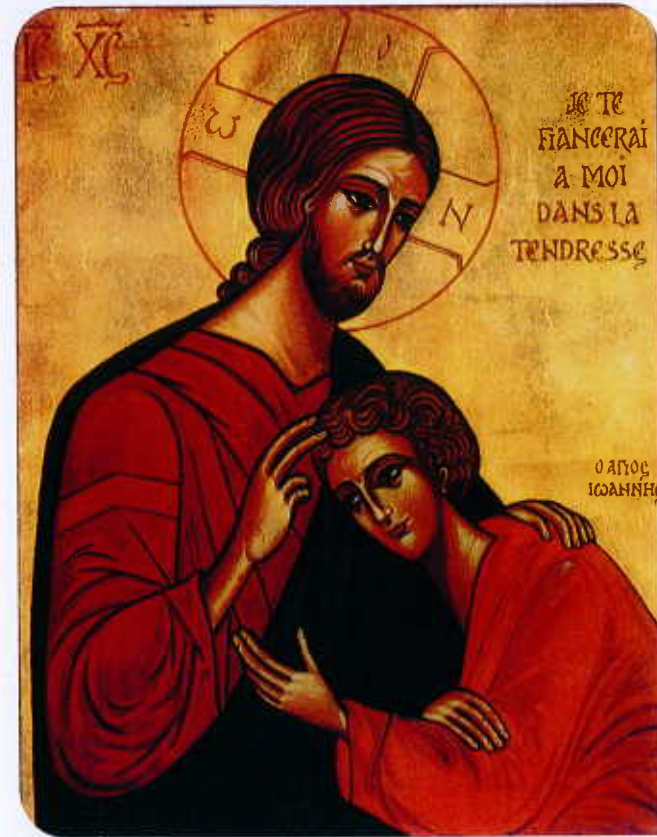


The beloved disciple
is the one
whose head rests
on the heart of Jesus



Faith
and Light

A journey
together
through
the Gospel of John

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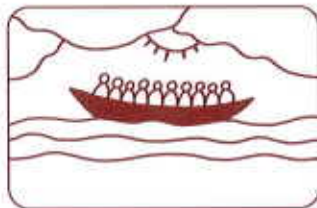
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FLI-CC/DN June 2002

IMPRIMERIE RENDERS - KAIN (TOURNAI) - BELGIQUE

This year we are going to reflect together on the Gospel of John. We will look at it step by step, and take time to pray with it throughout the coming year.

The gospel of John is different from the three other gospels, which recount the facts of the life of Jesus with his death, his resurrection and his message, particularly through the use of parables. The gospel of John is a catechism, which leads us gradually into the mystery of Jesus, so that we begin to trust him, to know him better and become his friend. He teaches us how to live with Jesus today.

This gospel was written around the year 95AD, after having been taught orally for many years. The author was known as « the disciple whom Jesus loved ».

Origen, born in 184AD, wrote one of the first commentaries on John's Gospel. He said that **in order to enter into this gospel and to understand it, you have to have the same experience as the beloved disciple himself, of resting on Jesus' heart and of having welcomed Mary as your mother.** There is a long tradition that confirms that the apostle John is this disciple whom Jesus especially loved.

Andrew Chouraqui, who was the deputy mayor of Jerusalem a few years ago and who translated this gospel, wrote in the introduction : « A book like this fourth gospel seems to flow from a deep silence, there where the Word of God is revealed as logos, the living word. And it is from this silent contemplation that we are called to read, understand, interpret and translate this work of John ». (A. Chouraqui : Bible p.2060)

Jean Vanier

The grace of the Guidelines

How much we must give thanks for the gift of these new « Guidelines », which you have in your hands today ! It is the fruit of a lot of teamwork, accomplished in the midst of many difficulties, unexpected things and love.

Imagine a little this worksite.

First of all, we must choose a **theme** among all those proposed by the International Council. Then Jean Vanier writes the introduction and a « word » for each month, which will give its meaning to the gathering. Then, the teams which have been asked and who have accepted to collaborate, get to work on **suggesting activities for the gathering**. Here I take the opportunity to give a very special « thank you » to the members of Faith and Light in the North of England, Wales and Scotland, who have worked with enthusiasm and efficiency. A big thank you also to Hugh Ellwood, of England, for his illustrations which help us to join Jesus.

Then comes the moment when a small team revises, completes, unifies and tries to take into account all the existing imperatives.

At last, is the stage of **the translations** into the three official languages (French, English, Spanish) and the dispatch of the text, in priority to the 35 countries who speak none of these languages. They get to work in turn to find translators.

At each stage, what supports the most these artisans, all volunteers, is in keeping their minds and hearts turned towards you, the 1450 communities to whom this booklet, small but very precious, is addressed. It is **the bond of communion** among all the communities in the world. It is the instrument which allows each gathering to be, not only a moment of pleasant and joyous reunion, but also a time of recharging in friendship, prayer, celebration, and fiesta. A time when one finds the nourishment to live through the month ahead. A time when each person, according to his gift, is called to grow in love.

Today, with its riches, its limits and its shortcomings, this Guidelines booklet belongs to you. It will become what you make of it.

Yes, let us give thanks for these « Guidelines ». May they help each member of Faith and Light to become more and more the beloved disciple, whose head rests on the heart of Jesus.

Marie-Hélène Mathieu

Available documents

Building community

Charter and Constitution	free
Guidelines for the first year	3 €
Leaders' pack handbook for the community leader	3 €
Leaders' pack handbook for the regional/national/provincial/zone leader	3 €
Handbook for the elections (to be published)	3 €
Sharing our responsibility in Faith and Light	3 €
Annual guidelines	3.80 € the unit (by 10, 30 €)

Deepening our life together

Deepening our spirituality in Faith and Light	3 €
Retreats in Faith and Light	3 €
The ecumenism in Faith and Light	3 €
Fioretti	2.30 €
Formation weekends and sessions in Faith and Light	3 €
Finances in Faith and Light	1.50 €

International pilgrimage Lourdes 2001

Video « They are opening up a way »	12 €
« Venez boire à la Source » : special number of « Ombres et Lumière » (French only)	2.50 €
Faith and Light badge	1.50 €

Getting to know us better

Leaflet	free
Letter to my brothers and sisters in l'Arche and Faith and Light (J.Vanier)	1.50 €

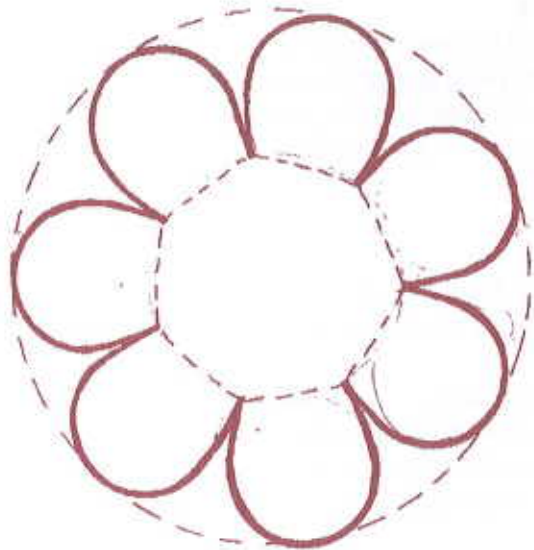
Some other books to help you

Mieux vaut allumer une lampe que maudire l'obscurité (M.H. Mathieu)	7 €
Dieu m'aime comme je suis (Marie-Hélène Mathieu)	13 €
Community and growth (Jean Vanier)	17 €
The scandal of the service (Jean Vanier)	9 €
I meet Jesus, small format/large format	5.50 €/9 €
I walk with Jesus, small format/large format	5.50 €/9 €
Pilgrims together, a vision of ecumenism (Jean Vanier)	3 €

(The prices indicated have no commercial character but represent a share of the cost of printing)

How to make a flower out of paper

(for the meeting of June)



- 1) Reproduce this drawing of a flower on a sheet of paper
- 2) Cut it out following the thick line
- 3) Colour the flower and write your name in the heart
- 4) Fold all the petals towards the centre following the dotted line
- 5) Place the flower in a small dish of water

... and watch it open !

Letter

from the team which prepared the activities

Our team made up of members from Faith and Light from North England, Wales and Scotland has been happy to be entrusted to suggest the activities of the guidelines 2002-2003. We have tried to be sensitive to our world wide family. However we are sure that sometimes we have made assumptions about the realities of other peoples situations. For this we are sorry. Many of the suggested prayers and ideas are Celtic. This spirituality is a gift to you. Its essence is linking the environment and our human experience. Through these we discover the love and will of God

The idea of the Guidelines is simply to suggest some ways of interpreting the Gospel and reflections. The Guidelines are meant as a springboard for ideas not an absolute prescription for what to do at a meeting.

The reflections and Gospel often contain multiple and complex ideas. What we have done is to take one core idea and develop it. Core groups will need to adapt suggestions so that what is shared speaks to the lived out experience of your own Faith and Light community in whatever country, faith or tradition, you belong.

The sharing and prayer times

The sharing and prayer times are specifically aimed at people in the heart of our communities : i.e. people with learning disabilities. As such, our ideas are simple and practical.

People with learning disabilities have a very Celtic spirituality : i.e. their experience and expression of God is primarily a lived through and human experience. Intellectual disability on the whole precludes people from cerebral, abstract interpretations of the Gospel. This is their gift to the non-learning disabled world.

The great gift from Faith and Light is that we share in the same God among us irrespective of persons living with a disability and others. Everyone is called as an unique person, and one and all in faith. For this reason we have tried to develop ways of sharing which exclude no one.

Music and songs

We have not suggested particular songs for the meetings. There are two reason for this : music is very specific to culture and faith traditions. Each community will need to be sen-

sitive to the needs of their members in the choice of music. Copyrights in the UK do not permit us to print music without a licence.

Music can help to create a prayerful atmosphere. Taped classical or folk music is useful. It is good to prepare it in advance so that you are sure that the piece you choose is long enough. It is also good to choose songs which are repetitive or have a simple refrain. Even if the song is new, people can learn it without recourse to written words, which again exclude many of our people.

Symbols and rituals

Unnecessary and complex words will lose people's attention. We need to think of ways to ask questions which are concrete, and related to experience. Remember we have five senses, all of which can be used in communication ! Think of ways to do this, as this ensures everyone is included.

Use symbols which reflect the core message. We have suggested some, but do not be afraid to choose something more culturally appropriate. The symbol can be used to link human experience with the experience of the mystery of God or the teaching of Jesus in the Gospel.

Do not be afraid of **silence** ! This allows us to take things in. Too many ideas and cues can be confusing for people with learning disabilities.

Ritual is important in our meetings. This helps people with cognitive difficulties understand what is going to happen next. It helps people feel secure. So do not be afraid to repeat actions within a meeting, or from one meeting to the next. Perhaps when preparing for prayer time the actions for doing this could be ritualized e.g. laying out the cloth, the candle, the flowers, playing music. . . This will all help in a non-verbal way to communicate that we are to be still, in the presence of God. People with learning disabilities often rely on cues rather than instructions.

So we hope that somewhere in this guideline your community will find one idea which helps inspire a community meeting at least once in the year.

If you find some ideas unsuitable then do not worry ! Keep going with the Gospel as this is what unites our family of Faith and Light around the world. But be free to reflect and develop your own core idea from the monthly text and ways to deepen with your community.

Enjoy the journey !

Jane Robinson and the team

“Announcement and Sharing Day”

In the previous Guidelines, we initiated this very important day. Two objectives :

Announcing

Faith and Light has been entrusted to us to be a sign in the world. We are to witness to the vocation of the person with a learning disability. We are called to tell in our parishes, our schools and other movements, the «good news» we have received. We are to propose to people « Come and see » !... Our handicapped brothers and sisters, so often rejected, open up the way.

Sharing

We form a large family scattered over 75 countries over the whole world. As in a family, some are very rich, others less, others, very poor. As in a family we have to help one another.

Our international family cannot afford to live and to grow, unless each community in each country becomes inventive and active, and brings its share. This goes from 1 euro or 1 dollar in the poorest countries up to 250 euros or dollars in the economically developed countries. Some communities manage to find much more.

How ?

In 2002, a certain number of communities lived out their « Day of Announcing and Sharing » with attractive and beneficial activities. If this is the case in your community, send your ideas and details of your achievements to Ghislain du Chéné, who will put them together in a « toolbox » to send to other communities. If you have not yet organised it, you are like the workers of the last hour who received as much as the others !

And think now, already, about your « Announcing and Sharing Day » for 2003 !

May this be the sign of your love for Faith and Light in the world, and may it bring much joy to your community and all the neighbourhood !

The time of fidelity

(or fourth time)

Last year, the Guidelines vigorously encouraged the constitution of **small groups of friendship**. Five or six members, of which one should be, if possible, a member of the coordination team, form a mini-community which meets once between each gathering of the community.

We have had echoes from twenty-five communities which had made up such groups and were very pleased with them. Two testimonies : one of a person with a handicap : « Before, it used to seem long, a month alone ». Another of a leader : « The groups of friendship enabled me not to be at the centre of relationships with everyone. The changeover is taken on by members of the coordinating team who thus discover a new meaning for their role. »

About twenty other communities would like to have started small groups, but came up against the difficulties of distance and workload. How, in spite of these real obstacles, do we form bonds which would allow each person to have relationships which are more personal and continuous ?

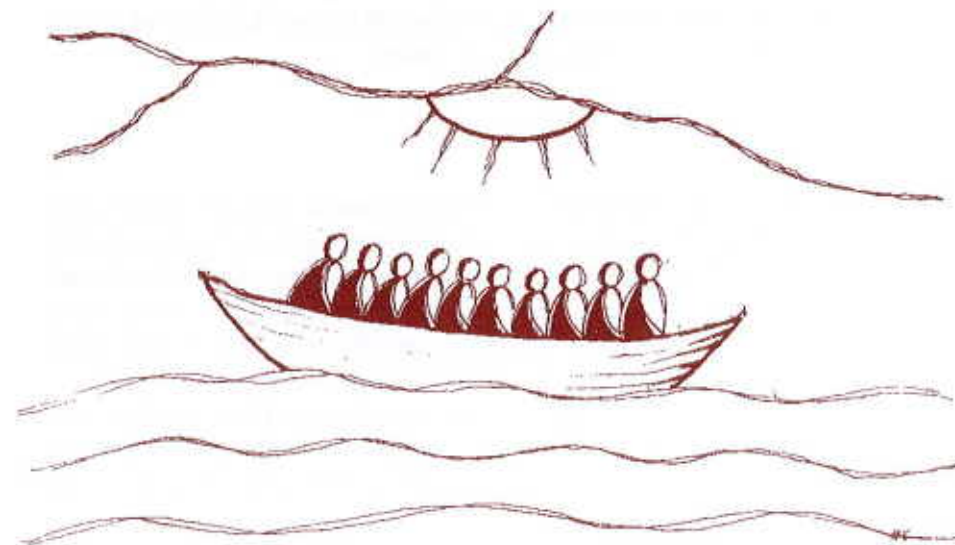
Two suggestions :

Even if it is impossible for the small groups to get together physically, it is essential to set them up. We can remain in contact by other means. At least one can make a telephone call, or write a little note, or drop in to say good day, or have lunch together... We carry each other in prayer, we feel we are not all alone...

We can encourage even smaller sub-groups, of two or three persons, geographically close, who will be able to get together more easily.

The small group of friendship, where you will discover others, to live through the « time of fidelity » is essential for each member to feel that he/she is unique, loved, and able to love. Is this not the essential feature of Faith and Light ?

God in our own story



■ To be welcome and to be reunited

At each of our meetings, it is important that this time be well prepared and full of warmth, so that each person feels expected and welcome with all he/she is experiencing, his/her joys and sorrows.

About a quarter of an hour after the time fixed for arrival, we could sing for a few minutes or play a little game waiting for the latecomers. Then we will share our most important news.

■ The Word

Each month the meditation of Jean Vanier will be presented by the chaplain, the leader or a member of the coordination team who can make a reading out of part of it, or better still, after having thoroughly assimilated it, reinterpret it through his heart, seeking how to communicate as well as possible, the Word of God to the whole community.

St John's Gospel, like the three other Gospels, reveals the story of Jesus, a story of extraordinary love. God accepts to take the form of a human being, to become flesh and blood, to become one of us, in order to speak to us of the life lived in God, to show us who God is, and to invite us all to follow a path of life. God loves us so much that God came among us to teach us how to live in order to be happy and to have peace in our hearts and to let go of our fears and selfishness.

However, this Gospel of John not only tells us the story of how Jesus lived, how he was rejected, condemned to death and raised from death, but also how each one of us is called to live today. It is the Gospel of love, written at the beginning of the first century, by the beloved disciple.

The Bible first of all recounts the beginnings of humanity. Then it tells us about those who came before the Hebrew people. Next it describes the life of Abraham and

Picture of Jesus



Prayer for Christian Unity

Lord Jesus,
who have prayed that all should be one,
we pray for the unity of Christians,
just as you want it, by the means you choose.

May your Spirit allow us to experience
the suffering of separation,
to recognize our sin
and to hope beyond all hope.

Amen !

(From the prayer of the Abbé Couturier)

the whole history of the Hebrew people up to the birth of Jesus into a Jewish family in Bethlehem. The Bible tells us how God is present throughout the history of humanity and in each one of our lives. The gospels tell us how Jesus came into the world and what he accomplished.

This story is so important. The story of each of our lives is important. That is why, today, we are going to recall our own story, how God was revealed in our lives, how we have grown in Faith and Light. Let's share the story of Faith and Light, of how God has watched over our communities. It is good to discover how God exists in the heart of all creation, but also that God is present in the heart of our lives ; that God calls us forth and leads us forward.

■ Sharing

● Together

Bring a photograph of yourself from the past (e.g. child, teenager, wedding, a special occasion). Put them all together.

Let everyone try to guess who is who !

Use the photos to allow each person tell a story about themselves.

Make stepping stones from paper or card.

Each person has a stone and writes or draws the names of people or places which are significant in their life

● In sharing groups

Share in pairs or in small groups, how each came to belong to Faith and Light.

How has Faith and Light changed you ?

What people, places, have helped you recognize God in your life ?

■ Prayer

« We are called to set sail together on the river of life »

« We are called to walk together on the path of life »

Sit or stand in a circle with a large candle/Faith and Light Boat in the centre. (Allow plenty of space)

Have a basket of small candles : one candle for each person.

Play or sing some gentle music as people gather.

Create a Faith Life Path using the stepping stones to make a path leading toward the light candle or The Boat.

Each person lights a small candle and places it on their stepping stone. Either silently or aloud say a thank you prayer for the gifts of people and places God has given me.

Bless each others' journey, by taking the two hands of the person standing next to you and holding them prayerfully then allow them to take your hands in the same way.

Say this Celtic blessing :

« May God make safe to you each step.

May God make open to you each pass.

May God make clear to you each road.

And may He take you in the clasp of his two hands. »

Or,

If you want to do **the prayer of the poor** (appendix 1) : look for a quiet corner. Your body is relaxed and quiet in an unchangeable position but your back is held straight. Your hands are open. Now have in front of you a picture of Jesus with his eyes fixed on you very gently. While watching it, try to give your heart to him. Keep repeating your « word of love » (e.g. « Jesus, my friend »). Stay with him for at least ten minutes.

It would be so beautiful if you could do this prayer of the poor everyday.

■ Fiesta

We could blindfold a person and ask him to say who it is who is now going to speak a few words. It will show that you know that person very well already. You could go on by doing the same game with many others...

The 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.]

(Beginning of the short prayer)

[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 in 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 ways of the Gospel.]

(End of the short prayer)

[Jesus come and live in us and in our communities
as you first lived in Mary.
She was the first to welcome you in herself.]
[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 !

* Phrases between brackets are like verses which can be read by two groups which respond to each other. Or the reading by one member alternates with that of the whole group.

Our life anchored in the Gospel

Self-giving : Jn 19,25-27 ; Lk 2,35 ; 22,42 ; 23,46 ; Phil 2,5-11

1. Mk 10,13-16 ; Ps.131
2. Mt 6,25-34
3. Mt 8,20 ; Lk 2,41 ; Jn 11,55-56

Friendship : Jn 11,33-36 ; 17,26 ; Mt 11,19 ; Lk 14,12-14

1. Co 1,27 ; Jn 2,5 ; Mt 5,3
2. Mk 2,13-14 ; Jn 15,14-15
3. Mk 10,42-45
4. He. 7,13-14
5. 1Co 11,1
6. Lk 10,39 ; Phil 2,7-8
7. Lk 10,39
8. Mt 6,7-8
9. Jn 15,15
10. Mt 5,37
11. Lk 6,22-23 ; Jn 16,22 ; Phil 3,1 ; 4,4 ; Lk 10,20
12. Mk 2,19
13. Col 3,12-14 ; Ep 4,32
14. Jn 17,20-23
15. Jn 19,25-27
16. 2Co 8,1-5
17. Gal 3,28
18. Ac 4,20

● BETWEEN NOW AND THE NEXT GATHERING, SOME SUGGESTIONS

⇒ **The time of fidelity**

In the small group of friendship (appendix 4)

When your small group comes together :

- be inventive and adaptable !
- find time to get to know each other better
- pair off and take time during the month to spend time together to share more of our story before the next meeting.

In your personal life

Take time to thank God each day for the person who has helped you most in the day.

Or,

Write a little passage in your diary, which you have been keeping specially this month, reviewing the day before. It will give you a sense of journeying, a sense of the story of your life.

⇒ **In the coordinating team**

Read the introduction to these guidelines : « some reminders for the coordinating team » in the Guidelines 2001-2002. (1) Pay special attention to a moment of reflection on the role and the responsibility of the team.

Maybe a plan for the whole year can be drawn up.

(1) The appendices for previous years are available from the International Secretariat.

The Guidelines in your hands

(briefly, some advice and reminders)

1. If possible, let each member of the coordinating team have **one copy** of the Guidelines. The other members of the community also, if they so wish. Some people like to take it and read it at home. On the other hand, during the gathering, only the leader and two or three members of the coordinating team are to use it.

2. Adapt the time of the **word** to those listening. Read it, using the essential passages, or better still, after having assimilated it give it back again with your heart. If the weakest persons do not understand it intellectually, they can get hold of the core of the message and the faith of him who is expressing himself.

3. Give a place each to the **sharing groups** including five to eight persons led, if possible, by a member of the coordinating team. For many members, it is the only moment where they can express themselves, personally and freely. Before starting on the questions proposed, each person should repeat his first name and describe a joy or a sorrow experienced this last month.

4. Thanks to all of you, who last year, returned their **evaluation of the Guidelines**, and to all those who, this year will return them sufficiently early for us to take into account as much as possible, their criticism and suggestions.

All the members, parents, persons with a handicap, friends and chaplains want to live in friendship as a message of the love of God, following Jesus. Our spirit of friendship has the following facets :

1. Friendship makes the discovery of the beauty of each person in their handicaps and in their gift of growth.
2. Friendship is the heart within the body of the community.
3. Our structures are elements of support and not of domination.
4. Our leaders are friends with particular gifts, not authorities.
5. They are lay people : the chaplains are friends who make Jesus and his Church present.
6. Friendship is expressed mainly by « being with » and not by « doing for ».
7. « Being with » underlines the importance of the body.
8. « Being with » is also expressed in a different way of praying : without words.
9. Friendship creates an intimacy of the soul.
10. Intimacy removes masks and gives spontaneity.
11. Spontaneity, the freedom to be oneself produces joy.
12. Joy expresses itself in the celebration and the fiesta.
13. Intimacy of the soul opens the door to forgiveness.
14. Friendship is the first condition for the free gift of ecumenism.
15. Ecumenism can be an opening to the devotion to Mary which we have received after our rebirth at Lourdes.
16. Friendship creates fidelity and financial solidarity

We can add :

17. Our way of life is our contribution to the Church and to society.
18. Theses spiritual riches inspire in us a missionary zeal.

But above all, we want to deepen our life in Faith and Light with all our being : as much in our community as in our daily life.

The leader explains the process clearly :

.We start with a prayer or a song.

.In silence, each person chooses a point on the list from « How do we want to live in Faith and Light ? » (Each person has a copy)

.We try to find an experience we have had in our life illustrating this point, or on the contrary, an experience we have not had. (If our experience does not appear on the list, we can add it). We look for the biblical text which corresponds to this point (see page 72) and we meditate on it. We can also find a better text and add it to the list.

.Then, after this time of silence, we share our reflections.

.If we have the time or the desire for it, we can mime the biblical text or even have a small celebration.

.We end with a prayer and a song.

It seems to us that each time, new experiences will arise and lead us to a greater « awareness » and a stronger « commitment » to our mission. And is not that the deepening that we desire ?

How do we want to live in Faith and Light ?

Our way of life has been given to us as a gift, a mysterious grace, which has developed since Lourdes 1971 and will continue to develop. We shall find its expression, above all, in the Charter.

The great sources of our life are the Good News of a loving Father, whom Jesus has revealed and the bonds of human friendship which Jesus has shown to us through his example.

So we say :

All the members, parents, persons with a handicap, friends and chaplains recognise suffering in human life and want to live in giving themselves up to the Father and to Jesus.

1. We become like little children in the arms of the Father.
2. Our plans are in the hands of God
3. In financial matters we live with a certain poverty
4. We love pilgrimages, those moments when we live in the presence of God.

Creation

(Jn 1, 1-13)

Oh how beautiful are your works !



■ To be welcome and to be reunited*

■ The Word*

« In the beginning was the Word :
The Word was with God
And the Word was God
He was with God in the beginning
Through him all things came into being
Not one thing came into being except through him. »
(Jn, 1, 1-3)

This is how John's Gospel begins, contemplating God who existed before all else. Genesis, the first book of the bible begins in a parallel way : « **In the beginning God created heaven and earth.** » This book gives us a symbolic account of creation which culminates in the creation of man and woman : « **God created man in the image of himself, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them** » (Gen. 1, 27)

Before entering into the story of Jesus, the evangelist wants to remind us that the Word, at God's right hand, in communion with God, created everything. God is well present in nature and throughout the universe. God is hidden in them but at the same time they reveal God to us.

Let us reflect on the immensity of the universe, this marvellous work of God. Let's try to count the stars, to look at the bright sun which gives light and warmth. How we love the sun ! And at night the moon which shines and then disappears again, only to return a little while later.

Let's look at the different species of animals, of birds, of fish. Look at the flowers, the plants, the vegetables. Look at the men and the women and the children. All of these are alive. Each living being gives life to its offspring. If the seed is well nourished, it sprouts and grows, producing other seeds. Look at the wheat, how each sheaf produces grains. Life has an eternal quality. It is contained in each seed. Each fly gives birth to other flies and so on and so forth. Let's look particularly at

* See page 6

Deepening life in Faith and Light

« Faith and Light has changed us », is the phrase heard everywhere on the lips of members of Faith and Light. And we are happy to be able to say it.

However, the question continues to be heard : help us to deepen our « spirituality », to deepen the spirit which inspires us in Faith and Light.

Jean Vanier writes in number 133 of « Ombres et Lumière » :

« The YWD, a retreat, a pilgrimage and certain blessed moments in life are often the occasion of an outpouring of joy and light. Jesus and the Gospel seem to us then so close. Everything appears luminous. But later, there is the return to daily life. We again meet our friends who have not perhaps had the same spiritual experience ; work or study and fatigue can also wipe out this experience of our heart. We then risk forgetting or even losing our treasure, and the place of our interior freedom. »

That is perhaps why this request for deepening continues to ring out. What reply can we give to it ?

Here is an attempt, one among several possibilities. It is a method which can help this deepening even outside retreats. It can be proposed to parents, friends, chaplains, long-standing members as well as more recent ones.

It is an exercise that we propose to do at regular moments. Either in small groups meeting at fixed times to work on it (for example, once a month), or during the meeting of the coordinating team, or personally.

Let us take the case of doing this at a meeting especially devoted to it. Let us create a pleasant and creative atmosphere : a flower, several songs, a cup of coffee : the object of the meeting is to achieve an « awareness » and a « commitment ». First, look and see what is the life of Faith and Light, and then say « yes, that is what I want. » If you want to go anywhere, you must first study the route, then take the decision to start off.

The prayer of the poor

For those who feel attracted by the prayer of the poor - the heart-to-heart prayer, there is again this year, an encouraging word, each month, in our Guidelines.

The prayer of the poor is a prayer of presence, of fidelity, even if our interior turmoil urges us to do something else. It is not easy to persevere in a situation which is not obviously useful, without any result of which we can feel proud. It is only a « being with », that is all. But in Faith and Light we know it is a sign of love : « You, you are so precious to me, you, you are worth more than anything else which could draw me to it at this moment ».

The prayer of the poor can lead us to a deep giving up of oneself to Jesus, a peaceful rest on the breast of Jesus, like Saint John at the Last Supper. It is the most beautiful prayer one can make. It is also the prayer of Jesus on the cross before he died. « Father, into your hands I commit my spirit ». It is in fact the prayer that he taught to his apostles when he said to them. « Now you pray thus : Our Father » He used the word « Abba » which means « Daddy », a word of a child for his father. It is a word which expresses an attitude, the attitude of contemplation.

The prayer of the poor is, above all, a prayer of the body. When you have nothing to say, you can at least express yourself by your body. You take up a comfortable position which allows you to remain in peace without moving, as if in the arms of God. You open your hands, putting them on your knees. You breathe gently and regularly and you remain there. You can be helped by repeating a single word, a word of love.

During the gathering of the community, the chairs are arranged in a semicircle, allowing everyone to see the prayer corner. We create an atmosphere of silence, with a background of soft meditative music.

We remain there in trust, in the silence of the heart, letting Jesus love us and transform us.

Father Joseph Larsen,
international chaplain

men, women and children, each one so different, each one unique and each one with their own beauty.

And God saw that all that was good and beautiful. It is true that our universe with all its living beings is good, beautiful, and was made so intelligently and with so much love. Let's give thanks for our earth which is like a mother who nourishes us. Let's give thanks for the beauty of our universe. It is the reflection of the glory of God. Let's give thanks for the gift that is each one of us, for each of our lives. Let's also give thanks for all those who work to make the world a more beautiful place, a place that is easier to live in and more humane for all of us. In creation each thing and each person, big or small, is important and has a gift to offer. Each of us is called to build the community of Faith and Light.

Sharing

• Together

Use pictures or photographs to show the beauty and diversity of creation. Use words, music and sounds as well.

Prepare a tray of objects/plants from the natural world in your country.

Each person is invited to discover the objects or the plants on the tray, by smelling, touching and holding them in their hands.

Choose your favourite object. In pairs, reflect what the object makes you think about. What does it remind you of ?

Use music (e.g. Peer Gynt) and mime the beginning of Creation (you could use the Genesis story).

• In sharing groups

Make a collage of faces depicting people from around the world, or make a collage of our own faces. Recall the richness and diversity of gifts in creation.

Prayer

Create a beautiful space, with the collage and/or other beautiful natural objects...

Play some taped music whilst laying out the path.

Lay the stepping stones (made last month) as a path to the beautiful space listening to a taped music.

Invite people to place their favorite beautiful object on the stepping stones.

Invite people to make a « word collage » by naming their favorite thing in creation.

The leader/chaplain reminds everyone that God created each person also.

Invite each person to take the hands of the person next to him/her and say « (the person's name) you are created by God, in his/her image. »

The Blessing

*« Deep peace pure white of the moon to you
Deep peace pure green as the grass to you
Deep peace pure brown of the earth to you
Deep peace pure grey of the dew to you
Deep peace pure blue of the sky to you.*

*Deep peace of the running wave to you
Deep peace of the flowing air to you
Deep peace of the quiet earth to you
Deep peace of the shining stars to you
Deep peace of the Son of Peace to you. »*

Or,

If the conditions are favourable, you could also do **the prayer of the poor** (appendix 1) in the attitude suggested last month, and listen to all the sounds around you. Keep saying your « word of love » for those sounds you are hearing (e.g. « Thank you »). They are the sounds of God's creation. Remain in this wonderful listening state for at least ten minutes.

If you could do this every day, you would learn a different way of being.

■ Fiesta

Play a game in which each person is given the name of an animal. (There must be at least two of each animal). Each person makes the sound of their animal and walks around the room until he/she finds the other animals the same as him/herself i.e. by the end all the sheep will be together.

● BETWEEN NOW AND THE NEXT GATHERING, SOME SUGGESTIONS

⇒ The time of fidelity

In the small group of friendship

In twos and threes make a card and send it to a friend or a member of your community ; thank them for their help.

In my personal life

For each person make a copy of the icon on the cover of the Guidelines, or the picture from « I meet Jesus » (see appendix 5). Write under it « Jesus says to me : I love you as you are, I need you. You are my well-beloved ».

Each day, look at the icon or the picture of Jesus. Jesus says to you : « I love you as you are. I have need of you in this world of war and discord».



Prayer

(The person playing the part of Jesus should be prepared before the prayer time).

Have some gentle instrumental music playing in the background whilst people gather quietly in a circle.

The Samaritan woman walks to Jesus and He embraces her, or holds her hands.

Each person in the community goes to Jesus one by one and he repeats the action.

As each person goes toward Jesus, He says : « (the person's name) I love you as you are, I need you as you are. » That is what Jesus did to the Samaritan woman.

Together say « The Our Father ».

Or,

If you want to do **the prayer of the poor** (appendix 1) : sit in a circle in a relaxed position, your back held straight and your eyes closed. You open your hands. Then, you fix your mind on a person in pain, from your acquaintances or from the news. Try to identify with his pain. And repeat your « holy word » (e.g. « Lord have mercy, or Lord hear my cry »).

Hold on to this pain for at last ten minutes.

This could also be a good prayer for every morning. It would teach us deep compassion.

Fiesta

Maybe you can do a game of « Bingo » or other games designed to make money for solidarity. This way we learn the joy of giving and sharing.

● BETWEEN NOW AND THE NEXT GATHERING, SOME SUGGESTIONS

⇒ The time of fidelity

In the small group of friendship

Plant some seeds, bulbs, plants – whatever is appropriate to your season. Tend them and watch them grow throughout the year or, if weather permits, spend an afternoon together in nature or do the deepening exercise. Be friends !

In my personal life

Take care to rejoice every day at the gifts of creation, make a special effort this month not to be wasteful in places where there is an abundance. Pray for those countries where food is short, the rain is long awaited, . . .

Or,

Do something creative every day for a short while, such as knitting, arranging an album, or anything else you like doing, decorating a table, arranging a bouquet of garden flowers, writing a little poem or drawing in the sand . . . Everything is creation.

⇒ In the coordinating team

The exercise for « Deepening your life in Faith and Light » (appendix 2) could be used by the coordinating team this month, or at the moment you consider to be the best, with some members of the community. Prepare materials to be used for the posters and Advent calendars at next month's gathering.

John The Baptist

(Jn 1, 19-36)

How

to announce Jesus?



ding that we are perfect, autonomous, capable, without barriers. Each one of us has disabilities. Each one of us finds it hard to love, to forgive or to be open to certain people. Then there are all those fears in us which close us in on ourselves. When we think we are good, when we do not acknowledge our weaknesses, we are at risk of thinking that we do not need others, that we do not even need the help of Jesus and his Holy Spirit. We close up in ourselves, in our so-called qualities or in a form of despair and sadness. How can we say to each other « I need you » ?

Sharing

• Together

Someone reminds us the gospel story of the Samaritan woman as we acted it last month. Today we continue to look at the Samaritan woman with Jesus. (Jn 4, 16-18 ; 28-30 ; 39-42).

Mime Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman ; this time however taking Jn 4, 16-18 ; 28-30 ; 39-42.

The key elements are : the sad life of a woman like her, her desire to share experience with others, the harshness of the Samaritans towards her.

Reflect on our community life over the past year.

Make a story line telling about the past year, with photos, drawings, symbols which illustrate what you have done and lived through together. (You can use the stepping stones again).

Tell stories which speak about happiness and sadness, about difficult times of pain and grief.

Recall people with their gifts and poverties. How have we helped each other ?

Recall people from your town, your parish, or your family who have helped your Faith and Light community, by their friendship, their availability, their support for the « Day of Announcing and Sharing ».

• In sharing groups

This month, the parents can get together in the same sharing group.

Remember moments of darkness/weakness in your life ; share them with the others if you think this is possible. Maybe you can also share moments when other opened up to you and you heard about their sorrow. Can we share and understand the pain of others ?

■ To be welcome and to be reunited*

■ The Word*

Let us continue to listen to the conversation between Jesus and the Samaritan woman. First of all, notice how the personal relationship is what matters most to Jesus. Life, material goods, things are all given to us for this relationship. There are things that we can buy or produce and use and then there are people. What is a person? A person is someone who is important, who has a heart, who can love, think, know, communicate and who can say « I ». Each person is important because they are created by God, in the image of God. Of course some people know how to do a lot of things and others very little. But each one is unique, each one has a gift to give. Each one is loved by God and can love, that is to say, enter into a relationship with others. People are so much more important than things! Let us remind ourselves that all the organisation of our communities is for a relationship, so that each person can grow and be happy.

Jesus enters into a relationship with this Samaritan woman because she is unique and important. He knows that she is fragile. After promising her that the water he will give her (that is to say the Holy Spirit) will become a spring of water within, welling up for eternal life, he asks her to go and call her husband. In a very sensitive way, Jesus touches the wound, the weakness, the vulnerability of this woman. She answers him that she has no husband and Jesus says to her « **You are right to say « I have no husband » ; for although you have had five, the one you now have is not your husband. You spoke the truth there** ». Jesus knew the depth of her wound. When she says « **I have no husband** » that means « **I am all alone. Nobody loves me. No one is really committed to me** ». Is that not the same cry of so many people, of so many families, of so many people with a disability today? They are lonely!

Jesus loves this woman in all her brokenness. He loves each one of us with our brokenness. At the same time, he is revealing to us so that in order to discover a source of life in us, to be free and happy, we must acknowledge our weaknesses, our wounds and our difficulties in relationships. We must live in truth, not preten-

* See page 6

■ To be welcome and to be reunited*

■ The Word*

In the prologue, John the Evangelist introduces John the Baptist :

« **A man came sent by God. His name was John.
He came as a witness, to bear witness to the light,
so that everyone might believe through him.
He was not the light, he was to bear witness to the light.** »

(Jn 1, 6-8)

So here is the amazing figure of John the Baptist, a witness of Jesus. By his testimony he announces Jesus. He directs our eyes towards Jesus. When he sees Jesus coming towards him, he says : 'Look, there is the lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. It was of him that I said : « behind me comes one who has passed ahead of me because he existed before me » (Jn 1, 29-30)

John the Baptist was humble, poor, clear and limpid. He did not want to draw attention to himself ; he knew that he himself was of no importance. He said that he was not fit to undo the straps of Jesus' sandals (Jn 1, 27). He said that he was just the friend of the Bridegroom and that his joy was to listen to him. He said that Jesus had to grow greater and that he, John, must grow smaller (Jn 3, 29-30).

John the Baptist began his witness when he saw the dove come down and rest on Jesus whilst he was being baptised. In fact the one who had sent John the Baptist had said : « The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and rest is the one who is to baptise with the Holy Spirit ». And John the Baptist adds : « I have seen and I testify that he is the Chosen One of God. » (John 3, 29-30)

John the Baptist has a special role : to prepare people's hearts to receive Jesus. He quotes Isaiah to highlight this role : « I am a voice of one that cries in the desert: Prepare a way for the Lord. Make his paths straight ! » (John 1, 23)

We will soon be entering the time of Advent. We are going to prepare to celebrate the coming of Jesus, the Word who became flesh. Let's remember two things

* See page 6

about John the Baptist : he is the witness who announces Jesus and he prepares hearts to welcome Jesus.

How can we bear witness to Jesus who came to give us the good news ? The good news that all men, all women and all the children of the earth are loved by God. They are called to get to know God and to love each other. We know this and we have seen the beauty and the importance of people with disabilities and can give witness to that. We can be witnesses of the truth that God has chosen those who are weak and « foolish » of this world in order to confound the « wise » and the powerful of this world. By the way in which we live out the Faith and Light charter, we can be witnesses to Jesus, showing what he has done in each of us and in Faith and Light. How can we live and witness to this good news ?

How can we prepare our hearts to receive Jesus who has come to liberate us from our selfishness and lead us towards forgiveness and towards a greater love ?

■ Sharing

● Together

Lay out the stepping stones (which were made in September) in a crooked path.

Mime the story of John The Baptist (Read Jn 1, 23).

Straighten the path.

John carries a flask or jar of water and pours it into a bowl.

Each person is blessed by John : « (The person's name) be ready to welcome the Saviour »

● In sharing groups

Gather in small groups and reflect on how each person present is a witness to Jesus.

• Think of the places we go each day : e.g. work, home, school, church ? What can I do to make Jesus present in these places.

• What makes it difficult for me to do this ?

■ Prayer

Lay out the stepping stones leading to a bowl of water.

The Samaritan Woman (continuation) (Jn 4, 16-18 ; 28-30 ; 39-42)

Recognising our poverty



EVALUATION OF THE YEAR (together or in sharing groups)

We shall take the time to make an evaluation of the year. Each person replies to these questions.

- What have I liked best in the community this year ?
- What have I found to be the least good ?
- What would I like for next year ?

If we are in small groups the leaders will make a note of what each person says. The evaluations will be taken up at the next meeting of the coordination team, with the next year in view.

Some communities spend a day or a half-day of relaxation outside – often within a religious community with which they are twinned – and take time then for this annual evaluation.

Each person is invited to place their hands in the water, as they do this we pray that they will be refreshed by Jesus.

Use the water symbolically as we bless each other, so that we are enabled to be His witness in the world.

Hold hands in a circle. Recall that together our witness is stronger and that as a community we are called to support each other.

The Blessing

*« God to enfold me, God to surround me
God in my speaking, God in my thinking
God in my life, God in my lips
God in my soul, God in my heart ».*

Or,

The Prayer of the Poor (appendix 1). Write down on a beautiful piece of paper a word of Jesus that is very dear to you. Then, sitting down in a relaxed position, your back held straight and your eyes closed, hold the paper against your heart and keep saying your « word of love » (e.g. the word itself that you have chosen). Stay with this word for at least ten minutes.

You may want to do this every morning of this month.

■ Fiesta

Create small groups. Each group makes a poster with Jesus at the center. At the end, there will be an exhibition of them.

● BETWEEN NOW AND THE NEXT GATHERING, SOME SUGGESTIONS

⇒ **The time of fidelity**

In the small group of friendship

Should we make contact with another community in our country/zone or somewhere else in the world? Perhaps we could send a card to greet and encourage our friends and already wish them a happy Christmas.

Pray for places in the world where clean water is scarce, and people suffer through lack of it.

If you have not been able to do it in the community, make together an Advent calendar in order to experience your waiting for Jesus more deeply.

In your personal life

Make a list of people to whom you could send or give the Faith and Light folder and send or give them such a folder. It will be witness of Faith and Light.

Day after day put into practice the suggestions made in the Advent calendar, created by the small groups or the community.

⇒ **In the coordinating team**

The feast of Christmas will need a lot of preparation, but also make sure that the meeting of coordinating team includes a good time of spiritual nourishment. May the team repose on the breast of Jesus and take Mary as their mother.

● BETWEEN NOW AND THE NEXT GATHERING, SOME SUGGESTIONS

⇒ **The time of fidelity**

In the small group of friendship

In twos and threes visit/phone/send a card to someone in the community, or to a neighbour who is going through a difficult period... or to a Faith and Light community in a country which is in great difficulty. May your sign of friendship be living water to this person or community.

In your personal life

You may start every day by watering a plant in your room while praying: « Jesus give me some of your living water so that I may give living water to others. »

Profit from this time to learn how to rest on the heart of Jesus, like St. John. The icon on the cover of the Guidelines can help you daily.

⇒ **In the coordinating team**

For many countries in the Northern Hemisphere, the timing of the vacations (holidays) does not allow for meetings in August, nor even in July. However, do not hesitate to have the July gathering if a small number of people can benefit from it. The solitude will be less long and the theme of this meeting is so beautiful. For all the other countries, whatever the time of their « long vacation », the coordinating team will have to find initiatives which will strengthen their bonds of friendship, especially thinking of those who will not be leaving home.

The team will draw up an estimation of what was good this year and the priorities to consider at the return after the holiday (vacation), so that community life will help each person to become even more beloved of Jesus.

Think about a time in your life when you have felt exhausted, overburdened.
 How did you get through? Did someone encourage/refresh you? Who was this person? What did they do or say to help? How can you say that these persons gave you 'living water'?

Spend a few moments evaluating the year (page 62).

■ Prayer

You need a large tray or several trays filled with cold water, at least two inches deep.

Gather everyone round the tray(s). Each person has their flower folded.

Sing a song about water and life

Quietly listen to the reading of John 4 : verse 10.

Place all the folded flowers in the trays of water and watch prayerfully (they should open up!). Maybe have some gentle background music to help people be still.

At the end of the prayer, each person gives his/her neighbour the flower with his/her name saying : « (the person's name) - Jesus gives you living water. »

We can pray for the countries lacking water and pray especially for Faith and Light in the countries which are suffering the most.

Or,

If you want to do **the prayer of the poor** (appendix 1), take the position which suits you best. ... Think of one of your weaknesses, a physical or a psychological handicap. Feel the pain of it. Open your hands waiting for God's healing to come while softly repeating your « holy word » (e.g. « Come Lord Jesus, come » or « Maranatha »). Continue this prayer for at least ten minutes.

If you wish, you can do this every morning before starting the day.

■ Fiesta

Here is a team game. The object is to fill, as quickly as possible, with water or sand, a bottle or a narrow recipient, by means of a small spoon. You could also fill a bucket by means of a glass which you pass on to one another, blindfold. (All variations are possible)

Christmas

(Jn 1 : 1-14)

God reveals himself through weakness



■ To be welcome and to be reunited*

■ The Word*

John's gospel begins with this contemplative view of God :

**« In the beginning was the Word
and the Word was with God.
He was with God in the beginning.
Through him all things came into being
Not one thing came into being except through him »**
(Jn 1, 1-3)

When speaking of the second person of the Trinity, John calls him the « Logos » which is most often translated by the « Word ». « Logos » is a word rich in meaning which signifies « the Word » (spoken by God) but also the « thought » or « idea » behind the word or moreover the vision or wisdom of God. The Word which creates or Divine Wisdom are the two same activities of God. When using this word « Logos », John must certainly have had in mind those great texts about the wisdom of God and about creation. (cf. especially Psalm 8).

The Word was Life. This Life was Light, present in creation, for all came into being through the Word, the Light. But people did not recognise the light of the Word in creation. They did not recognise the Word in the words of the prophets. The Word came to his own and his own people did not accept him.

This is the mystery : **The Word became flesh and lived among us**. At a particular moment in history, this eternal God, Creator of heaven and earth wanted to become one of us, a human being. For that, he needed a woman. He did not want to appear in the heavens in a way that was grandiose, but to be born like us all. He needed a woman in order to take human form. Like each one of us, He grew for nine months in his mother's womb. He was born. As a child he needed Mary and Joseph to feed, wash and protect him.

* See page 6

saying to you « Give me something to drink », you would have been the one to ask, and he would have given you living water ». A conversation then begins between them. She speaks of the water from the well, Jesus speaks of water as a symbol of the Holy Spirit that he wants to give us. Jesus even tells her that the water he will give her to drink will become in her a spring of water welling up for eternal life. An astonishing thing to say ! Jesus wants to give us God's own life (since eternal life in Jesus' language does not mean life after death, but the very life of God, the Eternal One, given to us by Jesus) ; if we desire it, we receive it.

Today, let us reflect about the water which washes us, refreshes us, gives us life and makes us into men and women who are fully alive.

■ Sharing

● Together

Mime Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman (Jean 4, 1-14).

Make flowers from coloured papers (see appendix 8 for a template). It is important to use this template in order for the flowers to be used successfully in the prayer time.

Each person writes their name in the centre of the flower.

Put these aside for prayer time.

Have water in bowls and cups. Feel the water, watch it trickle, spray... Add colours and watch the water change colour. (Children and the child in us love to play !)

Cut out pictures of water from magazines and find photos of water. Talk about its uses : to cleanse, to give life. Think about the sea, the rain, the ice, a lake.

Recall what it is like when we have no water or no clean water. For some countries this is an everyday reality. You can look at a map of the world showing the countries which are short of water and which are also members of Faith and Light. We shall carry especially these communities in our prayer this month.

Recall times when water refreshed us.

● In sharing groups

Reflect on John 4 : verses 5-6 « Jesus was tired by the journey and sat down by the well » to help us to recall. Recall peoples' experiences of travelling and tiredness. Have photos/pictures to help us recall. Reflect on Jesus' need for water in the midday heat.

■ To be welcome and to be reunited*

■ The Word*

In our journey through John's Gospel, we have seen how John the Baptist prepared the way to meet Jesus. Then Jesus welcomed a few disciples. He brought them to a wedding feast to signify our final destination : life with God in the joy of an eternal wedding. By chasing the sellers from the Temple, Jesus shows us that it is he, with his body, who is at the heart of this wedding. He *is* the new Temple. Jesus reveals to us that in order to be able to welcome Jesus' message, enter into the Kingdom of God and live this eternal wedding feast, we need to be born « from above », of water and the Spirit. In this way we are called to let ourselves be guided by the Spirit. Today, the Gospel shows us how Jesus accomplishes his mission and how we are called to live this new life given by the Holy Spirit. Jesus enters into a relationship with a woman who is excluded, poor and wounded. She is a Samaritan woman who has been rejected by the Jewish people and by her own people because she has an history of broken relationships. She is a woman who feels lonely, unloved and filled with guilt. When we follow Jesus, he leads us towards the poor.

After a whole morning's walk in the sun, Jesus is tired. He is sitting by a well. His disciples have gone into the neighbouring village to search for food. This Samaritan woman arrives to draw water from the well. It is midday. Jesus turns to her and humbly asks : « **Give me something to drink** ». Here is the Creator of heaven and earth, the Word made flesh who asks for help from this poor woman. Through this, Jesus teaches us how to approach people who are weak and in need. Often the poor person feels alone, guilty and undignified. Jesus doesn't tell this woman she must change her life. He does not judge her. By asking her for help, he shows her profound respect. He reveals to her that she has value and that she can do something beautiful. Through that, Jesus teaches us to approach someone who is weak and in need, not from above, through generosity and superiority, but from below, with humility, showing him that he can do something good for us.

She reacts : « **You are a Jew. How is it that you ask me, a Samaritan, for something to drink ?** » In fact, Jews normally had no contact with Samaritans. Jesus replies : « **If you only knew what God is offering and who it is that is**

* See page 6

The Word, God, wanted to become a little child who was fragile, vulnerable, without defence in order to reveal the love of his Father. The Almighty, the all-great became the little-one.

The life of Jesus is the story of God's coming into the earth of our humanity, to communicate love, then to return to the Father taking with Him all his brothers and sisters of humanity.

By becoming flesh, Jesus reveals the deep meaning of human weakness and thus the deep meaning of Faith and Light, because at the heart of Faith and Light is the weak person. When we are strong, autonomous, we don't always realise that we need others. When we are weak, we need others. Weakness calls out to the other. Weakness is at the heart of human relationships, at the heart of the community. We are united because we need each other.

Christmas is the revelation that God needed Mary and Joseph. It is the revelation that God needs each one of us because God is Love. To be able to give himself to us, God needs our « yes ». If we do not receive him, He cannot give himself, He cannot reveal himself. In the same way, He awaits our « yes » in order to act in the world. Jesus reveals God's love through our love. If people are hungry, Jesus does not send manna from heaven, but he inspires us to share or gives us the idea to give food to the hungry or to find the means to help them. It is when we are weak that we need others. Our weakness calls out for love.

■ Sharing

● Together

Each community needs to prepare in advance a box enclosing other boxes representing the world that God made. Within each box should be a picture or a name of something in creation, e.g. a star, a tree, a flower, an animal, a fish, a rainbow, human faces or silhouettes.

The box is passed from person to person, this can be done prayerfully (with somebody reading Jn 1,1-14 in the background), when a piece of music could be played or the community could sing a chosen song to accompany the actions. When the music stops, the person holding the first box opens it. A carol is sung and the game continues thus until the smallest box enclosing the main present, that which God gave us at Christmas, his Beloved Son, is revealed - symbolized by a heart-shaped bread roll and a picture of the Nativity, with

a beautiful written phrase e.g. « *O God so great, who has made you so small ? Love !* »
(St Augustine)

● In sharing groups

This world expects us to be strong and able. God gave us his Son who was so small. In Faith and Light we are united because we need each other.

- How are you going to welcome baby Jesus ?
- Why has Jesus wanted to love you like a little child ?
- What are the little signs of love we give each other in Faith and Light ?
- How do we welcome those who are weak ?
- How do we accept ourselves when we feel little and weak ?

■ Prayer

After the song is sung, people gather around the baby Jesus and symbols of creation.

At this moment, the leader or the chaplain could help the group in reflecting upon Jesus, the Almighty, the All Powerful -who became the little-one. He gives each person a picture of the Nativity.

The chaplain or the leader could invite us to be still and to give thanks that Jesus has come to us, and to sense His presence with us. Stay in the presence of Jesus in this quietness, in the presence of Him who loves us.

Or,

If you want to do **the prayer of the poor**, (appendix 1) have a picture of the Nativity in front of you. While watching it, sitting in a relaxed position, your back held straight and your hands open, keep company with Joseph and Mary and watch over Jesus. Keep repeating your « word of love » (e.g. « Jesus, Joseph, Mary »). Stay with them for at least ten minutes.

Would it not be wonderful to do this everyday of this Christmas season ?

■ Fiesta

Jesus inspires us to share, to give food to the hungry or to find a way to help.

The Samaritan Woman

(Jn 4 : 1-14)

The Holy Spirit in our hearts, a wellspring of life



● BETWEEN NOW AND THE NEXT GATHERING, SOME SUGGESTIONS

⇒ **The time of fidelity**

In the small group of friendship

Maybe three or four members from the community could do an activity enabling them to enjoy water. A trip to the swimming baths, a walk by the sea or round a lake or beside a river.

In your personal life

You have received the Holy Spirit. He lives in each one of you. Let Him act through you in the little things of daily life. Find a way of linking up with someone on your community during the month and living the fruit you have received.

⇒ **In the coordinating team**

Make sure you prepare the mime of the Samaritan woman for next month. Perhaps a member of the community has not yet been confirmed. Could the team reflect on a possible way of preparing this with the family or the parish?

Each member can decorate items of food. Make little bread rolls in the shape of hearts and spread them with cheese, chocolate or jam... helping each other.

When everybody has finished the leader invites each person to come forward to choose two items of food, one to be placed around the baby Jesus as a gift which will later be taken home, and one to exchange with another community member during the fiesta time. Carols could be sung or played whilst this activity is taking place.

● BETWEEN NOW AND THE NEXT GATHERING, SOME SUGGESTIONS

⇒ **The time of fidelity**

In the small group of friendship

Christmas is a time of littleness. The feast of the Holy Innocents is so appropriate during these days. Our little group may want to visit a family with many children or with a child that is ill or with a new-born baby – not necessarily members yet of Faith and Light – and bring them some Christmas presents.

In your personal life

Each day we take some time to be still, to remember the person who we gave our item of food to, or the person we thought of and brought into Jesus' presence at the community gathering. In prayer we ask Jesus to be present with that person.

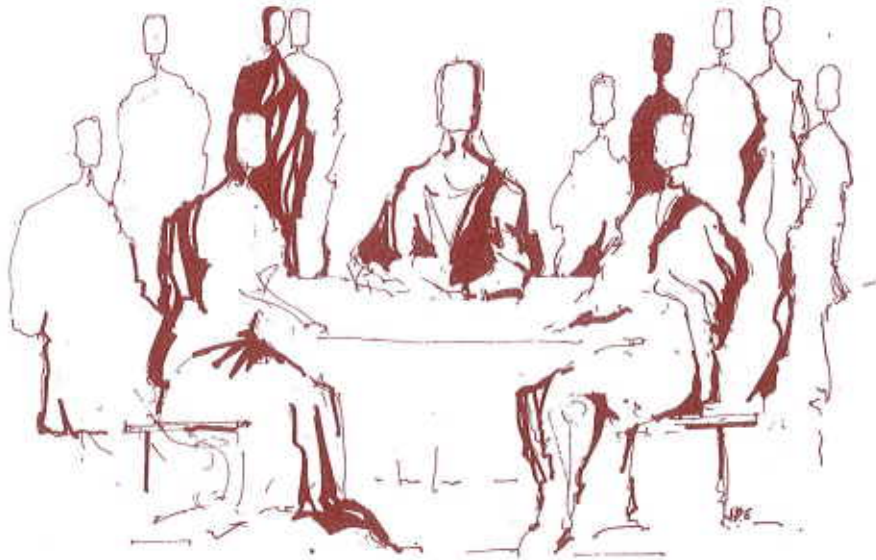
You can also remember a weakness of your own and say « Thank you Lord ».

⇒ **In the coordinating team**

Try to think of a special activity to highlight the « week of Christian Unity ». We could arrange to give each member of the community the text of the prayer for Christian Unity (appendix 4).

The first disciples

To follow Jesus is to work together for unity



Or,

If you want to do **the prayer of the poor** (appendix 1) : your body is relaxed, your back is held straight up and your hands are open. Now think of a special gift you have, a gift from God. And rejoice in it. Feel how good it is. And let your « holy word » come up from deep inside you (maybe « Thank you Lord » or « You are so good »). It will do so much to do this prayer every morning of this month.

■ Fiesta

At the first pilgrimage in Lourdes at Easter 1971, the word « Alleluia » echoed for three days everywhere, in the sanctuaries, the hotels, the streets... « Alleluia » to say good morning, thank you, sorry, to each other. This word was understood in all languages at all intellectual levels. Much more than words it showed unity and joy.

It was a bit like at the first Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles. Everyone understood them in their own language.

On Easter Monday 1971, Faith and Light was born, when all the pilgrims asked that all this should continue and when Jean Vanier said « Do everything that the Holy Spirit inspires you to do. Continue to meet and love each other in your communities. »

Today, filled with the Holy Spirit, we also can talk to each other and understand each other, simply with the word « Alleluia ».

We can ask one another questions, mutually, to which we will reply simply « Alleluia ». We can kiss each other, again saying « Alleluia ».

Each person receives a little card on which is written the word « Alleluia » and he/she will write or draw what this makes him/her think of his/her clothes. Then it can be pinned onto his clothes.

We can dance a farandole, all singing the « Alleluia » that we know. We can leave the room, go into the yard and perhaps even into the street to express our joy and our love to all whom we meet.

Or,

Find feathers or tissue paper and have fun blowing them.

Take a kite outside and watch it fly.

Make bubbles and blow them in the air.

*In our labor, your repose,
In our fever, your coolness,
In our tears, your comfort.*

*O blessed light,
Come and fill the inmost core
Of the hearts of all the faithful.*

*Without your divine power,
There is nothing in any man
Which is not corrupt.*

*Make clean what is soiled,
Water what is arid,
Heal what is wounded.*

Or,

Fill balloons with helium. Each balloon is attached to a string with a label which has one of the gifts written on it. You could use the gifts of people identified in the sharing, or the fruits of the Holy Spirit as suggested by St Paul : (Love, Joy, Patience, Kindness, Gentleness, Faithfulness, Generosity, Self Control).

Or,

If balloons are difficult to get hold of, have a beautifully gift wrapped box filled with coloured ribbons. Each ribbon has the name of a fruit of the Holy Spirit written on it. When the community is gathered around a circle unwrap the box to find the gifts inside.

Each person is given a balloon or a ribbon to hold. The leader/chaplain says to each person : « (the persons name) be filled with God's Spirit, and a sign of his (say the fruit which is on the label). » When everyone has a balloon/ribbon, stand in a circle and thank the Lord together for the gift of each person in the heart of the community. Then listen attentively to the reading of John 3 : 7-8.

Release the balloons or wave the ribbons
Sing a song to the Spirit.

■ To be welcome and to be reunited*

■ The Word*

John the Evangelist tells us how the first disciples began to follow Jesus (Jn 1, 35-51).

John the Baptist looked towards Jesus and for the second time he said to his own disciples : « **Look, there is the Lamb of God** ». Two of them left him and began to follow Jesus. Jesus turned and said to them : « **What are you looking for ?** » They answered him : « **Master, where do you live ?** » He replied : « **Come and see** » ; so they went and saw where he lived and stayed with him that day.

Jesus' first words to these two men who follow him bring them back to their own deepest desires : « **What are you looking for, What do you want ?** » They do not really know what they want, but they are touched by the way in which John the Baptist affirms that it is Jesus who baptises in the Holy Spirit, that he is the chosen one of God, the Lamb of God. They are drawn to Jesus and want to live with him.

Then three other disciples, Peter, Philip and Nathanael follow him together. Today, let us think about what it means to « follow Jesus and be a disciple of Jesus ».

Let us remember that January is the month in which we pray in a special way for Christian unity, unity between the disciples of Jesus who belong to different theological and church traditions. We have all been baptised and have received the Holy Spirit ; we all believe in the same word of God. We all want to follow Jesus.

« To follow Jesus » means to walk behind him, to receive him as « Lord and master » of our lives who teaches us about God, but also how to live. Jesus came to lead us towards the Father, to draw us into his intimacy, to teach us to love as he loves. In a letter he wrote to his disciples, John the Evangelist says that whoever wants to remain in Jesus, must act as Jesus acted (1 Jn 2,6). The disciple of Jesus is called to live the charter of Jesus, the beatitudes, the commandment of love : « **Love one another as I have loved you** », to seek at all times to love others, those who are different and even the enemy. It is obvious that we cannot do that on our own, we need to receive the Holy Spirit who helps us to let go of our fears and selfishness. Today let us reflect on what it means to be « disciples of Jesus ».

* See page 6

If the disciples were united around Jesus at the Church's beginning, that has not been the case throughout history. Today still, there are so many divisions between Christians. At the end of the Middle Ages, serious divisions appeared between the Eastern and Western Churches, then later there was the Reformation with new divisions created between Christians of the West. All of these divisions wound the heart of Jesus which has an immense thirst for unity : « **May they be one, as the Father and I are one** ». How can we as disciples of Jesus announce Jesus to the world if we are not united ? It is not firstly through discussion, but by becoming like Jesus, by becoming his disciple in all things, by seeking to follow him and live like him, not on our own, but together with our brothers and sisters.

■ Sharing

● Together

This month we are thinking about following Jesus. In the Gospel reading we see how people began to follow Jesus. A follower of Jesus is a disciple. In our sharing time let us explore through a chosen activity how it feels to follow. Communities could choose to do one or more of the suggested activities.

Mime : We could read Mk 10 : 35-45. The apostles quarrel about having the places of honour. Jesus tells them to be servants of each other and thus imitate him.

After this we could have the washing of the feet after which Jesus has said : « I have given you an example to imitate. » (Jn. 13, 2-18). The washing of the feet is an ecumenical celebration at which all Christians can participate. It would be a fitting activity for celebrating the week of prayer for Christian unity.

Or,

If the washing of the feet is too difficult to do, we can propose the following

A member of the community represents Jesus and walks around the room/space doing various movements. He leans towards a woman seated on the ground. He teaches, prays, weeps, eats. We follow him, one by one, imitating him. The leader should explain how we, as disciples of Jesus, also set examples to others, and that our actions should reflect the love of Jesus. Then he explains why people who were at the back of the line were not able to see Jesus, but that they probably copied the gestures, attitudes or movement of the person in front of them.

been a great change. How did this feel at the time ? Scary ? Exciting ? Did you feel a certain loneliness, or rather, a certain confidence ?

Or,

Think of the way in which the Holy Spirit has transformed our inner selves through Faith and Light. Give small concrete examples which, for you, were signs of the Holy Spirit acting through you.

Or,

The Holy Spirit gives you new life. How can this rebirth change, even a little, the values in the society around us ?

Or,

This month could be an excellent chance to live through together the deepening of our spirituality (see appendix 2).

■ Prayer

All together, responding verse by verse, you can say together this beautiful prayer to the Holy Spirit :

*Come, Holy Spirit, into our hearts,
Send from Heaven above
A ray of your light.*

*Come among us, father of the poor,
Come, giver of gifts,
Come, light of our hearts.*

*Lord of consolation,
Sweet guest of our souls,
Soothing freshness.*

« Do not be surprised when I say :
You must be born from above.

**The wind blows where it pleases ; you can hear its sound,
but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going.
So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit »**

(Jn 3, 7-8).

The joy of Jesus' disciples is to have this new life in them. The Holy Spirit is given to us and wants to guide us throughout our lives. It wants to teach us to love, to commit ourselves to each other and especially to those who are in pain and in the most need.

■ Sharing

● Together

Using red and yellow coloured paper, make flame shapes, one or two for each person.

Talk about the gifts of each person and then write the gifts on the flames. Glue them together to make a collage of fire. This represents the gifts of the Holy Spirit in your community, which gives us rebirth and an entrance into the Kingdom of God.

Or,

Use any colour of paper, every colour of the rainbow. Make shapes and ask people to choose a colour which reflects who they are and say why. What is the gift God has given them ?

If some people find this difficult, another member of the community could help them choose a colour and say why this represents the person, and what is their gift.

Again make a collage with all the pieces.

Or,

Re-use the stepping stones by writing the gift of each person on a stone and constructing the community by placing them on one another.

● In sharing groups

Reflect about the times when the Holy Spirit has « blown you » to places, people and happenings which you did not expect or want. Reflect on times in your life when there has

Or,

In pairs, one person is invited to keep their eyes closed whilst the other person leads them around the space. After a period of time the roles are reversed.

At the end of the activity everybody sits in a large circle and each person is asked to share how it felt.

● In sharing groups

Jesus calls us to be disciples, which means we follow Him. He lived for us a life of love, and commands us to do the same.

In the small groups we consider the commandment of love. « Love one another as I have loved you, try at all times to love others, those who are different and even your enemies »

Think about a real life situation where there is the challenge to love or not to love.

Try and mime/act out the situation with two endings. One where we do not choose love, and a second where we choose to love as Jesus asks us to.

How do we witness our desire for unity with Christians belonging to different Churches ?

■ Prayer

People gather together and in stillness listen to the Gospel reading, Jn 1, 35-39.

Afterwards, each sharing group re-enacts the plays/mimes they have created in their sharing group.

The leader then reads Ephesians 5, 1. « **Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love...** ». The leader then asks the group to think about that verse and in the secret of their hearts to ask God to help them to follow Him and to walk the way of love. One large candle can be lit from the central community candle and passed to one person at a time, who can choose to either pray in silence or aloud (gentle background music can be softly played as the candle is passed).

The leader then invites us to say together the Faith and Light prayer, which could be done in the form of responses, each group reading a sentence. We can do also the prayer for Christians unity (see appendices 3 and 4)

Or,

If you want to do **the prayer of the poor** (appendix 1) : sit in a relaxed position, your back held straight and your hands opened to the Giver of all goods. Your « word of love » could be a word of obedience (e.g. « Yes, Lord Jesus »). Keep repeating it and stay with it for at least ten minutes. Do not mind if your thoughts wander away ; just come back to your « word of love ».

Jesus himself kept saying all his life : « Your will be done ». Try to live this through your daily life.

■ Fiesta

The community may like to find a way of making footprints during the Fiesta time, e.g. stepping in paint or mud or making a picture/collage by drawing around each others' feet. After this, they could make up games which invite people to follow a path, walking in certain footsteps, distinguishing one lot from another, not mistaking their way, with more or less difficult variations.

■ To be welcome and to be reunited*

■ The Word*

Together let us prepare ourselves to live through the Feast of Pentecost, the feast of the Holy Spirit. In this passage of John's Gospel, we come to the dialogue between Jesus and Nicodemus, one of the Jewish leaders. Through this dialogue, Jesus wants to reveal that in order to enter into the Kingdom of heaven, we have to be born « from above ». Nicodemus does not understand. How can we be reborn ? How is it possible ? Jesus insists : « **In all truth I tell you, no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born through water and the Spirit** ».

What is the Kingdom of God ? Is it not the place where God lives and reigns ? To enter into the Kingdom of God is to be with God, to live with God, to be filled by God, to live in joy and of the very life of God. Jesus came that we might enter into this Kingdom and be lead to the Father's heart. It is like a new birth, a birth into a new life. To enter into the Kingdom of God is not something that will happen at our death. The Kingdom of God is here now in the heart of each one of us insofar as we welcome Jesus, putting our trust in him. The Kingdom of God is eternal life, the life of the Eternal One. It is given to us through baptism when we are born of water and the Spirit : « **Whoever believes in me has eternal life** » (Jn 3, 15-16). Since we have the life of the Eternal One in us, we can love as He does, know as He knows, With God's life in us, we can do the things which are humanly impossible to us. We can forgive, love our enemies, see each person, weak or strong as beloved by God, be close to those who are poor, those who are « strangers » (strange to us) ». That is why John, in his letter to the disciples, says ; « **My dear friends, let us love one another, since love is from God and everyone who loves is a child of God and knows God** ». (1 Jn 4, 7).

God's gift at baptism, this new birth, is in us like a seed that will grow. We must nourish it and watch over it. Only then can we live of the Spirit. That is why Jesus says to Nicodemus :

* See page 6

Nicodemus

(Jn 3, 1-20)

The Holy Spirit Brings us to the Kingdom of God



● BETWEEN NOW AND THE NEXT GATHERING, SOME SUGGESTIONS

⇒ The time of fidelity

In the small group of friendship

Arrange for a small group or as the whole community to participate in a Christian Unity service. If possible request for Faith and Light to lead a prayer/song during which time other members of the community can hand out paper hearts. On the hearts could be inscribed a word or a symbol signifying particularly the desire of Jesus for the unity of his Church.

In your personal life

Each day spend time reading about or reflecting upon the life of a person who has been a follower of Jesus.

Have a map of Palestine in your room and go each day over the places where Jesus has been.

⇒ In the coordinating team

We are half-way through the year. This may be a good time to evaluate the work of the coordinating team and look again at its priorities, so that each person will be helped to grow humanly and spiritually in the community. It is also time to assess the small groups of friendship or other ways of living in the time of fidelity.

The next meeting will be the one where the Feast of Life takes place. Doubtlessly, you have been thinking about how you will live it out (see page 37). Today, you must think about the final preparations...

Your opinion on the Guidelines would be most valuable to us. Please send your evaluation sheet (see page 32) to the International Secretariat before 28 February 2003.

THE EVALUATION OF THE GUIDELINES 2002-2003

To be sent to the International Secretariat before 28 February 2003

Do not hesitate to use an extra sheet to indicate all your replies, questions, suggestions, testimonies

Name of my community :

First name and name of leader :

Country :

1. Does the Guidelines of 2002-2003 meet all your requirements ?

2. What do you appreciate most ?

3. What do you find less good ?

● BETWEEN NOW AND THE NEXT GATHERING, SOME SUGGESTIONS

⇒ The time of fidelity

In the small group of friendship

How do we make our homes dwellings for God ? You do not need to go far to find God, because we are his temple. Welcoming people into our homes, we make our homes into the home of God.

Visit a special, holy place, or make one at home. Use it to reflect on work, family : what can I do today to reveal Christ alive in the world ?

In your personal life

This month you can meditate on the passage from the book of Etty Hillesum « Extract from a disrupted life. Journal 1941-1943 » : « *People are sometimes for me houses with open doors. I enter, I wander through the corridors and rooms. In each house, the arrangement is slightly different, but they are all similar and one ought to be able to make of each one a sanctuary for you, my God. And I promise you, I promise you, my God, I shall search for a lodging and a roof for you in the greatest number of homes possible. I am starting to look for a roof for you. There are so many uninhabited houses, where I should introduce you as guest of honour.* ».

Or,

Every morning, take the time to become aware of what God is doing for you now.

⇒ In the coordinating team

During the time of prayer at your meeting, each person can recite the names of persons in his or her small group of friendship. Together we commit them to the Holy Spirit.

In preparation for Pentecost, you can say the prayer to the Holy Spirit (see page 53)

Or,

If you want to do **the prayer of the poor** (appendix 1) : recover a relaxed and meditative position. Close your eyes. Be conscious of a part of your body and how it feels, e.g. your hands ; experience their beauty, their brokenness, their energy, . . . Accept them with gratitude. Your « holy word » could be « Thank you Lord ». Dwell with them as long as you feel like. Then turn to another part of your body and do the same. The whole prayer will last at least ten minutes.

■ Fiesta

This game shows that our bodies must be instruments which are becoming gently guided by the Spirit of Jesus, something which is not always easy.

The community is divided in teams. Every member stands behind another member and puts his hands on the shoulders of the one in front of him. The one who is in front must follow the instructions of the one who is behind him. Everybody closes his eyes, except the last who will be the guide. He must get his team as fast as possible to the finishing line, only giving instructions with his hands : a tap with the right hand means turn to the right, and a tap with the left hand, to the left. A tap with both hands means : go straight ahead. No hands means : stop. One can put obstacles on the course.. the team which arrives first wins. You can start again with a new guide.

4. What do you think of the appendices and how do you use them ?

5. Has your community formed small groups of friendship ?

6. In what other ways do you live the time of fidelity ?

7. What are your suggestions for improving the next « Guidelines » ?

(You could also add the detailed report of a meeting which has been particularly beneficial for your community. Thanks !)

8. How many Guidelines 2003-2004 will you require ?

In French :

In English :

In Spanish :

The Wedding Feast at Cana

(Jn 2, 1-12)

A foretaste of the Kingdom



Prayer

After having relived the gospel passage about the merchants driven from the Temple, make a special prayer place together. Place the body on the wall or on the floor and surround it with flowers, incense. Place a lighted Paschal Candle close by.

The community stands in a circle around the body. Each person holds a small unlit candle.

The leader/chaplain recalls the core message : « Jesus is the Temple of God. I am a temple of God. »

We remember the times we have failed to reveal the presence of God and we say sorry. Each little group in turn says the « sorry prayer » which they prepared in the time of sharing.

Each person takes their little candle and lights it from the Paschal Candle and then places it on or near to the body picture of Jesus.

As each person does this community say : « (the name of the person) - You are called to be a temple of God »

Say the Prayer of Faith and Light : the leader could recite it line by line and the community repeat each line.

We could also choose to read this Celtic prayer :

*« God is within
God is in my head and in my thinking
God is in my eyes and in my seeing
God is in my mouth and in my speaking
God is in my heart and in my loving
God is in my hands and in each action
God is in my feet and on each journey
God is within me and without me
God is in the heart of friend and stranger
God is in the other who comes to me. »*

Give thanks for the moments when your actions and your attitudes have revealed God in you.

In this passage, Jesus is angry because the temple traders are trying to profit from religious things. They are mixing money and cult... They are desecrating the Temple. They are making the Temple into a « market ». Advertising in the media creates desire. It pushes us to buy more and more. We use money not only for necessities but also for more than is needed. In this way money can desecrate the temple of our bodies. We need money in order to live but also to help those in need. It can therefore become a means for loving and re-establishing justice. How can each one of us rediscover the meaning of money within God's vision and how best to use it ?

■ Sharing

● In sharing groups

Before the meeting, make a giant body shape of Jesus (taking the picture extracted from the book of Jean Vanier « I meet Jesus » reproduced in the appendix 5). Cut it into pieces e.g. arms, head, legs...

At the meeting divide into small groups each with a body piece. Spend time in small groups decorating the pieces of the body.

Whilst doing this, talk about how each person uses the different parts of their body to reveal the presence of God. Remember that the most fragile bodies reveal Jesus. This way we will discover and recognise our holiness.

Ask each little group to recall a time when they have not used a part of their body to reveal God e.g. when our lips speak ill of people, when we harm people with our actions or failure to act. Each little group prepares a short « sorry prayer ».

During this time, a group can prepare the mime of the merchants in the Temple, who did not respect God's house. (Jn. 13, 22). This mime can be presented in the first part of the prayer.

● Together

Call the small groups together and fit the pieces together to make up the whole body shape of Jesus.

■ To be welcome and to be reunited*

■ The Word*

At the beginning of this Gospel, we see John the Baptist pointing Jesus out as the Chosen One of God. A few men begin to follow him. They are his first disciples. At first, there are five of them : Andrew, his brother Simon-Peter, Philip, Nathanael and another who is not named but who is perhaps John the Evangelist himself. What is the first thing that Jesus does with these five ? Does he bring them into the desert for a retreat ? Does he take them to one side to study the Torah, the prophets and scripture ? No, first of all he brings them to a wedding feast ! In Jesus' time, wedding feasts lasted a full week. There was drinking, singing and dancing. People came from far and near to celebrate the unity of the two spouses and the two families. Let us imagine Jesus at the wedding feast, singing, laughing with the other guests, happy to be with his friends. Jesus is deeply human. But then there is a problem. These two poor families have not allowed for enough wine. There is no more wine ! It is an humiliation. Jesus' mother who was there, notices and she says to Jesus : « **They have no wine !** » Jesus seems to put her request aside by answering « **Woman, what do you want from me ? My hour has not yet come** ». Mary seems not to understand his refusal and says to the servants : « **Do whatever he tells you** ». Jesus then changes six or seven hundred litres of water into wine and an excellent wine at that ! Instead of turning into a disaster, this wedding feast finishes in joy because of the presence of Jesus, Light of the world.

Why does Jesus bring his disciples first of all to a wedding feast ? Is it not because the wedding at Cana symbolises the wedding feast of the Kingdom of Heaven to which we are all invited ? Jesus says that the Kingdom of God is like a wedding feast (cf Mt 22, 1-10). In the Gospel of Luke (14, 15-24) the master of the house says to the servants to bring in all the poor and disabled people to the banquet.

What does the wedding feast signify ? It is the celebration of a covenant between a man and a woman and between two families, a celebration of peace, unity and fruitfulness. It is also the celebration of the covenant that unites us all in our community of Faith and Light. It is a time of joy. It is the time when we celebrate com-

* See page 6

mitment and faithfulness. It is such a marvellous sign of the Kingdom of Heaven where we will all be with God in unity and joy for eternity. In order that we might live this unity in heaven and taste this deep, real and permanent unity, the water of our poor humanity must be changed into wine, the wine of the inebriating presence of God. We need God's presence to live well in community.

This miracle of Cana is in fact more than a miracle. It is the sign of something marvellous, of a celebration to which we are all invited. It reveals Jesus, Light of the world. In this month of February, we are celebrating the feast of Light, the celebration of Faith and Light as a sign of future happiness of which we already have a foretaste on earth with the presence of Jesus and with Faith and Light.

■ Sharing

● Together

This month we are reflecting upon the fact that in the beginning God saw that it was not good for a person (Adam) to be alone. So he gave Adam a companion: Eve. This is what we celebrate in our Faith and Light communities; that God brings us together in families/communities of commitment, love and belonging.

So we remember this month that Jesus took his disciples to a wedding where He celebrated with the people, the joy of being together:

Mime: The Wedding Feast at Cana (Jn 2,1-12)

The community could include songs and dances from their own country in their mime.

The mime should be well prepared. It is a good way of helping us to enter together into the heart of the Gospel.

At the end of the mime, the leader explains how the presence of Jesus at the wedding turned something good into something special and wonderful.

● In sharing groups

Let us imagine Jesus at the wedding feast, singing and laughing with the other guests, happy to be with his friends.

. Have you ever been to a wedding? Why was it special?

. Can you think of a time when you have enjoyed being together in Faith and Light?

Can you think of a time in Faith and Light where you felt the presence of Jesus?

During this time certain persons may like to make small gifts which are a sign of

■ To be welcome and to be reunited*

■ The Word*

This Gospel story reveals to us that the body of Jesus is the new Temple of God. We must remember how much the Jewish people honored the Temple. It was the place where God dwelt among his people. For special feasts, especially the Jewish Passover, everyone set out for Jerusalem on pilgrimage to give thanks to God. It was really a sacred place. In the Temple, the sanctuary was the most sacred place, the « holy of holies » to which only the high priest had access.

One day Jesus entered the Temple courtyard and what did he find in the sacred place? He found people selling cattle, sheep and doves and money changers! (In the Temple Roman money was not allowed to be used. It had to be changed for Temple money). Jesus then made a whip out of cord and chased the animals from the Temple. He knocked over the money changers' tables. Just imagine the commotion, the noise of the animals and the fury of the sellers, the anger of Jesus. Priests are brought to the temple and they want to know with what authority Jesus has acted. « **What sign can you show us that you should act like this?** » The Evangelist gives us Jesus' reply: « **Destroy this Temple and in three days I will rebuild it** ». The Evangelist adds « **But he was speaking of the Temple that was his body** ».

For us the risen body of Jesus is the new sanctuary, the place where we meet the Father. He is the source of life, love, truth and forgiveness. The body of Jesus is the heart, the centre of all Christian life. Later in the Gospel, Jesus will say: « **Whoever eats my body and drinks my blood, lives in me and I in him** ». In this way we too become a temple of God. Paul will affirm this: « **Do you not realise that you are a temple of God with the Spirit of God living in you... God's temple is holy and you are that temple** » (1Cor 3, 16).

We are touching on a great mystery: God lives within us. Our bodies are holy; they are called to reveal the presence of God. Each one of our bodies, with its disabilities, visible and less visible, is therefore precious. How can we become more aware of this mystery?

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Easter

(Jn 2, 13-22)

Jesus is
The Temple of God,
I am
a temple of God



friendship, e.g. a bracelet, a necklace, a post card with a drawing, a collage or a little box with a message in it...

■ Prayer

People gather to sit in a circle, softly singing 'Ubi Caritas' as the circle is formed. The leader stands in the middle of the circle and explains about the symbol of the wedding ring, i.e. a symbol of eternal love. The leader invites another person to join him/her in the centre and they join hands, the chosen person then invites another person to join and link hands, one-by-one everybody joins the centre circle, and holding hands, face outwards. A lighted candle is brought to the centre of the circle and everyone is invited to turn to face the light.

The leader then encourages the group to think about how God has brought them together in the world-wide family of Faith and Light, with Jesus always present at the centre, and how His presence makes something ordinary into something very special.

Or,

If you want to do **the prayer of the poor**: (appendix 1), close your eyes. The candle will be there in the middle of the circle waiting for you, its light enfolding you without your seeing it. Keep repeating a « word of love » (e.g. «Light of the world» or «Kindly Light, « Jesus, my joy » or « Thank you, Jesus »).

■ Fiesta

The Feast of Light

Marriage is a time when people give themselves to each other as a gift. The Feast of Light, if lived simply in the community, could be a time when members can re-commit themselves to Faith and Light, to serving one another, and to be a light for the world.

The feast will be celebrated differently if we have invited another community to celebrate it with us, if we have chosen to spend it in our parish or if we have arranged to have the Day of « Announcing and Sharing » on that day.(appendix 7)

● BETWEEN NOW AND THE NEXT GATHERING, SOME SUGGESTIONS

⇒ **The time of fidelity**

In the small group of friendship

Maybe the small groups could meet at the home of a community member where they have never visited before, as a sign of gratitude for his/her belonging to the community. They could bring him/her one of the little gifts made at the community gathering.

In your personal life

Everyday in your prayer time, remember people who are denied the joy of having friends.

⇒ **In the coordinating team**

Those who have not already lived through or planned the Day of « Announcing and Sharing » for 2003 could reflect on how to arrange for it (appendix 8).

Is there a special effort in solidarity that you could live through together during Lent ?

● BETWEEN NOW AND THE NEXT GATHERING, SOME SUGGESTIONS

⇒ **The time of fidelity**

In the small group of friendship

Together attend a local Passion Play or jointly attend a variety of services in one another's churches during the Holy Week.

At Easter, you could invite several friends to look at or re-look at the video « Lourdes, Easter 2001 ».

In your personal life

During your daily prayer time, which is a time of fidelity to Jesus, hold your little cross in your hand and offer to God an area of pain in your life, or in the life of a member of the community. You can also thank God for giving us new life as we remember the little seed we planted at the community meeting.

⇒ **In the coordinating team**

. How, in the community and the coordinating team, are we to accompany those who are suffering most today ?

. Do we believe that suffering and compassion are a path to God ?

. Have you already made plans for the summer camp ? Perhaps this is the moment to motivate the whole community, to look for new friends and necessary help, and to choose the theme of the camp and the way of living it out.

Holding the little crosses in our hands, we reflect on these questions :

What did you think about when you made the cross ? What did it feel like ? (You can draw or paint to express your feelings)

If you prefer, you can remain silent.

■ Prayer

Sitting in a large circle, each person is given a seed to hold whilst somebody reads aloud John 12, 24. The leader then explains about the cycle of the life of a plant or a flower, and how a flower needs to die to bring forth seeds for new life to begin again.

The leader asks everyone to think about the seed as being a symbol of his/her life. Each person is encouraged to plant the seed in a pot of soil. Everyone sits down and quietly sings « Father I adore you. I lay my life before you » whilst they reflect upon what they have just done.

Or,

If you want to do **the prayer of the poor** (appendix 1) : you hold the little cross you have just made gently in your open hands ; your hands are lying on your knees. You choose again a « holy word » (e.g. « Jesus » or « my loving Jesus ») and let your heart respond to Jesus' suffering. Remain with him for at least ten minutes.

You can do this wonderful prayer of faithfulness of « being with », at the beginning of each day.

■ Fiesta

In this time of Lent we could have a sober meal (e.g. replace the usual meal by a bowl of rice). The saving thus made could be added to what is produced on the Day of « Announcing and Sharing ». Try to find some activities that do not create too much exuberance, but where true joy is present.

Jesus crucified

(Jn 3, 14-15)

Jesus goes to the end of love



■ To be welcome and to be reunited*

■ The Word*

Let us take time to contemplate the cross of Jesus.

In John's gospel, Jesus' sufferings and rejection by the religious authorities, his cross and resurrection are not only present at the end of the Gospel, in chapters 13 to 21, but they are present throughout the whole Gospel. Jesus' whole life is infused with and centered on « his hour », which is also the hour of our liberation, our salvation and our resurrection.

In Prologue of this gospel, we saw that « the Word, which is God, took flesh » in Mary. The life of Jesus is a movement in weakness and vulnerability towards the washing of the feet, the condemnation, the humiliation, his terrible death and finally the tomb. Then, there is the ascent in the Resurrection and the Ascension. For us human beings, defeat is a painful reality. For Jesus, defeat is a way of showing his love « to the end ». That is why the Evangelist shows Jesus' cross not as a descent but as an ascent in love.

This month we are not going to follow from the Gospel story of the wedding at Cana, but we will pause on the words of Jesus to Nicodemus :

**« As Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert,
so must the Son of Man be lifted up
so that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him ».**
(Jn 3, 14-15)

Here Jesus refers to the bronze serpent made by Moses in the desert (Nb 21, 4-9). All those who had been bitten by a poisonous serpent and looked at the bronze serpent were healed. Jesus tells us that all those who look at him, on the cross ; that is to say, all those who have faith and trust in him will be raised and will have eternal life in them. In John's language, « eternal life » is not « life after death », but the very life of God given to us through baptism and given to each one of us today if we trust in him. To be healed by Jesus is to no longer be closed up in the prisons of our

* See page 6

selfishness and our fears. Jesus came to open the doors of these fears that imprison us within ourselves and within our group. He comes to free us to love.

During our community meeting, let us take time and stay with Jesus on the cross, pray with Jesus on the cross. Let us give thanks for he loved to the end and gave himself, his life, so that we may have life.

Let us take time with Jesus on the Cross and tell him that we trust him and want to welcome him, to follow him, to love him, to truly be his disciple. To be a disciple of Jesus is also to accept our difficulties, our disabilities, all that makes us suffer. To be his disciple is to desire to receive the Holy Spirit and grow in love.

■ Sharing

● Together

Just as Jesus suffered rejection from the world, many of us have experienced pain and rejection, but because Jesus accepted the way of the cross out of love for us, God raised Him from the dead.

As we take our pain and rejection to the cross, we are healed and the door is opened to a new life of love and freedom.

People sit in a circle. The leader offers to each person in turn a cross/crucifix. The person then holds it to their breast and, when ready, returns it to the leader, who in return presents them with a flower/symbol of new life, e.g. a budding twig or an egg.

Or,

The community may wish to have an experience of embracing the cross.

Someone holds a large wooden cross, the leader invites the community members to come forward, to stand or kneel before it and then to embrace the cross. Then he invites each one to pass under an archway formed by two members of the community. Once they have passed through the archway, another member of the community who is dressed in white to represent Jesus who then gives them a symbol of new life.

● In sharing groups

People could help each other to make small crosses from two twigs or branches tied together. (They could take these crosses home with them). During this activity, an instrument may be played or meditative music listened to.