

Guidelines 2003-2004



Faith and Light

Deepening
our
friendship with Jesus
through the Gospel of John

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Dear friends,

For the second year in a row, we are going to put our steps in those of John, « Jesus' beloved disciple ». We are going through the second of the three parts of John's Gospel. Which means that it will be our joy to further deepen in this Gospel next year, sustained, once more, month after month, by the invaluable meditations of Jean Vanier.

Thanks to you, Jean, for this faithful monthly encounter through the Guidelines, which you have been giving the Faith and Light communities all over the world for so many years... We know you have much love for the Gospel of John, and that it nourishes your reflection and your prayer in a special way... Thank you for taking all of us this year again (which is the year of your seventy-fifth birthday!) – and also next year – on this way of communion with Jesus in the heart of the Father. This way is a grace for every one of our communities! Yes, may Jesus be more loved, may He find joy in us, in our lives, in our communities, in our Churches.

Then, let's be on our way! A long and beautiful year opens before us: simply to further discover with what kind of Love Jesus loves us... A year to become even more his friend, and love « as He does » our brothers and sisters, especially those who are at the heart of our communities, the weak, the despised ones, the rejected ones, those in whom Jesus so much loves to dwell and who have so much to teach us.

Isn't it wonderful to think that at the four corners of the world, in very different cultures, contexts, traditions, through the joys and pains that make up our daily lives, 1464 small Faith and Light communities will seek to deepen this way of friendship with Jesus hidden in the poor, and give witness of it to the eyes of the world?

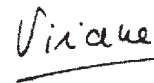
Dear friends, may you discover, and use with enthusiasm, the Guidelines now in your hands! Do not hesitate to make adaptations with creativity and flexi-

bility according to the experience of your community, especially if you do not feel at home with some proposals made in it which might not be in accordance with some of the practices of your Church. In our way towards the unity so much desired by Jesus, it is important to not be afraid and to make the small steps we feel we can make. We, all of us, are called to become more and more open to our brothers and sisters from Christian confessions different from our own, and to the particular richness of their Churches, while we seek to root ourselves more deeply in our own Christian tradition.

This is a necessary challenge! It is, indeed, not always easy in our communities, in our national and international meetings, or in these Guidelines which are meant for the whole Faith and Light family to encourage each person and each community to really open up to others, and, at the same time, to deepen their belonging to their own Church. There are times when the language used could, by itself, hurt or raise barriers... Please take care, therefore, to adapt everything you judge necessary. But also be aware that we are journeying, and, step by step, we seek more and more how to better go forward together, while we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus in whom we are one...

Before I finish, I would like to extend my warmest thanks to the team that has worked with so much enthusiasm on these Guidelines: Silvia, from Switzerland, Claude and Mary, from Ireland, Sabine, Nathalie and Mathieu, from France, Father Joseph and Corinne who have ceaselessly worked so this precious resource gets to you in time. As for the drawings so full of life, which illustrate these Guidelines, we owe them to Thérèse. Many thanks from the bottom of my heart to each and all of you, and to those who will now translate these Guidelines in your native language!

May the coming year be a beautiful one for each of your communities! Be certain that along your path, Jesus, who is so happy to be your friend, will place his hand around your shoulder and will protect you as he did his friend Mena. Trust Him! You too, be more and more His friend!



Viviane le Polain
International Coordinator



Letter from the editing team

The editing team for this year's Guidelines has worked with much joy and enthusiasm. It hopes you will share the same joy and enthusiasm when you get acquainted with this new version and begin using it.

*We have meant to put emphasis on non-verbal elements, on **body language**, which is so close to the language of the heart : on simple and joyous **games**, on symbolic **gestures**, on **objects** that call to mind an important reality. Our main hope is to help our friends with handicaps and all around them to grow inwardly. We have given special attention to **personal welcoming** and to **meals** or **snacks**, which are great moments of friendship : conversation becomes spontaneous, we serve one another with gentleness, we rejoice together with the flavour of each thing.*

*The time for **sharing** will primarily be for reading the Gospel (the reference of the text is indicated after the theme chosen for the month), then the meditation of Jean Vanier will be read or presented in one's own words by the coordinator or by the chaplain. The **sharing groups animated** by a member of the coordinating team, will be made up of five to seven persons. For many of them, sharing time will be the only time during the month when they will be able to express themselves freely and personally on questions that have been designed to be very simple.*

*The **prayer** is being presented in a somewhat new way. We have emphasised the value of **silence** in the « prayer of the poor ». We are thus offering some beautiful texts that invite to personal meditation.*

*As a concrete sign of this friendship with Jesus we are going to live together throughout the year, we are suggesting that a small « **friendship bag** » be made out of plain fabric for every member of the community. It will be given at*

the very first meeting. Every month, a new token of friendship will be placed into this « friendship bag ». And as the first precious gift, we are offering a card showing the « Jesus and his friend Mena » icon, which is one of the oldest of the Church.¹

Those who would like to further deepen in the spirituality of Faith and Light could use the exercise offered in Appendix 3 (page 86) or get inspiration from the L'Arche book : « At the heart of our communities ».² This is a booklet full of drawings and colours, but also full of quite important and simple questions in order to help all members of the community become conscious of their bonds, celebrate their gifts and deepen their life together.

However, meditating on the texts of our Guidelines and living together what they offer will bring a natural deepening. Every community gathering centred on its theme is like a mini spiritual formation session lived in « friendship with Jesus ». This is the theme for our year.

In union of heart and prayer,



*For the Guidelines team
Corinne Chatain
General Secretary*

¹ We are aware of the fact that in some countries, it is difficult that every member of a community get a guidelines booklet. So please, feel free to request from us the number of cards that you wish to receive. We'll be glad to send them as a present to you!

² Refer to the list of available documents, page 99. Has been translated into several languages.



To all of you, members of the coordinating team³

Let us take the time, during each of our meetings, to reflect together about the role and responsibility of the coordinating team. Let us also take the time to deepen friendship among the members of the team. Friendship is the very heart of Faith and Light. If it is truly alive among the members of the coordinating team, it will shine forth over the whole community. Let us remember from the very beginning of this year that the work of preparing the gathering is not sufficient to generate and nurture friendship. Let us be inventive; let us live as a team the three times of every gathering.

At every meeting of the coordinating team, let us seek a way to deepen the spirit that moves us within Faith and Light. We could, for instance, choose from Appendix 3, « Deepening life within Faith and Light », page 86. We could also read the meditation of Jean Vanier and underline the word, or sentence, that touched us most. The underlined passages can then help us share with others how we let ourselves, little by little, be changed by Jesus.

Let us set up, from the very beginning, small groups of friendship for the year, discerning whether it is best to keep the groups existing from the previous year, or starting new ones (re. Appendix 2, page 83). If we can form them and we are located in a place where they can meet easily, the groups of friendship can be entrusted with a specific task for one of the times of the monthly gathering. For instance, a group of friendship could be in charge, each month, of the welcoming, including the necessary preparation.

Let us set apart plenty of time for the **first meeting** of the coordinating team. We have to get the whole year started! Setting aside a full day, or better yet, a week-end would be wonderful!

3. In order to start the year as well as possible, we'll refer to appendix 1 « some reminders to the coordinating team », (page 82).

From the start, we have to plan our **calendar for the whole year** :

- ◆ Decide the **community meeting** dates, taking holidays into consideration.
- ◆ Is a **Feast of Light** planned with other communities near by or with the region? Or shall we be twinned with another community? If the feast is to take place in our parish or local church, let us think about contacting the pastor, or the minister soon.
- ◆ Has a common date been agreed upon in our region or our country for the **Announcement and Sharing Day** (re. Appendix 9 page 94)? If not, decide right now on what date would be most appropriate.
- ◆ Many communities go on **pilgrimage** or live **another type of spiritual experience** together. If so, choose a place and dates.
- ◆ If we decide on a **summer camp**, let us set the dates as early as possible.



And now, on to the preparation of the first **meeting**.

In the letter of invitation sent to each member of the community, we can suggest that every member **make a drawing** capturing a moment of his/her holiday when he/she lived friendship.

Let us carefully prepare our **commitment ceremony** as proposed in the time for prayer. Let it be both simple and beautiful! Some mothers among the community will have been asked to sew a «friendship bag», so each member gets one.

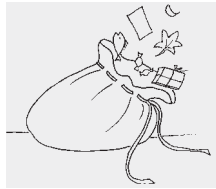
Let us now pray together facing the image of Jesus and his friend Mena.

September

The disciple whom Jesus loved in the Gospel of John

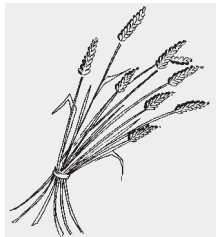


September



Welcome and gathering anew

The coordinating team will be on hand before the time set for the gathering and will welcome everyone personally. As the members come, a moment is reserved for looking at every drawing that tells about a moment of friendship during the holiday time. They could be mentioned again within the sharing groups. Paper and pencil will be ready for those who have forgotten to bring one. Everyone gets an image of the Christ and his friend Mena icon.



The word

We read the Gospel of John 15, 12-17. Then proceed to the meditation of Jean Vanier, which can either be read or presented in one's own words:

*Four Gospels tell the life and teaching of Jesus. We could actually say that there is only one gospel with four different chapters. The fourth, written by the disciple « whom Jesus loved », is very different from the others. The Fathers of the Church say that **this gospel is for those who want to deepen their friendship with Jesus**. The author says that he has written it « so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing this you may have life through his name » (Jn 20, 31).*

*What is « life » ? When John speaks of « life », he is speaking about the very life of God, the communion between the Word and God, between the Son and the Father. This life is given to us at baptism. We are born « from above » through water and the Spirit. This new birth is a transformation, which allows us to know God and to love as Jesus loves. Baptism is like a spring, which must grow and bear much fruit. **This Gospel is the Gospel of friendship and of communion of hearts**. Friendship is not a static reality. If it is not nourished, it is at risk to gradually disintegrate.*

*This Gospel was written about the year 100, by John himself or by his disciples who wished to transmit all he had said, preached and lived close to Jesus. If the author calls himself « the disciple whom Jesus loved », does that mean that Jesus loved him more than the others ? I don't think so. It think it is because he would like each one of us to identify with him and become Jesus' friend, the beloved of Jesus. Didn't Jesus say to the Apostles : « **I no longer call you servants but friends** » ? (Jn 15,15).*

September

Origen was born about 80 years after John's death. At the beginning of his commentary on this Gospel he wrote that we cannot understand it unless, like the beloved disciple, **we rest on Jesus' heart** and take Mary as our Mother. It is therefore a Gospel to be meditated, prayed and contemplated. We have to let the Holy Spirit open new doors in our hearts so that we may enter more deeply into the mystery of Jesus, the Word who became flesh in Mary's womb.

Friendship with Jesus, which introduces us into friendship with the Father, is the central theme of this Gospel. That is why today we want to reflect together on friendship.



Sharing

► Together

We sit in a circle, and after having listened to the Gospel of John and Jean Vanier's meditation, we reflect on friendship.

Jesus tells us : « I call you my friends ». Being friends means to commit oneself in fidelity.

One can be helped by chapter XXI of the « Little Prince » (a famous novel by French writer Saint Exupéry) and think about it.

The little fox said :

If you want to make a friend of me, tame me !

- What do I have to do ? said the Little Prince.

- You have to be very patient, answered the fox. First you'll sit at some distance from me, like this, on the grass. I'll be glancing at you from the side and you will remain silent. Language is cause for misunderstanding. But each day, you may sit a little closer...

This year, Jesus calls us to become even more a community where friendship, tenderness and fidelity are lived. The **small groups of friendship** will be of great help to make this time of fidelity part of our life. The coordinator explains how and why these groups have been formed (re. Appendix 2, page 83). In order for all members to get acquainted, the groups of friendship begin to meet as sharing groups.

September

The person in charge will explain the meaning of the commitment celebration proposed to each one during this first meeting.

► In sharing groups

Let each one introduce himself/herself, say a few words about himself/herself, family, home, work...

Let each one show his/her drawing about friendship or tell a nice story about a friend, a story of tenderness, solidarity, fidelity...

- ◆ What is a friend ?
- ◆ Do I have a friend ?
- ◆ What does it mean to be friends ?
- ◆ Is Jesus my friend ?
- ◆ The community is a place of friendship and fidelity where each one gives and receives
- ◆ Am I ready today to commit myself to be as faithful as possible during the whole year ? How will I do this ? Write it down on a small piece of paper.

The sharing group – group of friendship – can now set a day of the month when it could meet. If not possible, members of the friendship group can keep in touch by phone, or dropping a card, or praying for each other, which could be done every Wednesday, for instance.



Prayer « *To become more and more Jesus' friend* »

We are sitting in a circle and we are telling the stories of Jesus we like best, those where he showed us how he lived friendship. For instance, Martha and Mary invite him to their home, Martha prepares the meal, Mary listens to him... The call of Zacchaeus... Mary-Magdalene anoints Jesus' feet with a very precious perfume... We all want to know him better so that we can love him more and more.

Let us listen to Jesus' word and let us say it over and over again to let it penetrate our hearts. Yes, let us listen to him speaking to us and repeat after him:

September

- ◆ « *Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another* » (Jn 13, 34)
- ◆ « *No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends* » (Jn 15, 13)
- ◆ « *I do not call you servants any longer..., but I call you friends* » (Jn 15, 15)
- ◆ « *... I know those whom I have chosen* » (Jn 13, 18)
- ◆ « *This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you* » (Jn 15, 12)
- ◆ ...

Then, in prayer together, everyone can entrust one of his or her friends to the Lord.

▶ **Prayer of the poor**

Let us now read Appendix 4 (page 88) on the prayer of the poor.

We sit in a circle. In our hands is the image of Jesus and Mena. And, softly, we repeat our word of love : « *Jesus, you love me. Jesus, I love you* ».

▶ **Commitment celebration for the year**

A celebration of commitment to the community for the year is proposed for those who would like.

A large candle is lit near the altar in a chapel, or near a big cross in the corner reserved for prayer. Next to it is the banner of the community. After a short introduction, the community coordinator or the chaplain will ask the following questions drawn from the prayer of Faith and Light to all the members of the community (the coordinating team may choose other questions) :

- ◆ « *Will you follow Jesus in our community ?* »
All willing answer : « Yes »
- ◆ « *Will you commit yourself to take part in the meetings with all your heart ?* »
All willing answer : « Yes »
- ◆ « *Will you be everybody's friend within the community ?* »
All willing answer : « Yes »

All together now say the prayer of Faith and Light, in its short or full version (re. Appendix 7 page 92).

September

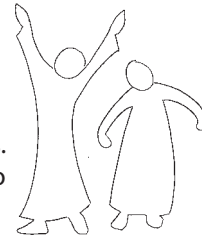
Then, the chaplain or the community coordinator gives everyone his/her «friendship bag» that he/she is to keep for the whole year. In it is placed the little sign of friendship that is given to each one at every gathering. Today, it is the image of Jesus and Mena, and also a string of cardboard figures. We sing a song of thanksgiving.



Fiesta

All of us get the fiesta ready:

- ◆ Small figures can be cut from thin cardboard of many colours
- ◆ The **new members** could use bright colours



Each one writes his/her first name on one of the figures. These can then be fastened or glued together so as to make up a string. This symbolises friendship and unity within our community, a friendship that is passed from person to person. The string will be used as decoration for the fiesta table.

▶ Meal or snack

All help in setting the table as nicely as we would in every day life for those we love.

At the end of the meeting, the string is cut up, and the individual figures are put in a basket. While leaving, each one receives the figure of another member of the community so that he can pray for him/her throughout the coming month.

BETWEEN NOW AND THE NEXT MEETING : A FEW SUGGESTIONS



▶ The time of fidelity

- ◆ *Within small groups of friendship*

This is the first meeting of our small group of friendship. We can get in pairs in order to get to know each other's story, then, each one tells the story of the other as it has been heard. We can encourage each other to deepen and to

September

keep the commitment that we made at the preceding community gathering.

If our group of friendship is in charge of the welcoming for the month of October, a tree leaf for each member of the community can be cut from coloured cardboard. On one side, a first name is written, and on the other, the sentence: « *Jesus, heal me!* ». The group will also get a large tree branch ready, which will be used during the sharing time and also to decorate the meal or snack table.

If our small group cannot meet this month, let us show our friendship by means of a phone call, or dropping in, or sending a short note, or going out with one or the other...

◆ *In our personal life*

Every morning, let us spend just a moment by the window and say: « *Jesus, will you come and stay with me today?* »



As a coordinating team

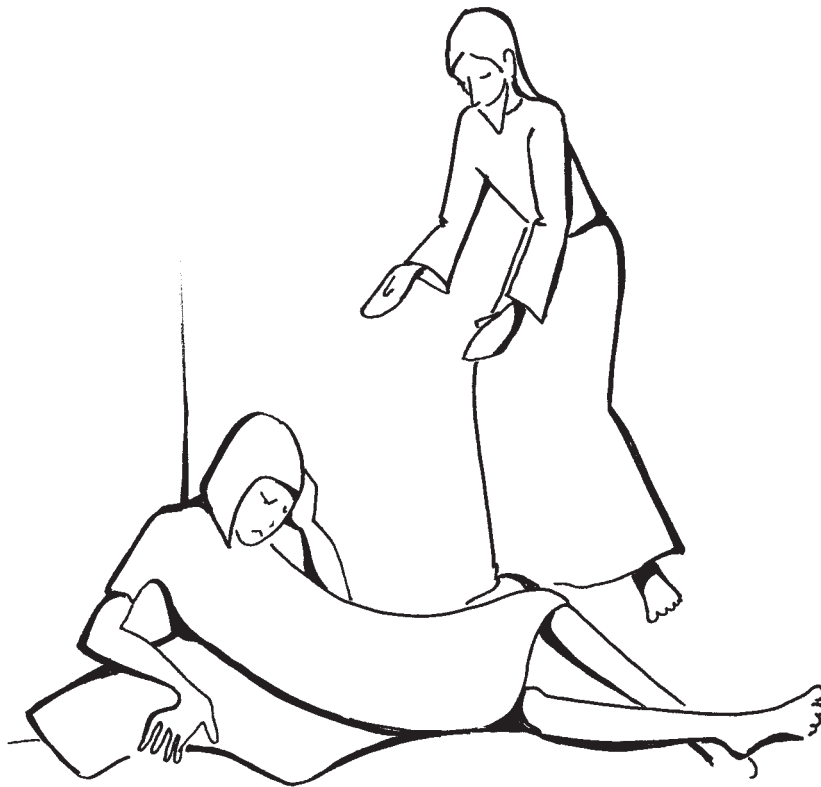
We seek to deepen the spirit that moves us in Faith and Light by doing together, for instance, one part of the exercises proposed in Appendix 3 « Deepening life within Faith and Light » (page 85).

Let us carefully prepare this time for sharing. If we decide on re-living the gospel of the paralysed man, let us read with attention Appendix 5 « Doing a mime at Faith and Light » (page 89).
Let us pray in front of the image of Jesus and his friend Mena.

October

Jesus goes towards the poorest

(Jn 5, 1-9)





Welcome and gathering anew

The welcoming group gives each one his/her tree leaf, which will be used during sharing time.



The word

We read the Gospel of John 5, 1-9, then proceed to the meditation of Jean Vanier, which can either be read or presented in one's own words :

The first time Jesus goes to Jerusalem with his disciples, he goes to the Temple, « his Father's House ». The second time he goes with them to Jerusalem, he goes to the Pool of Bethesda, which was like a local asylum, « where crowds of sick people, blind, lame and paralysed lay ». Throughout the world, I have visited many places of suffering like that asylum, where the rejected ones of humanity have been placed : all those who have no place in society, who cannot stay in their family because their family cannot cope or because they are a cause of shame for their families. In the richer countries, these places may be quite clean but they are frequently sad, without much life... In poorer countries, these places are quite dilapidated, many of those welcomed wander around half naked, without any activity, without medical care... It seems there was a belief that the waters of the pool of Bethesda were therapeutic and that the first person who entered the water when it was stirred up, would be healed.

*I am moved to see how **Jesus goes right away to the most neglected ones of Jerusalem**. I can imagine him going from one to the other, placing his hand on each one, saying a word of affection and encouragement. Finally he meets a paralysed man who has been there for thirty-eight years. Jesus asks him : « **Do you want to be healed ?** » « Lord, he says, I have no one to put me in the pool when the water is stirred up... ».*

*Not only is this man paralysed but he is all alone. He is like the Samaritan woman who said to Jesus : « I have no husband ». No one is interested in him, he has no friends ; no one is there to help him. **Is there any greater human suffering than the anguish of feeling completely alone ?** When we have no friends, we quickly imagine we are not lovable ; we believe we are bad and guilty for existing.*

October

In other gospel passages, Jesus responds to a cry of faith and trust from people asking to be healed. **This man has asked him nothing.** Apparently he has no faith or at least he does not know Jesus. On the contrary, he is closed in on himself in sadness and despair. Jesus says to him : « Get up, pick up your sleeping mat and walk ». At that very moment the man was healed.

Faith and Light was inspired by Jesus to help people with disabilities and their families to find life through a community, with friends. He does not want them to be alone, in sadness, feeling guilty.

It is important that we share together the joy of belonging to a community, this place of friendship, of solidarity and of sharing. Perhaps some may give witness to moments of loneliness and of sadness that they lived before finding the community.



Sharing

▶ Together

We may mime the first part of the Gospel of the paralysed man (Jn 5, 1-9). All take part, family members, friends, persons with a handicap. We see people make the passage from isolation and humiliation to the joys of community.

The branch of a tree is then placed on the floor, in the middle of the room.

Solitude, fear, sadness are also experienced in our bodies. We can try to give them an expression or an image through a very simple gesture : all by one's self in a corner, sad, curled up, head in one's hands, sitting against the wall... For instance : « *When I am in a sad mood, says Peter, I sit on the side of my bed, all by myself, just so.* » Peter showed us what he does when he is sad. Each one of us has found himself/herself sad or alone one day or another. Let us express this sadness, this loneliness or this fear by a simple gesture. The musical background reflects sadness.

Then, someone, a friend, a visitor comes to see us. We all know the gestures that help us come out of our gloom : an arm on the shoulder, around the neck, a kiss, a hand in our hand pulls us into the heart of the world, at the heart of the community, among friends... We all come together again in a big circle, holding hands. The music has changed to express our joy to be no longer alone.

Each one in turn comes to attach his/her leaf to the branch : it comes back to life.

► In sharing groups

It is sometimes so difficult to get out of one's isolation... One loses heart like the paralysed man by the Bethesda pool... There is no hope left. Can we remember a time when we had gone through some despair? Can we remember a time when a friend helped us out? Can we share the happiness of belonging to a community? Has anything changed for me since I became a member?

- ◆ Why do I sometimes feel sad and lonely?
- ◆ Do I dare ask a friend to help me?
- ◆ Do I know when my friend is sad?
- ◆ Can Jesus come to my help, whenever I feel sad and dejected?
- ◆ What is He expecting of me?



Prayer « *A friend's trust heals us* »

A poem by E.E. Cummings

no time ago
or else a life
walking in the dark
i met christ

jesus) my heart
flopped over
and lay still
while he passed (as

close as i am to you
yes closer
made of nothing
except loneliness

We are sitting in a circle. In the middle is a mat. The leader reads John 5, 1-9. He/she describes the despair of the paralysed man and then goes over Jesus' questions and explains the answers.

October

Jesus healed the paralysed man by giving him back trust in himself, through His friendship.

We then pray Psalm 131, which is one of trust :

*« O Lord, my heart is not lifted up,
my eyes are not raised too high ;
I do not occupy myself with things
too great or too marvellous for me.
But I have calmed and quieted my soul,
like a child in its mother's arms ;
Content as a little child
so is my soul within me.
O Israel, hope in the Lord
from this time on and forevermore. »*

➤ Prayer of the poor

The leader may go over the explanation presented in Appendix 4 again (page 88). We are sitting in a circle around the mat. We say our word of love: e.g. « Jesus, heal me ».



Fiesta

We then make up a friendship dance. With the help of background music each one moves here and there within the room, in circle, straight, to the right, to the left. We cross each other's path without stopping and we keep smiling. Then we look someone straight in the eyes. We come closer, we greet each other and we start the « game of mirrors » : very slowly we do the same movements as the one close to us (hands, arms, head motions...). After a short time, we come closer, our hands touch. We stay this way a short moment. The music is tuned down. What a nice dance ! We know each other. We are friends. The music is once more set louder and the dance can be started over again as many times as we want.

➤ Meal or snack

The big branch covered with leaves is set on the table as decoration. Flowers and fruits may be drawn on a paper tablecloth...



Upon leaving, each one will take a leaf from the branch and put it in his friendship bag to bring home. This month, I'll keep secret in the bottom of my heart and prayer the name of the person written on the leaf, and I'll tell him/her at the next meeting that I prayed for him/her.

BETWEEN NOW AND THE NEXT MEETING : A FEW SUGGESTIONS



▶ The time of fidelity

◆ *Within small groups of friendship*

We could visit a sick or lonely member of the community, who was not able to make the last gathering, or can no longer come.

October is the month of the Rosary for the Catholics. John-Paul II has strongly urged the faithful to come back to the Rosary. This is a poor person's prayer that gives simplicity of heart. The Orthodox also love this prayer very much. We could say a decade of Hail Marys. Mary never ceases to lead us to Jesus and to the presence of Jesus in our hearts. In interdenominational communities, the Catholics could explain to the others how they pray the Rosary and how the Rosary helps them to pray. The members belonging to other churches could also share different ways of praying from their own traditions. In communities rooted in Anglican and Protestant churches, it would be good if members can share together different ways of praying. For instance, October 13 is for the Orthodox, particularly those of Russia, a very great holy day, the « Day of the Protection of the Mother of God ».

The small friendship group in charge of the welcoming for the November meeting will make a large rainbow-shaped puzzle. At the time of welcome, each member of the community will then receive one piece of the puzzle with his/her name written on the back.

Another group will get petals from roses or other flowers ready for the time of prayer.

◆ *In our personal life*

We will send a picture to a friend of our self smiling with the words : « *You are great!* » And we will keep saying each morning : « *Jesus, you trust me. Jesus, I trust you* ».

October



As a coordinating team

At the October meeting, we saw Jesus heal a paralysed man on a Sabbath day. As the Gospel goes on we see Jesus making Himself equal to God. What

accusation do those who do not understand the mystery of Jesus' love and communion with His Father make against Him ?

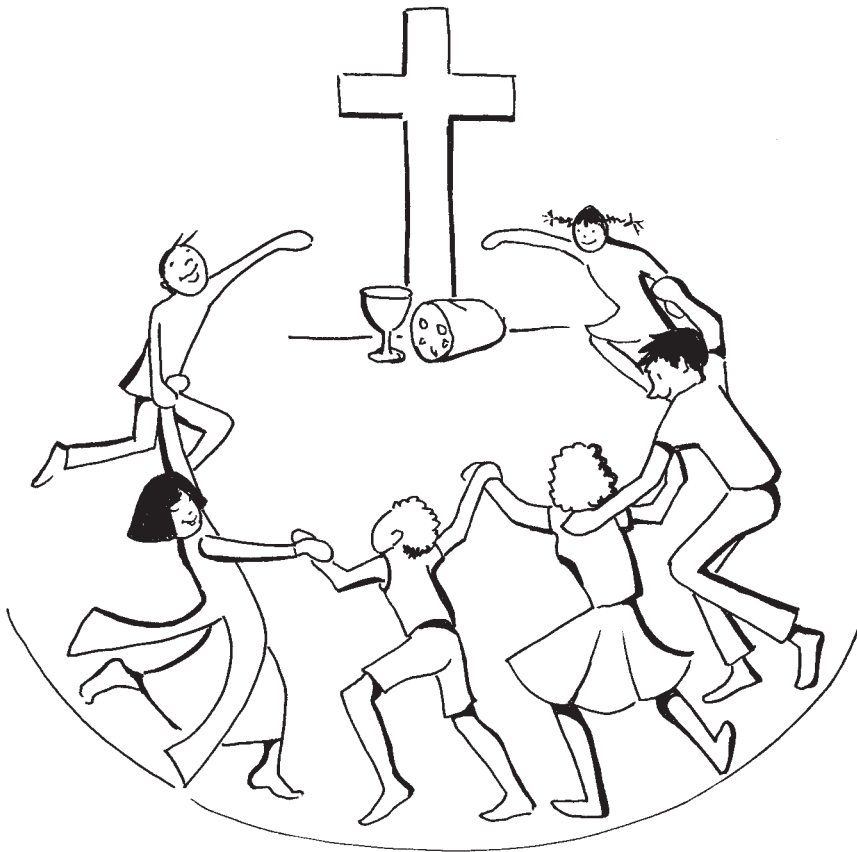
Here, Jesus invites us to take the side of those who, by themselves, cannot do much. Let us share about this theme. The wealth of our sharing as a coordinating team will help us enliven the sharing at the next community gathering.

For the November meeting let us try to meet on a Sunday, if that is possible, in order to share all together in the Eucharist at our parish, or in the Sunday worship service at our local church.

Let's not be shy! Let us use the possibilities offered by miming. It is important to work on it together as a coordinating team. If you meet in one of your homes, get going! Push tables and chairs and start exploring the possibilities of movements and gestures while one of you is slowly reading the Our Father aloud. The main thing is to keep it spontaneous. Let the movements and gestures come from deep within your heart. They will help you to create a mime/dance. You may use the text in parts. The idea here is not to rehearse the mime ahead of time and teach it to the community, but rather to live through this experience in order to get a better appreciation of its difficulties, but also its possibilities. You will then feel more at ease to confidently lead this activity. Of course, staying open to many other suggestions will help you weave a beautiful mime or dance during the celebration.

Living together in communion

(Jn 5, 10-47)



November



Welcome and gathering anew

The members of the welcoming team greet each one saying : « (first name), you are my friend », and giving him/her a piece of the puzzle bearing his/her name.

When we are all together, we will see, as usual, that each person has the opportunity to share a joy, a suffering, a big or small event experienced in the past month. Next, each one will say for whom he/she prayed during the past month, whose name was written on the leaf, which was given at the previous gathering. Our lives, like all the colours of the rainbow, are made of the joys and sorrows of each one. As these bits of news are shared, the pieces of the rainbow puzzle are being put together. The rainbow will later be used as decoration for the snack table.



The word

We go back in a few words to the healing of the paralysed man heard last month, then we go on reading the Gospel of John 5, 10-47 and proceed to the meditation of Jean Vanier, which can either be read or presented in one's own words :

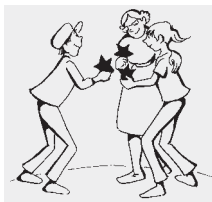
When Jesus healed the paralysed man, it was the Sabbath day, or the day of rest. For the Jewish people, there were six days for work and one day for God. On that day they would go to the synagogue, remain with their family, read the word of God, rest. Several centuries before the coming of Jesus, before the Greek and Roman occupations, the Jews had created little fraternities of pious men. They helped each other to remain faithful to the word of God and to their traditions in the face of the seductions and new ideas of the occupiers. Sometimes these fraternities became rigid, interpreting with harshness what was forbidden, such as work on the Sabbath day. They were like watchdogs making sure that no one would do what they had forbidden.

In this chapter, we see the Pharisees condemning the man who was healed because he is carrying his mat on the Sabbath day! He replies simply that the one who healed him told him to carry it. A conflict breaks out when the Pharisees meet Jesus; they become angry with him. Jesus' answer to them is : « **My Father is at work until now and I am working also** » (Jn 5, 17).

« But that only made the Jews even more intent on killing him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he spoke of God as his own Father and so made himself God's equal. » (Jn 5, 18). Here we touch on something very delicate. The richness and the beauty of the Jewish religion was their faith in the One God : there is only one God. The Greeks and Romans on the other hand believed in many gods. For the Jews, the greatest blasphemy was to question this uniqueness of God, to count oneself equal to God.

From verses 19 to 27 of this Chapter 5, **Jesus tries to make those he is speaking to understand his bond with the Father.** He is not in opposition to God, **he is with God, in communion with God, his Father.** He neither says nor does anything without the Father telling him. It is the first time in John's Gospel that Jesus seeks to help us all to penetrate this mystery of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Father is the Source of all : of all creation, of all life. **The Son springs from the Father ; he is equal to the Father, and the Father sends him into the world to reveal the true face of God : the face of goodness and of forgiveness. And the Father with Jesus sends the Holy Spirit to transform us by bringing us into the very life of God.**

For we who are followers of Jesus, Sunday is a holy day, a day of rest, prayer and relaxation. Jesus especially calls upon us to join him at Mass or at Sunday worship in our Church. We receive the bread of the Word and the bread of Life, Jesus. He gives us the strength to offer ourselves with Him, to become bread for others, throughout the week. Thus, **each day we are called to love our brothers and sisters, and to heal the broken hearts. And to love is to live communion.** Our community, just like the small fraternities that we were talking about at the beginning of this chapter, will help us to do this.



Sharing

▶ Together

Sharing can be centred on the celebration of the Lord's day. Together we ask the Holy Spirit to inspire us with gestures to express many things : being together, trust, the shared bread, forgiveness, strength, communion, joy. Let us use the words of the Our Father. We gather suggestions of some beautiful gestures. We will not mime every word. The gestures are finally chosen by all, then linked together gently and patiently so as to become a beautiful prayer of our whole body and heart to celebrate the day of our Lord.

November

It could also be suggested to reflect on an experience of division starting with a mime. It is only when we recognise a division or a problem that we are able to act. Persons with a handicap also have the awareness both of what is divisive and what brings communion. We, in Faith and Light, are not professional educators, but through what we do, our example, our sense of human dignity, we are the leaven of a new world where men and women, often without a voice, live the Resurrection.

A small group will first mime a story describing an experience of division. Let us not forget that, sometimes, small things may bring great conflicts!

The other members of the community will identify the problem and will try to find one, or several, solutions. In order to change the course of the story and give it a hopeful ending, or to stop the scene whenever someone wants to make a change, clap your hands and take the place whichever actor you want to replace. You are leading a different unfolding of the story. Do not be afraid to start over several times so that many have a chance to express themselves. Take your time, encourage each other and have fun! It is often while having fun that we learn much, even if the topic is a little serious and the exercise a little difficult at first!

✦ In sharing groups

Jesus calls us to live in communion with him and with our brothers and sisters, especially on Sunday, the day of the celebration of the Lord's Supper or of worship together; the day of joy, rest and fellowship.

- ◆ How do we live our Sundays?
- ◆ Is it important for me to join other Christians and take part in the Eucharist or the customary service in my church on Sundays? Why?
- ◆ If I have difficulties or lack courage to go to my church, who could help me to be more faithful?
- ◆ Are there obstacles that prevent me from joining in the Sunday celebration? What can I do about this?
- ◆ Do I know I make Jesus happy when I am part of the Sunday gathering and I receive Him in my heart?
- ◆ In what other ways can we make the day of the Lord special?



Prayer « *Sunday, a breath of life* »

The community participates in the Eucharist or usual Sunday worship in the local church or parish and may even help with the preparation and the celebration.

A beautiful text from the III^d century Christians

« On the day of the Lord, leave everything and run with haste to your Assembly because this is your praise to God. »

A beautiful prayer by Marthe Robin

« God of love, come as a powerful wind into our cathedrals, our churches, our chapels, our cenacles, into the most luxurious homes as well as into the most humble ones. Fill the whole world with your light, your consolation and your love. »

We sit in a circle. The leader reads the Gospel of John 5, 10-16 and 19-21. He/she explains that for Jesus, the Sabbath is a day when He gives life and He asks us to give our life to him and to others. Reference can be made to the Gospel of Mark 2, 27 where Jesus said : *« The Sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the Sabbath »*.

In the month of November, we have a special remembrance of those who have gone back to the Father, and we have special prayers for them. Each one says a word to a friend of the community or to a member of his/her family who has joined the Lord, or simply says his/her name. We can pray together, mentioning their names. Many petals of roses or other flowers are then scattered in the corner reserved for prayer.

We end by saying the Our Father. The Father is the source of all life.

► Prayer of the poor

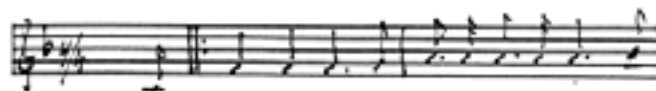
We come to rest in the heart of Jesus. We sit in a circle in a relaxed way. The leader may take up Appendix 4 (page 88). Our love word can be : *« Jesus, I come to live in your heart »*.

November



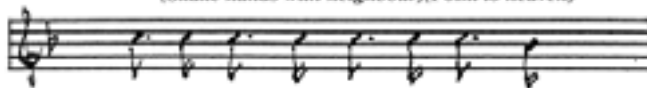
Fiesta

All of us now sit in a circle. One or several balls of yarn are thrown in turn. The yarn is of several colours, if possible, those of the rainbow. As the balls are thrown around, they unwind and all taking part find themselves linked to the others, as if caught in a huge spider web. (Let us remember until snack time the name of the person who last threw us the ball). Life manifests itself by dance. We may sing a song with gestures about the community, while creating an imaginary « *chain of friendship* » or a dance...



Com- ment vas-tu ? Joyeux a- vec Jésus? Bat-
(*Serrer la main*)(*Pointer vers le ciel*)

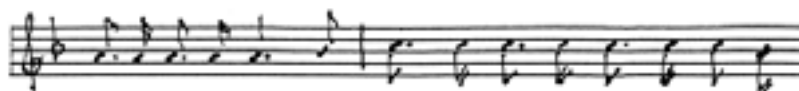
Hel- lo, my friend! In Christ we are content. We
(*Shake hands with neighbour*)(*Point to heaven*)



tons des mains. Bat-tons des mains. Re-
clap our hands, we clap our hands. And



gar-dons tous nos pieds. On frap-pe le pied droit. On
point to where we stand. We stamp our right foot. We



frappe le pied gauche. On tourne en rond, on tourne en rond. On
stamp our left foot. We turn around, we turn around. And



cherche un autre ami. Com-
find an- o- ther friend. Hel-

▶ **Meal or snack**

The table is decorated with the rainbow. Each one sits next to the one who threw the ball to him/her. When leaving, each one receives a piece of the rainbow puzzle and puts it into the friendship bag.

Each person who receives a puzzle piece will make a small gift for the person whose name is on the other side of the puzzle piece. This gift will be given to him/her as a sign of friendship at the time of fiesta during next month's gathering (December) when we celebrate Christmas.

BETWEEN NOW AND THE NEXT MEETING : A FEW SUGGESTIONS



▶ **The time of fidelity**

◆ *Within small groups of friendship*

We cannot say we are someone's friend if we are not interested in what he/she does or what he/she likes. That's why we get invited to the work place or the home of a friend from our small group. We can also go watch him/her play soccer or practice his/her music... If there are younger children among us, we can go pick them up at school; go over to their home for the afternoon snack... This way we can live in communion an important moment of our friend's life.

If our small group of friendship is in charge of the welcoming for the December gathering, we prepare small Christmas delicacies, which will be used at prayer time. Each will have a small label that will be used for writing a name...

Another group will prepare the welcome time from one of the suggestions proposed.

◆ *In our personal life*

Every morning, we hold in our hand the image of Jesus and his friend Mena. We put our other hand on the image and we let the life of Jesus flow from this hand into our heart. And we say : « *Thank you, Jesus* ».

November



As a coordinating team

We will emphasise the religious dimension of the meeting, so as to counterbalance the commercial aspect now given to Christmas. We can read together the very beautiful chapter 6 of the Gospel of John and personally meditate on it.

We then get ready to set up the crib in the corner reserved for prayer. And if we decide to relive all together the story of the birth of Jesus, it is with the greatest care that we are to prepare ourselves. Re. Appendix 5 : « Doing a mime at Faith and Light » (page 89).

How are the small groups of friendship going ? What richness do they bring ? And if they are yet to be set up, why don't we try to get them going for the next gathering ? What a beautiful Christmas present that would be !

Let us also get ready everything that is necessary to make Christmas cards to send to the communities of our twin zone, or of other countries, or of our region.

Bethlehem, The «House of Bread»

(Jn 6, 1-71)



December



Welcome and gathering anew

The welcoming team offers to each one upon arrival the image of a crib, or of the infant Jesus, or the name of Jesus written on a pretty label that can be stuck or pinned on one's heart.



The word

Today, we start with Jean Vanier's meditation. With him we relive the multiplication of loaves, and what Jesus wanted us to understand as so essential : His own body given up for us, first at Christmas, then on the Cross, then as food in the Bread of Life.

We have come to the sixth chapter of John's Gospel which begins with a marvellous feast. There is a huge crowd following Jesus because he has done so many miracles ! Many people bring him the sick so that he will cure them. Jesus has compassion on this crowd because they have been walking with Him for three days and are beginning to get hungry. He has them sit down in small groups, in community, and he multiplies the five loaves and two fishes, brought by a small child, giving to each one as much as they want. It is a real celebration for all these families who are gathered together.

This celebration is the sign of another celebration, this earthly food is given to reveal a heavenly food. Jesus knows that it is not only our body that needs to be nourished, but also our heart and our spirit. Later in this same chapter, Jesus reveals that he is the true Bread of Life :

« I am the Bread of Life

No one who comes to me will ever hunger ;

No one who believes in me will ever thirst » (Jn6,35)

« I am the Bread of Life which has come down from Heaven.

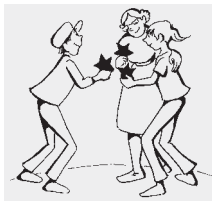
Anyone who eats this bread will live forever »

And he adds : « The bread that I shall give is my flesh for the life of the world » (Jn6,51)

The village where Jesus was born is called Bethlehem, which means « House of Bread ». It is in this little place that « the true Bread of Life » is born. Jesus, tiny baby, the infant-God, came into the world to give himself to us, to give

life to the world. He gives himself first to Mary and Joseph. **He gives life to us by changing our hearts of stone into hearts of flesh, by revealing to us the true face of God : the face of a loving little child who wants to teach us how to love.** And in this chapter Jesus says : « Whoever eats my body and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him » (Jn6,56). God has become little in order to live in each one of us. Isn't that what friendship is all about ? **Friends can say « you live in me and I live in you ».**

The meaning of Christmas is that the Word became flesh in order to give himself to us and to bring us into friendship with him. **By becoming Jesus' friend we become children of the Father... Jesus becomes bread so that we can be nourished by him and become, like him, bread for the others.**



Sharing

► Together

The most precious gift that we can offer is the time we give to a friend. Waiting is what we experience during Advent and throughout our whole lives. We so often wait, sometimes with impatience, but sometimes also with anxiety.

We may all mime the story of the birth of Jesus with the Annunciation, then the trip to Bethlehem, the innkeeper's rejection, the birth in a stable, the news brought to the shepherds.

► In sharing groups

Jesus is born in Bethlehem to give life to the world. He came to give His body so that we are no longer alone.

Jesus would like to live in the crib of our heart.

How can we prepare for Him this home of love ?



Prayer « Bethlehem, the place where one eats one's fill »

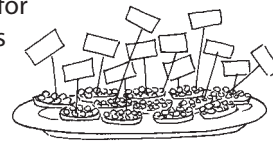
A beautiful quotation from St Bernard de Clairvaux :

« Let us rest in the heart of those we love ; likewise, may those we love rest in our heart. »

December

We sit in semi-circle in front of the Nativity scene.
The leader reads the Gospel of the birth of Jesus, and beautiful Christmas carols are sung.

Little Christmas cakes are being passed around. Each bears a label on which we write the name of the ill or distressed person for whom we want to pray today. Each little cake is then set in front of the crib, with these words :
« *Jesus, this is for your friend (say the name)* ».
A last carol is sung.



Or

A small Christmas figure showing the Infant Jesus is passed around, while a carol is sung. When the figure comes into my hands, I may say a word, press Him to my ear to listen to Him, rock Him on my heart, then pass Him on to my neighbour on my right... A meditative chant addressed to Jesus is sung during this time.

◆ Prayer of the poor

We sit in a circle and the leader may then read again Appendix 4 (page 88). The cakes have been placed in the centre. The word of love may be the first name of one of the persons whose names are written on the labels : « *Jesus, bless (say the first name of this person)* ».



Fiesta

We offer the little gift to the one for whom we have prepared it (according to each country's culture).

We may recite a poem or tell a Christmas tale.

Here is a suggestion for a gift to the parish, local church to which we belong or to the religious community with which we are linked : on a big star, prepared ahead of time ; each member of the community sets his/her fingerprint, if possible using a variety of colours. Each person's name is written next to his/her fingerprint.

December

Christmas cards or stars may also be made and sent to another community in our twinned zone, or in another region, or in another country.

We are careful to slip into our friendship bag our precious image of Jesus, or that of the crib we have been given at the beginning of this gathering, along with the little gift offered by our friend.

BETWEEN NOW AND THE NEXT MEETING : A FEW SUGGESTIONS



▶ The time of fidelity

◆ *Within small groups of friendship*

Special attention will be given so that no one is left alone for Christmas or New Year's Day.

Could our small groups participate in some action for the poorest organised by our parish, local church or by a charity? Or could we think of spending New Year's Eve together as a region or as a country as some already do, in a spirit of friendship, prayer and festivity, which is so much part of Faith and Light?

If our small friendship group is in charge of the welcome for January, we will prepare cardboard fishes of different colours.

Another small group will gather everything that is necessary to make the rain stick during the time of fiesta.

A third group could meet just before the meeting to bake home made bread for the meal or snack.

◆ *In our personal life*

We spend a moment every morning in front of the crib or the image of Jesus received at the previous gathering, and we say : « *When I am weak – as you, Jesus – then I am strong* » (2 Cor 12, 10) or : « *When I am weak, I call to you, Jesus, and you give me strength* ».

December



As a coordinating team

Evaluation of these Guidelines for this year is to be found **in the central pages**. Let us take the time to answer

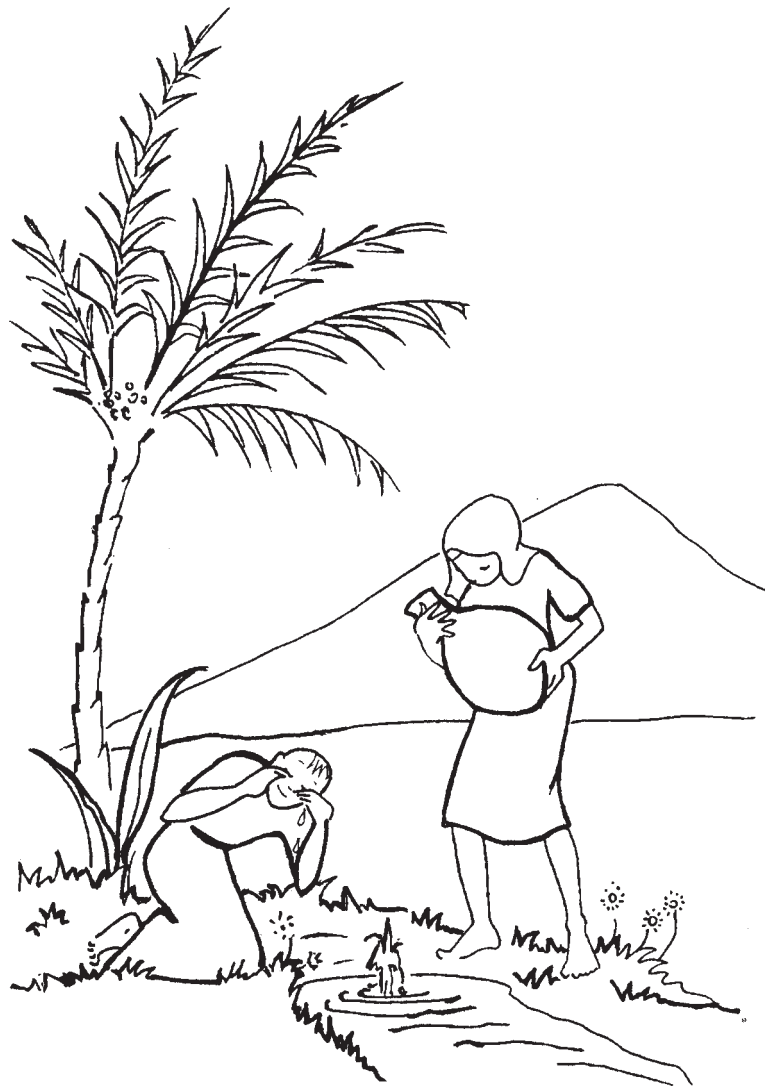
its questions as precisely as possible.

For the January gathering a ball, glasses, a decorated bowl, bottles or jugs will be needed.

This month our sharing will be less intense... We'll even have some fun. We still can live something deep and beautiful. What's important today is to welcome the other person as he/she is and to embrace our differences. That too is the way that opens us to ecumenism: finding out about the other person, welcoming him/her with his/her own gift and riches, and celebrating his/her presence. We may read together a passage from the Faith and Light booklet: « *Ecumenism, a gift of friendship* ».

To Drink at the Source

(Jn 7)



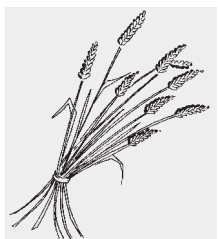
January



Welcome and gathering anew

The welcoming team offers a glass of water to each one upon arrival and explains the importance of water for those who are deprived of it. January is the middle of summer in the Southern Hemisphere, and it is very intense in desert areas there. Thinking of the Faith and

Light communities in those parts, we are particularly grateful for this offering of a glass of water. The welcoming team may also provide a picture or an image showing an area deprived of water. Each one then receives a coloured fish and writes his/her name on it.



The word

Let us then take up the Gospel of John 7, 1-37 and read it. The meditation of Jean Vanier can either be read or presented in one's own words :

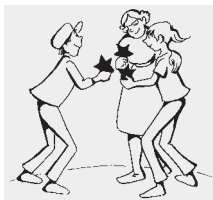
During the Feast of the Tents, Jesus is teaching in the Temple. A whole discussion begins about him. Is he the Messiah ? A prophet ? Some people are starting to believe in him ; others are still doubtful ; still others reject him. Then there are long debates about the origin of the Messiah. Jesus comes from Nazareth, they say, so he cannot be the Messiah ! Jesus can no longer put up with all these discussions. The intellectuals discuss and debate ; the pious people who go the temple regularly are afraid to believe in Jesus ; they are afraid to be excluded from the synagogue by the religious leaders.

*« On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out : « **If anyone is thirsty, come to me and drink** » (Jn7,37).*

Jesus addresses himself to the poor, to those who are in anguish, to those who feel rejected and excluded, to those who are « thirsty », to those who do not find their place in society. People who are wealthier, more well established in the society, do not realise how much they need Jesus ; they think that they can always work things out by themselves. At the heart of the Church are the « poor in spirit » who need God. The Kingdom of God belongs to them : « Come to me all you who labour and are burdened, and I will give you rest » (Mt 11, 28).

*During this month of January, when we pray especially for Christian unity, this text reminds us an essential thing : **that we are called to have deep thirst for Jesus and for his desire that all those who are baptised, who have received***

the Holy Spirit and who believe in him and in the Holy Spirit, might be ONE as the Father and Jesus are ONE. This is the great desire of God's Heart. Jesus came to bring together in unity all the scattered children of the Father. It is only Jesus who can lead us on the path of unity. If all the disciples of Jesus really thirst for Jesus and come to Jesus to drink, if we all seek to live his new commandment and the teachings of the Gospel, if we allow the Holy Spirit to fill us and penetrate us, unity will come; it will be the gift of God for all Christians.



Sharing

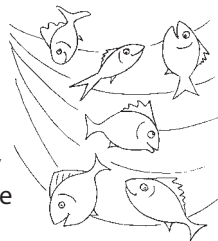
► Together

We can share about our differences, that are also our richness, once we have discovered and welcomed them... After each brief sharing we can say, «*Difference is great!*» And God knows how different we are from each other.

Respecting all our differences, welcoming the sufferings that sometimes come because of them, we desire to work for unity, opening our hearts, so that the community may always be more a haven of love and peace.

We can live all this in a circle, throwing a ball in turn from one to another. The one who catches the ball then takes a step forward and introduces himself/herself: with a bow, a wave of the hand, a jump... This person says his/her name and says: «*I do...*» or: «*I have...*», then exclaims: «*Difference is great!*». Then we all repeat this together as a chorus. It is now time to throw the ball to someone else...

We can end the game by throwing our fish onto a big blue piece of fabric or a net set in the middle of the room. We then all together get hold of an end of the piece of fabric and lift it and wave it so the little fishes dance. Meanwhile, we can sing a song everybody knows (e.g. «*There's lots of fish in the sea...*»). We end the game by everyone taking a fish.

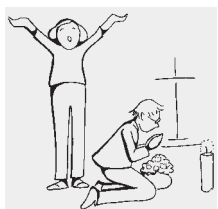


► In sharing groups

- ◆ In the community, do we know how to be open to those who are different from us?

January

- ◆ What can we do to better accept them ?
- ◆ Are we really possessed, as Jesus was, by this thirst for unity deep down in our heart ?
- ◆ How do we live it ?
- ◆ Are we ready to bear the suffering our differences may bring ?



Prayer « *Unity, the fruit of friendship* »

A beautiful text by Patriarch Athenagoras

« We are called upon to wage the most difficult of all wars, the war against ourselves. We have to succeed in disarming ourselves.

I have fought this battle for years. That is terrible ! But now, I am disarmed. I no longer have any fear, because Love is above all fears. I am disarmed from the wish to be right, to justify myself while at the same time discrediting others. I am no longer on my guard, jealously keeping my treasures. I can greet and I can share. I no longer particularly cling to my ideas, my projects. If someone offers me better ones, or not even better ones but just good ones, I accept them without regret. I have given up comparing. Everything that is good, true, real is always the best for me. That is why I am no longer afraid ; when nothing is left, no fear is left. If we disarm ourselves, if we are dispossessed of ourselves, if we open ourselves to the GOD-MAN who made everything new, then he will erase the evil of the past and will give us a new time when everything is possible. »

Our divisions wound Jesus' heart. He has come to gather us all together, to unite us. During this whole month, we are called to pray with all our heart for the unity of all Christians.

We sit in a circle, and a bowl full of water is placed in the middle. We come two by two and bless each other, saying : « *Be blessed. Be a source of unity* ».

Then we can read together this **prayer for unity** :

*« Lord Jesus, who prayed on the night before dying,
may all your disciples be one, as you are one with your Father and He with you.
Grant that we feel the pain of our divisions.
Help us to sincerely acknowledge the indifference,
the suspicion and the hostility we bear in our heart towards others*

*and give us the courage to liberate ourselves from these.
Grant that we may meet in you
so that from our hearts and lips ceaselessly comes forth the prayer
for the unity that you desire,
the way you want it, by the means that you want.
May we find in you, who are Love,
the way that will lead us towards unity
in obedience to your love and your truth. »*
(Father Paul Couturier)

Each one will receive the prayer for unity (Re. Appendix 8, page 93) and will thus be in a position to say it every day of the month and, even, every day of the year. The prayer for unity is a prayer that so touches the heart of God!

► Prayer of the poor

We sit in a circle. The leader may once more read Appendix 4 (page 88). Our fish is in our open hands. We say our word of love, e.g.: « *Jesus, help me* » or: « *Jesus, give me your meek and humble heart* ».



Fiesta

Suggestion for a do-it-yourself project : A rain stick

A rain stick is a traditional instrument that is found in some regions of the world. Built of bamboo in Brazil, made of woven wicker in Madagascar, they all work the same way : when the stick is turned over, and without making other movements, it gives a pretty pattering sound of rain or of waves rolling over pebbles. The stick is simply filled with small, hard grains, which fall on the many needles set inside the stick.

It is easy to make a rain stick. Get a good sized tube of strong, stiff cardboard, such as those found in the middle of fabric rolls. Its diameter should be about 4 to 6 cm (about 2 inches). Also needed are several boxes of pins (size n° 8 or 12), long rice (you can also try small glass beads or tiny pebbles), wide adhesive packing tape and clear-drying glue.

Insert the pins in a regular spiral pattern on the whole surface of the tube, using a small hammer (careful not to flatten the tube!). The criss-crossed

January

pins (that you may check by looking through the end of the tube) inside are going to slow the drop of the grains once the stick is turned, causing the rain-like sound. In order to complete the work, solidly stop up one end with cardboard and several pieces of the thick, criss-crossed tape. Put the grains, beads or pebbles inside the tube and close the other end in the same way. To keep the pins from coming out by painting several coatings of clear-drying glue over the tube. As the glue dries, it gets hard and shiny and acts like varnish.

While the glue is drying, we sit in a circle around a pitcher filled with very clear water. The leader then explains :

Clean water is that which comes from the « *Fountain of Love* », the gifts of the Holy Spirit, acts of love. The more we live in the love of God and of our neighbour, the more friendship between us deepens, the more unity between Christians becomes a reality. Dirty water symbolises divisions : all that is not according to the will of God.

Each one comes in turn with a cup, draws water from the pitcher of clean water in the centre of the circle, then we all go outside where there is a small basin completely filled with dirty water. Each one pours the clean water into the basin. The clean water flushes out the dirty water.

We then express our joy for this clean fresh water that cleanses and quenches thirst by singing songs about water or about unity.

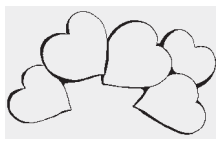
We end by inventing games, songs or dances, celebrating water, rain... We use our rain stick to bring rain over dry land... We imitate the noise of the rain by tapping the table, gently or more strongly, with one finger or the whole hand. We sing a song of thanks for rain : e.g. « *It's beginning to rain, rain, rain* », then we may give reasons for being thankful for water : « ... *Because it waters my lettuce...* », « ... *Because it cools my face...* », « ... *Because it cleanses my heart...* ».

► Meal or snack

For this meal or snack, we could simply drink fresh water and eat home made bread, according to the traditions of our country. This bread could be buttered or eaten with other good things.

We slip our little fish bearing the name of a new friend to pray for in our «friendship bag»!

BETWEEN NOW AND THE NEXT MEETING : A FEW SUGGESTIONS



▶ The time of fidelity

◆ *Within small groups of friendship*

During the week of prayer for Unity of Christians, we are invited to be prayerful and open in a way that is in accordance with the practice of our own Church. We can all participate together in a celebration of ecumenical prayer or we can pray for unity from the bottom of our heart. We could visit a priest or a minister from another Christian denomination and talk with him/her about Faith and Light. Or we could send a message of friendship to a Faith and Light community of another denomination, in another country.

If our group of friendship is in charge of the welcoming for the February gathering, we'll prepare a «*path of light*» for each one. On a small card we will draw a path lined with candles, one for each day of the month. Another group will prepare the candles that will be given to each one at the end of the celebration. We may use small transparent containers, of all colours...

◆ *In our personal life*

Let's look for a book on ecumenism, e.g. «*Pilgrims together, a vision of ecumenism*» by Jean Vanier, or the booklets by the Ecumenical Committee, especially: «*Ecumenism, a gift of friendship*»¹, which contains testimonies. Let us read a few pages each day and keep them in our heart.

A beautiful icon can also be set in our prayer corner, with a small candle lit next to it; we can then say the prayer for unity (Re. Appendix 8, page 93), or simply and gently repeat: «*Father, make us one*».

1. These documents are available from the Faith and Light International Secretariat. Some extracts have been published on the web: www.foietlumiere.org

January



As a coordinating team

If we haven't done it yet, let's remember to answer the evaluation questionnaire for this year's Guidelines.

Next month is the feast of Faith and Light. Preparation for this feast will certainly take more time than usual, so let's see to it that the tasks are shared among the members of the community.

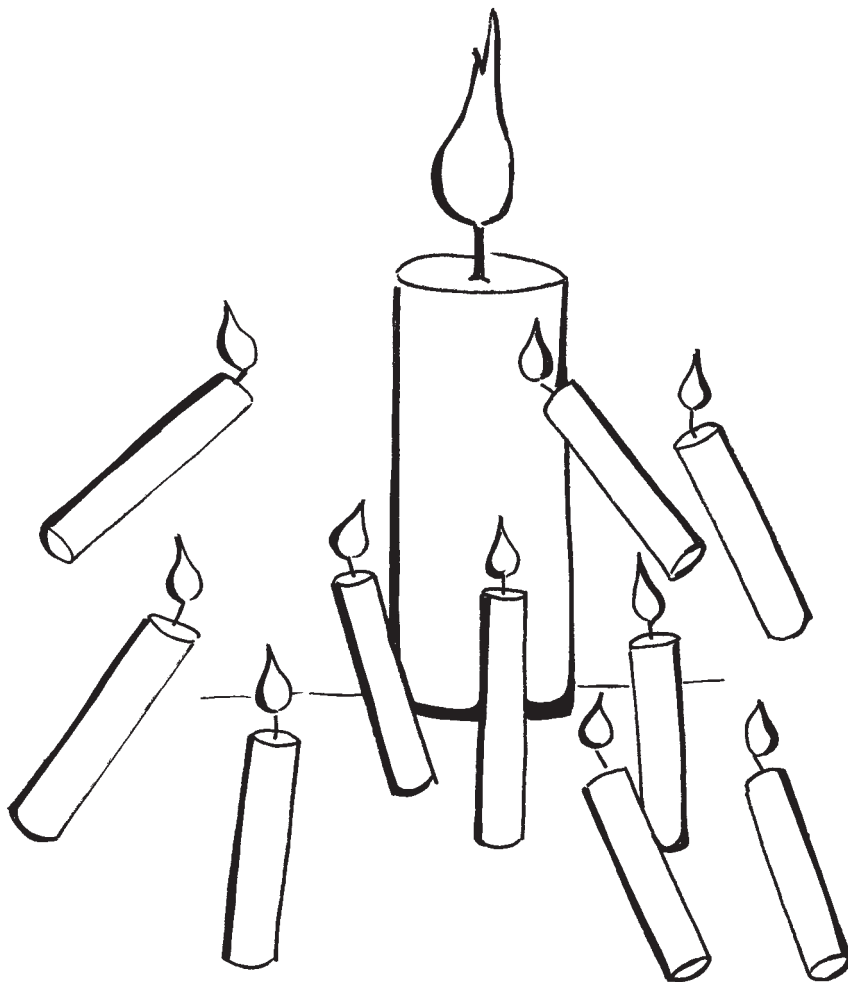
What have we planned? A celebration with our parish, or our local church? Joining with other Faith and Light communities? Inviting young friends, new families, members of our parish to join us? Could each member of our community bring a friend, someone in his/her family...? Will we have one or several witnesses about Faith and Light? Photos pinned on boards? Food to be shared? Candles to be given as presents?... How beautiful the light that reveals beautiful faces glowing in the night: why not celebrate in the evening around a table lit up by many candles (maybe one for each person)?

Let's ask three persons from the community: a friend, a person with a handicap, and a family member to prepare a very concrete witness that could touch the heart: «*How has Faith and Light changed my heart, brought me light, given a new meaning to my life?*». The witness will bring an object he/she thinks is the symbol of his/her testimony.

Let us think of bringing one large candle, and smaller ones for each member of the community and for our guests.

Jesus, Light of the World

(Jn 8, 12-59)



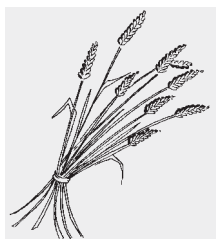
February



Welcome and gathering anew

The community and its guests meet for Eucharist or a worship service in the local church or parish, preferably in the evening.

At the end of the celebration, the welcoming team presents each one a lit candle, and, if possible, all go in procession to the place where the gathering is to be held.



The word

Let us read the Gospel of John 8, 12-59, then proceed to the meditation of Jean Vanier, which can either be read or presented in one's own words:

« **Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.** » (Jn 8, 12).

*We are anguished when we are lost in the night. We risk falling and hurting ourselves. We don't know which direction to take. Jesus says that he is the light of the world. Once we see a light in the night we are no longer lost; we see a path that leads to salvation. Jesus is the light because he gives meaning to life and to history. The danger for humanity is division, rivalry and competition that lead to the refusal to communicate, to violence, to conflict and to war. And in wars there are so many losers and victims. **Jesus came to show us the only way that leads to peace and happiness : love, compassion, kindness, welcome, community.***

We, human beings, are so self-centred, closed up in ourselves and in our group. We seem to be unable to open up to others who are different by their way of life, or their Church, their culture or their religion or by their disabilities and their difficulties. We build walls around our hearts.

Jesus came not only to show us the way but also **to give us the means to live this way. He promises to send us the Holy Spirit**, the Spirit of Love, to change our hearts of stone into hearts of flesh. Only the Holy Spirit enables us to love those who are different and to forgive when we have been hurt.

Jesus is the Bread of Life, the Water of Life, the Light of Life. In his person, there is

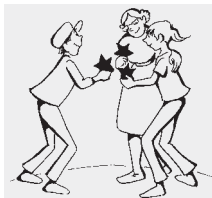
February

the peace, the water, the light that give us the very life of God. Through his presence in our hearts, we can love as he loves.

Jesus also says : « If you make my word your home, you are truly my disciples and you will come to know the truth, and the truth will set you free » (Jn8,31).

*When we welcome Jesus' message of love, when we hold the word of God like a treasure in our hearts, we are truly his disciples ; we know the reality of God, of the world and of history. We no longer remain enclosed in our ideas, our plans or our illusions. The danger for each one of us is to be afraid of reality, to run away from reality : the reality of God, the reality of our world with all its sufferings and divisions, the reality of our community and of others. So quickly we seek distractions, we seek to escape into our plans. Reality so often disturbs us. But **Jesus wants us to look at reality as he sees it, with his eyes, with his goodness.** Then we are no longer slaves of what others think of us, slaves of our fears, our anxieties, our need to seem better than others, slaves of our depression and of our sadness.*

Faith and Light has been given as a light in our societies and in each one of our Churches, **to reveal the beauty and the truth of persons who are weak, to show the value, the heart and the love of their parents and their friends.** Faith and Light has been given to us by Jesus to show us a way that helps us to know and love them better.



Sharing

▶ Together

We listen to the testimonies of three members of the community. After each one of the witnesses has spoken, he/she places at the centre of our circle the symbol of his/her testimony. This is when we all sing a song about the gift of light.

These testimonies (or fioretti) invite us to get deeper into the message of Faith and Light. They can also act as light for our guests to join us as members.

We place our large candle in the middle of our circle. We can take out the small cardboard figures we made in September and write on them the names of our guests. We then each get a little candle and place it in the middle, next to the big one.

February

This is the Feast of Light all over in the world. The leader can say a few words on the international dimension of Faith and Light (Re. Appendix 10 : Faith and Light across the world, page 95). Now is the time to start getting ready for the coming «*Announcement and Sharing Day*», while explaining its importance (Re. Appendix 9, page 94).

◆ In sharing groups

- ◆ Was I ever in the dark ? What did I do about it ?
- ◆ Did the community help bring me some light ?
- ◆ What light do I have that I can share ?
- ◆ Is there a person, famous or not well known, who is a bearer of light to me ? Who ?
- ◆ How could our community be a light for the world, for our Churches, our parish, our neighbourhood... ?



Prayer «*Jesus, my light*»

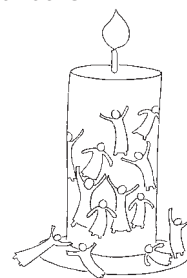
We sit in a circle around the large lit candle. Two or three from the team light the small candles from the large one and hand them around so everybody gets one. The leader then reads the Gospel of Luke 2, 25-32. It can then be mimed. The leader explains the words of Simeon about light. Each one takes his/her small candle and exchanges it with many others saying : «*The light of Jesus*».

Prayers of petition with a response may be said, as well as the prayer below, for all those who are in the darkness of suffering. We sing another song about light.

A prayer

«*O God, give light to my heart and light to my tomb,
light to my hearing and light to my eyesight,
light to my flesh,
light to my blood and light to my bones,
light ahead of me, light behind me,
light to my right, light to my left,
light above me, light beneath me.
O God, increase light and give me the greatest of all lights.
Give me the light coming from your grace, O All-merciful.*»

(«*Al-Ghazali*» Moslem prayer)



▶ Prayer of the poor

We sit in a circle holding in our open hands the small candle we have just been given. The leader may read again Appendix 4 (page 88). We repeat our word of love, e.g.: « *Jesus, my light* ».



Fiesta

In order to celebrate light, we could have a meal in the evening around the candles. A lit candle glows much better in the dark than in broad daylight. Isn't this fragile candle a symbol of the presence of Faith and Light in the world?

The welcoming team will have placed on each plate the « *path of light* » prepared by the small friendship group beforehand. The leader explains that, every day, we will colour one little flame of the small candles drawn along the path.

We can then sing or play games that everybody knows, adapted to our guests. Everyone will enjoy songs with gestures and refrain that are easy to learn.

There are two things to slide into our friendship bag this month: our small candle and our « *path of light* »!

BETWEEN NOW AND THE NEXT MEETING : A FEW SUGGESTIONS

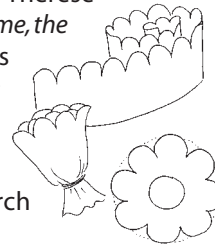


▶ The time of fidelity

◆ *Within small groups of friendship*

Together, we think about love and mercy. We can meditate on this quotation from Thérèse of the Child Jesus: « *Do not be afraid. The poorer you become, the more Jesus will love you* ». Or else, from Father Thomas Philippe: « *The little one has no other wealth than the love of his Father* ».

We make beautiful paper flowers of all colours, which we'll use to decorate the cross of pardon for our March gathering.



February

If our group is in charge of the welcoming for March, we can prepare a « topsy-turvy » game (Re. Welcome for the month of March, hereafter page 54).

◆ *In our personal life*

Every day, we colour the flame of one little candle that is drawn on our path of light, and, if we may, we light our real candle, saying : « *Jesus, today, I will be your light* ».



As a coordinating team

It is always important for the members of a community to live a time of reconciliation. It could be through celebrating the washing of the feet (Re.

Appendix 6, page 90), through a reconciliation celebration lived as a community, through a personal moment of sharing and prayer with a priest or a minister... It could also be a wonderful opportunity for Catholic members to receive the sacrament of Reconciliation. Whatever we choose, let us prepare the coming celebration with the greatest care.

This is an opportunity offered for each one to make a self-evaluation, and for the whole community as well. Reconciliation cannot be only an intellectual exercise. What can we do to affirm that it is, first of all, an experience of the heart ?

We prepare a large and beautiful cross that will be used during the time of sharing, and small labels for the paper flowers.

We could all do a mime on the gospel of the adulterous woman. This would put us on the right way to the Reconciliation. The text of Jean Vanier may be read. All condemning the adulterous woman will be men.

Jesus then forgives the adulterous woman. Those who accused her will come in turn to beg Jesus' forgiveness for the harshness of their heart. Then every man find his place back into the community and all rejoice.

Couldn't we all create a new dance of reconciliation? It is important to discover the bond between heart and body.

The evaluation of the guidelines 2003-2004

To be sent to the International Secretariat before 25 February 2004

*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 :

Address :

Country :

Zone :

1. Does the Guidelines of 2003-2004 meet all your requirements ?

2. What do you appreciate **most** ?

3. What do you find **less good** ?

4. What are the **appendices** that you **use** ? (indicate their number)

What are the ones that you **don't use**

5. Has your community **formed small groups of friendship** ?
How are they constituted ?

Who animate them ?

What are their main **activities** ?

What are the **fruits** of the small groups of friendship ?

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

7. Could you describe a **typical meeting** of your community indicating freely what is good, less good, not good ?

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

If possible, it could be of great help for improvement of next year's Guidelines that you tell us what you think about the suggestions given, give us fresh ideas, and inform us of your experiments starting from the present issues.

▶ Welcome

▶ The word

▶ Sharing together

▶ In sharing groups

▶ Prayer

▶ Prayer of the poor

▶ Fiesta

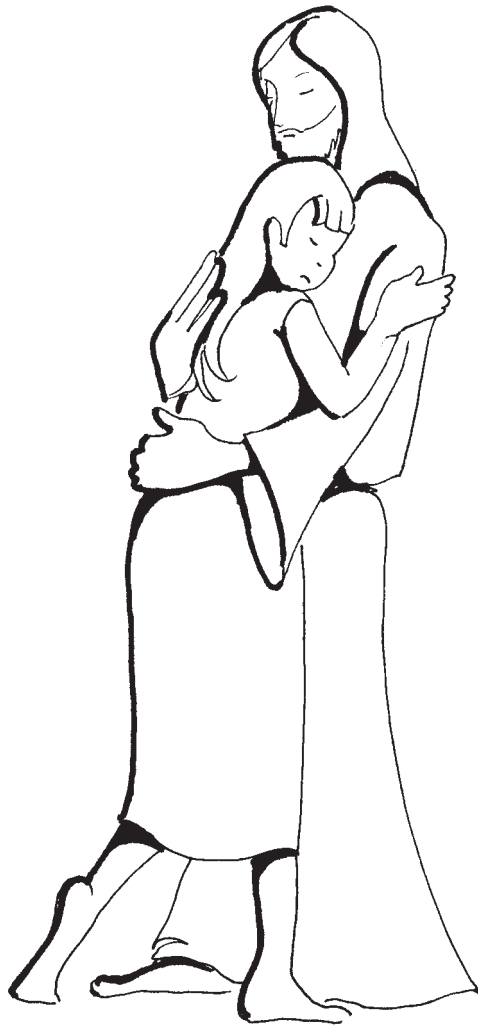
▶ Small groups of friendship

▶ Living Faith and Light in our daily life

▶ As a coordinating team

**«Neither do I
condemn you»**

(Jn 8, 1-11)



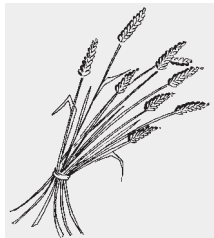
March



Welcome and gathering anew

The team in charge of welcome has prepared a « topsy-turvy » game that everyone is invited to play as they arrive: a pyramid of empty tin cans is to be hit off balance with a soft ball, a ball made of socks or of paper, thrown from a set distance.

The name of a sin may be written on each of the cans.



The word

We read the Gospel of John 8, 1-11, then Jean Vanier's meditation may either be read or presented in one's own words :

Jesus is teaching in the Temple. Suddenly there is a great noise. A group of men enter dragging a woman who is probably half naked ; they place her in front of Jesus and tell him : « This woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. Moses says that a woman like this should be stoned. And you, what do you say ? ». These men are seeking to embarrass Jesus who frequently speaks about God's forgiveness. They want to trap him. They want to discredit him because more and more people speak of him as the Messiah. If Jesus says, as he usually does, that she must be forgiven, he is contradicting Moses. If on the other hand, he affirms the law of Moses, he is contradicting himself.

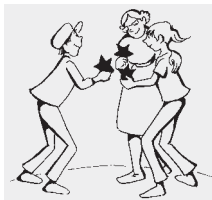
Jesus doesn't say anything. He bends down and writes on the ground with his finger. The men persist : « What have you got to say ? ». Jesus gets up, looks at them and says : « Let the one among you who is without sin throw the first stone ». The men go away, one by one, beginning with the eldest who should have thrown the first stone.

Jesus remains there, alone with the woman and he says : « Woman, where are they ? Has any one condemned you ? No on, she replies. Jesus says to her : Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more ».

What tenderness in these words ! Jesus loves these men even if they have wounded his heart. He does not criticize them ; he does not judge them. He wants to

reveal to them, by his word of light, that sin is in them ; he wants them to become aware of this. There is such tenderness in his words to the woman ! He asks a question as if he did not know : 'Where are they ?' Then says : 'Neither do I condemn you.'

Jesus did not come to condemn, but to give life. **He wants all his children to be united to him and through him to the Father.** Jesus is not saying that adultery is not a sin. On the contrary, he says : « Go and sin no more ». **He wants to free her from evil and help her to live in truth, love and fidelity.** In John's Gospel, sin is essentially not to believe in Jesus, in his goodness, in his presence, in his desire to come to our help. When we are with Jesus, united to him, we sin no more.



Sharing

► Together

Persons with a handicap, their parents, brothers and sisters often experience judgement and rejection by society, perhaps by professionals, neighbours... Each one of us has experienced, at one time or another, judgement or accusation that makes us lose confidence and feel guilty. Each of us may, at some time, have passed judgement on others.

Let our reflection focus on this word of Jesus : « *Neither do I condemn you* ». Are we able to forgive as Jesus did on the Cross, when he said : « *Father, forgive them ; for they do not know what they are doing* » (Lk 23, 34) ?

A cross is laid on a beautiful piece of fabric, rug, or mat in the middle of our circle. The paper flowers made by the small group of friendship are in a large basket. Each one picks one, then fastens to it a label on which he/she writes the name of a person to whom he/she wants to forgive everything, and then places it on the cross.

► In sharing groups

- ◆ Have I ever felt judged ?
- ◆ Am I ever tempted to judge others ?
- ◆ Who can help me to forgive and to ask for forgiveness ?

March



Prayer « *Jesus, our friend,
forgives us seventy times seven times* »

▶ **Celebration of the washing of the feet**

The celebration of the washing of the feet is a sacred gesture. Its meaning and the way it is to be done are explained in detail in Appendix 6 (page 90).

Today, the leader will put the emphasis on Jesus who washes the feet of all who will abandon him or even betray him. This is Lent, the time for penance and reconciliation.



At the end, we can sing « *Our Father* » which holds the words : « *Forgive us our trespasses* ».

▶ **Or Community celebration starting with the mime of the parable of the adulterous woman**

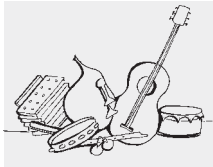
▶ **Or personal sharing and prayer with a priest or a minister**

▶ **Or Sacrament of Reconciliation**

Whenever possible, it is good to invite one or two priests or ministers, other than the community chaplain, so that each one has the opportunity to meet with a priest or minister of his/her choosing. Paper flowers may be available for the priest or minister to give those to whom he/she has granted pardon in the name of Jesus. He/she could give a small lit candle. After one is pardoned, he/she may go wash his/her face in a beautiful basin placed near the cross, and put down his/her candle next to it...

▶ **Prayer of the poor**

We sit in a circle. The leader may read Appendix 4 (page 88). Each one is holding a small glass. The leader pours a little water into it. Each one then drinks slowly whispering his/her word of love, for instance : « *Jesus, cleanse me* ».



Fiesta

This is the dance of reconciliation! Although this is Lent, we are full of joy because God has forgiven us. Let us be creative and spontaneous to express the joy of reconciliation. We can, for instance, choose a catchy

tune to start a beautiful farandole (form a human chain and follow the leader weaving around the room in a dance) ending up in a round. We come two by two to the middle of the round for a step or two of dance, then hug each other and return to our place, and so on until everybody is finished. At any time, the round may be stopped and all clap their hands to the rhythm of the music... We now catch our breath, standing in a circle and holding hands. We pleasantly smile or nod to each other, a way to tell our neighbour: thank you for having danced with me. And if we have still have energy, why not start now one of our favourite dances!

▶ Meal or snack

We can share a bowl of rice or soup, or just a simple snack to live together a time of fasting and sharing: the price for a full meal will be given as an offering to the Faith and Light communities in the poorest countries in the world. Of course, everyone will be invited to give generously: «*Happy is the one who gives with joy!*».

We then organise the «*Announcement and Sharing Day*» distributing the tasks among the small friendship groups.

Our «friendship bag» is becoming full of signs of friendship with Jesus: today, we add our paper flower.

Let's not forget to ask each one to bring some decoration for Easter, so that our meeting room will be really beautiful next time!

BETWEEN NOW AND THE NEXT MEETING : A FEW SUGGESTIONS



▶ The time of fidelity

◆ *Within small groups of friendship*

The small groups of friendship get together for a simple meal and to pray together to prepare themselves for the Easter celebration.

March

In Catholic communities, if it has not yet been possible to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation, they could all go together to a church where a priest would be available. If this is impossible, we may reflect together about how to make possible that each one benefit from this grace.

The team in charge of the welcoming for April will prepare for each one a small bottle of perfumed oil, or a little bouquet of fragrant dried flowers, or a small bag of spices, or, perhaps, a piece of sandalwood...

Another group will find a large shepherd's staff, which will be used for the times of prayer and fiesta.

◆ *In our personal life*

Every morning, we pray for someone we have a hard time loving. We say to Jesus: « *Jesus, please bless (the first name of the person)* ».



As a coordinating team

The Good Shepherd is such a familiar theme we might be tempted to go over it a little too quickly, thinking that it is « *déjà vu* ». But it is, in fact, one of the

main themes of formation in Faith and Light. Couldn't we now spend a little time with it and do some thinking about this theme? What does it mean for each of us to be a « good shepherd »? We see friends growing, suffering, sometimes rebelling, other times rejoicing. How do we live all of this? What support do we have available to us so that we can accompany them? Who is the « good shepherd » we need as a coordinating team and individually?

The Good Shepherd

(Jn 10)



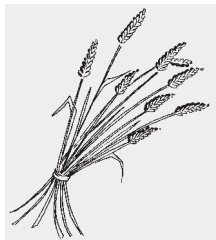
April



Welcome and gathering anew

The shepherd who knows each one of his sheep by name, gathers his « flock », personally greets each, and offers him/her a scented object : a small piece of fragrant soap, a small fragrant candle, a piece of sandalwood...

Each one will have brought something for the celebration : Easter eggs, drinks, flowers, leaves... The room is then decorated to make it look festive. The welcoming team teaches all a mimed song about the Resurrection.



The word

We read from the gospel of John 10,3-5 and 11-16 then proceed to the meditation of Jean Vanier, which can either be read or is presented in one's own words :

*In this chapter, Jesus' love for each one of us is revealed in a special way. **Jesus came to guide us, to nourish us, to protect us, to give us life and watch over us.***

He knows each one of us by our name. He is the Good Shepherd who gives his life for his sheep. The Jewish people and Christians love to sing the psalm :

**« The Lord is my shepherd, there is nothing I shall want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures
By still waters he leads me to revive my spirit »** (Ps 23).

Ezekiel reveals that the good shepherd searches for the lost sheep, brings back the stray, bandages the injured and makes the sick strong (Ez. 34, 16). But the goodness of Jesus goes even further. He is the Good Shepherd who is also the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world (Jn 1, 29). He gives his life by offering himself on the cross. He allows himself to be condemned, scourged and crucified. Then this Good Shepherd prays : « Father, forgive them for they know not what they do » (Lk 29, 34). In his passion and his crucifixion Jesus became the littlest, the weakest, the poorest, the most suffering of humankind so that the walls that prevent us from loving God and the others collapse. He really wants to be the Good Shepherd of humanity and of each one of us personally. In this chapter Jesus tells us :

« The Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me; I lay it down of my own free will, and as I have power to lay it down, so I have power to take it up again » (Jn 10, 17-19).

Jesus lays down his life, and then takes it up again on the day of the Resurrection. He has conquered death, sin, all the powers of evil. Jesus, risen at the Father's side is the Good Shepherd who brought Faith and Light to birth in 1971. **He asks us to let ourselves be guided by Him and to be good shepherds for one another.**



Sharing

► Together

Together, we can go over Jean Vanier's beautiful meditation on the Good Shepherd (everybody gets a copy); then each in turn tells what sentence moved him/her most and why.

Jesus came so we have life and have it in abundance. Those who are able, now lie down on the floor. Then someone wearing an alb enters the room and cries out loudly: « Come to me! I am the Good Shepherd. I will make you lie down in green pastures. I know each of you by name. I want to gather all of you into only one flock. I lay down my life for you ».

Then, all stand up and sing a joyful song.

► In sharing groups

Let's read once more Psalm 23.

- ◆ What can we learn from the way flocks are kept in our country?
- ◆ How does Jesus take care of me?
- ◆ What do I need most today?
- ◆ How can I learn to be a good shepherd?



Prayer « Jesus, I am your lamb »

We sit in a circle. The leader explains what the work of a shepherd is and then reads the Gospel of John 10, 1-15. He/she puts the accent on Jesus' tenderness. Jesus teaches us how to become a good shepherd. We are

April



Beau-ti- ful, beau-ti- ful,
Mer- veil-leux, mer- veil-leux,



Je- sus is beau-ti- ful, and
Jé- sus est mer- veil- leux, et



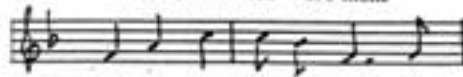
Je- sus makes beau-ti- ful
Jé- sus rend mer- veil-leux



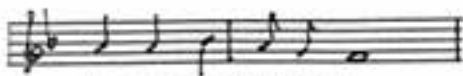
things of my life,
tout dans ma vie,



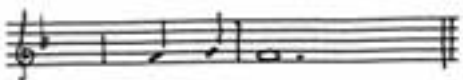
care-ful-ty touch-ing me
me tou-chant ten- dre-ment



cau-sing my eyes to see. And
ou- vrant mes yeux tout grands. Et



Je- sus makes beau-ti- ful
Jé- sus rend mer- veil-leux



things of my life.
tout dans ma vie.

His apprentices. In order to become a good shepherd it is necessary to be a good lamb of Jesus.

Our prayer together is the song «*Beautiful...*», with gestures, that many already know (and that will soon be available on video):

We may choose another song, Psalm 23 for example.

► Prayer of the poor

We sit in a circle. The leader may read Appendix 4 (page 88). The symbol of fragrance is then explained. The Apostle Paul wrote: «*But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads in every place the fragrance that comes from knowing him. For we are the aroma of Christ to God...*» (II Cor 2, 14-15). The leader goes on anointing each person's hands with a few drops of fragrant oil. And we say our word of love to Jesus, for instance: «*Jesus, my hands, your hands*».



Fiesta

A merry tune carries us away while we start playing a very simple game : we just follow the good shepherd. We can't miss him because he carries a staff. Every time the staff changes hands, we follow the new shepherd. It's fun, but it also shows us it's not always that easy to follow the good shepherd! We end the game standing in a circle and passing the staff around and saying at the same time : «*Lord, make me a good shepherd*».

► Meal or snack

The shepherd calls each one by his/her name and shows him/her to a seat around the table. We sing a song about friendship (for instance, «*My friends, let's sing all our joy!*»). We express how happy we are to have been called by the shepherd to be members of the large Faith and Light family. In the middle of the meal (or snack), there comes the surprise! Jesus (e.g. the community coordinator) comes into the room wearing a long white tunic and says with a loud voice : «*Now stop! I have a very important request to make to you. All of you have agreed to follow me. What are you going to do now so that, you too, become good shepherds?*» To all those who tell about their plans, their ideas, Jesus hands his staff while they are speaking...



He then gives explanations and, if possible, gives each small group of friendship a particular task for the next gathering. It may be : «*I am entrusting you with the task of preparing the time of sharing*» ; to another one : «*... preparing the fiesta*», and so on. Singing and dancing now express our joy in honour of Jesus risen from the dead who fills us with new life. The little fragrant gifts received at the beginning of the gathering are now exchanged. Everything we get is preciousely stored in our «*friendship bag*».

BETWEEN NOW AND THE NEXT MEETING : A FEW SUGGESTIONS



► The time of fidelity

◆ *Within small groups of friendship*

If possible, the small friendship groups participate in the preparation of the gathering for the month of May : sharing, games, mimes, prayers, and so on. This way we all become apprentice shepherds.

April

We can visit those who were not able to attend the last gathering, tell them how we lived this happy moment, and offer them a little bottle of fragrant oil. The small group of friendship in charge of the welcome for May will make very simple white scarves, which will be given to each one at the beginning of the gathering. Another small group will prepare balloons of all colours, which will be used at the time of sharing, and will also gather some little feathers for the time of prayer.

◆ *In our personal life*

Every morning, I rub the palms of my hands with fragrant oil and say: « *Jesus, my hands, your hands* ».



As a coordinating team

For the next gathering we again propose to you a mime or a workshop but this time about the Resurrection. Explore this together following the

explanations given for November (page 23)

Our wish is that you use very simple gestures rather than miming a story. Let's help each other! No one is to be left out. Whenever possible, let's encourage, let's draw out those who have the most difficulty to express themselves. Let's avoid giving them pre-determined responses or gestures to be imitated!

True enough, leading this kind of activity requires some gift, but it is also something that can be learned with the support and encouragement of the community, as well as through formation sessions.

The creativity of young friends may be of great assistance! Let's just ask them for help!

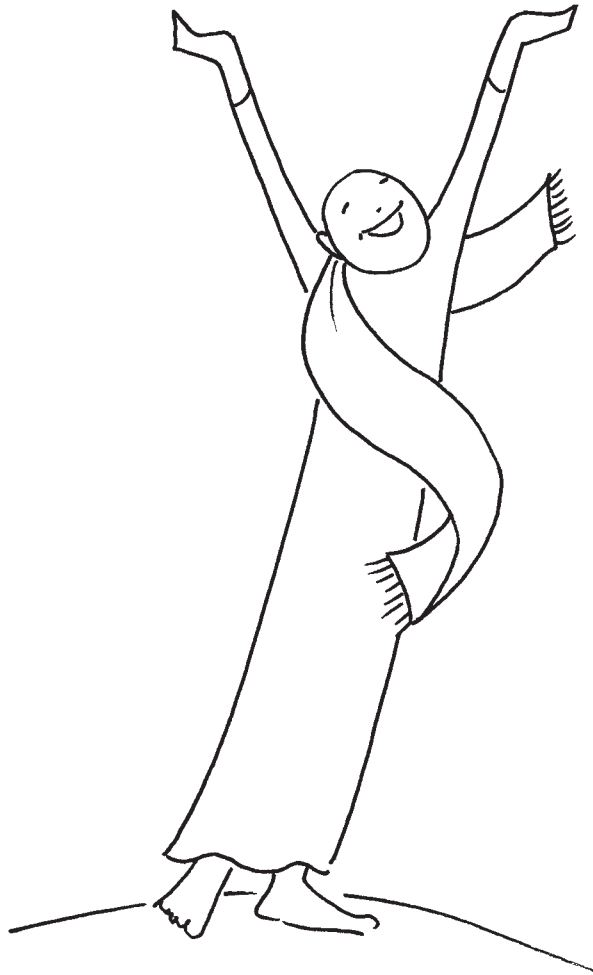
And if we still do not have small groups of friendship, why not ask other members of the community, particularly young friends, to prepare the next gathering? It is well within our duty as shepherd to call on new members, especially young ones, to get more involved. Let's give them a check-list and a copy of these Guidelines, if they don't have it yet, and let's trust them! They know that we can help them if the need arises!

Let us use this time, since others are preparing the gathering, to reflect on ways to call each member to grow and to take responsibility in the community.

May

The resurrection of Lazarus and the gift of the Holy Spirit

(Jn 11)



May

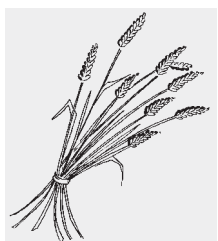


Welcome and gathering anew

The room will have been decorated with the coloured balloons prepared by the coordinating team or a small friendship group. Each one is welcomed by a member of the welcoming team who says : « *May the Holy Spirit be with you !* » The person who offers this greeting then

gently blows over each newcomer, places a hand under his/her chin and ties a white scarf or ribbon around his/her neck.

In the background, a beautiful chant, such as Taizé's « *Veni Sancte Spiritu* » or another meditative music about the Holy Spirit is being played.



The word

Let us choose and read a passage from the Gospel of John (e.g.: Jn 11, 1-3 and 32-44) and then Jean Vanier's meditation may be read or is presented in one's own words.

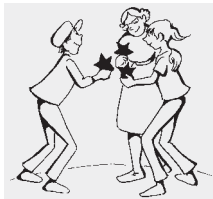
*This chapter of John is very moving. Jesus comes across as so deeply human and at the same time so divine. Martha and Mary of Bethany have just lost their brother Lazarus. Jesus is touched by the grief and the questions of Martha and deeply moved by the pain and the tears of Mary of Bethany. « Jesus weeps and is deeply disturbed. ». He shows us how close he is to each one of us when we suffer. Then Jesus calls Lazarus to leave the tomb and Lazarus comes out. This shows the divinity of Jesus. **He is the Son of God, Master of life and death.** The resurrection of Lazarus echoes the prophecies of Ezekiel (Ez 37). The prophet had a vision or a dream in which he saw a valley full of dry bones. God asked him to prophesy over these bones which gradually got up, were covered with flesh and became a multitude of persons standing up and alive.*

Afterwards, God interprets this vision for Ezekiel :

*« Son of Man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They keep saying "our bones are dry, our hope is destroyed ; we are finished." So, prophesy. Say to them, "The Lord Yahweh says this : I am going to open your graves ; I shall raise you from your graves, my people, and lead you back to the land of Israel... **I will put my spirit within you and you shall live** " » (Ez 37,11-14).*

Don't these dry bones represent our humanity today without hope? Because of their inner emptiness, many men and women throw themselves into short-term projects and seek pleasure, distractions and passing successes. They have lost the deeper meaning of life. But this inner emptiness, this race to fill it up with momentary things, aren't these in all of us? Aren't there parts of our selves hidden behind the stone of our inner tomb?

*Jesus sends the Holy Spirit over us to make us fully alive. He said to Nicodemus that we could not enter into the Kingdom of God unless we are « born from above », of water and of the Spirit. **Don't we all have the desire to be reborn, to begin again without the weight of our past, of our habits, of our selfish tendencies? The Holy Spirit comes to renew us, to change our hearts of stone into hearts of flesh.***



Sharing

► Together

The Holy Spirit comes to renew us, to change our hearts of stone into hearts of flesh. He wants to fill us with his gifts. Jesus gives us the Holy Spirit so that we may be resurrected.

The leader explains what the gifts of the Holy Spirit are : wisdom, understanding, counsel, strength, knowledge, piety, fear of God. We can also choose the fruit of the Spirit according to St Paul : love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Gal 5, 22).

We can do a mime of resurrection : we are closed up in ourselves, sad, lonely. Jesus comes to get us out of our tomb, to open us up to life and to the love of our brothers and sisters. The mystery of life has meaning only in the face of death, day contrasts with night, rigidity is the opposite of flexibility and spontaneity. These can be expressed by contrasts such as : tied up hands to free hands, hands that push others back to arms that welcome, bent back or tucked in shoulders to cleared chest and raised arms, sleep to awakening. There are times when resurrection comes very gently, through slow movements, events that are hardly noticeable, or at least gradual. At other times, it comes all of a sudden. Let's find out ! Let's not be afraid to let movement free us...

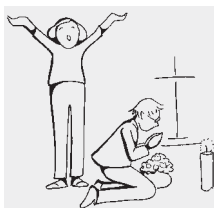
May

▶ In sharing groups

We can reflect together, and name the gift of the person beside us and write it on a small label that will be attached to one of the balloons. The gift of each may also be written on his/her white scarf.

Jesus calls us to a new life, a life of resurrection. We may share about these questions:

- ◆ What gift could I ask the Holy Spirit to grant me?
- ◆ What does it mean to « *be resurrected* »?
- ◆ Who can breathe new life into our hearts?
- ◆ Was there a time when my life took a turn in another direction?
- ◆ Do we know a person whose life has been changed, has been converted to love, as if has been « *resurrected* »?



Prayer « *Holy Spirit, breath of life* »

We sit in a circle. All the balloons have been placed in the middle. Each of us, speaking aloud, personally thanks the Lord for the gift he/she has been given, or has asked for.

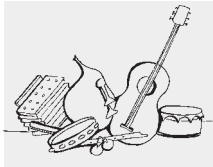
We can read together or meditate on this prayer of Saint Augustine:

« *Holy Spirit, breathe in me, so that I may think of what is holy,
Holy Spirit, act in me so that I may do what is holy,
Holy Spirit, give me strength so that I may keep what is holy,
Holy Spirit, keep me so that I may never lose what is Holy.* »

▶ Prayer of the poor

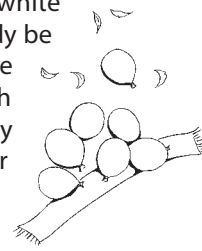
The leader may read once more Appendix 4 (page 88). We set a little feather as light as the wind in the palm of our hands. We say our word of love: « *Come, Holy Spirit!* »

At the end of our prayer, all together, we blow our little feather towards the balloons on which the gifts of each one are written, and we watch it slowly flutter. We sing a song of thanks.



Fiesta

We can draw or paint a representation of the Holy Spirit (a flame, a bird...) on the white scarf on which our gift may already be written. Then we can tie all the scarves together in a long band. We all hold it with both our hands, we turn, we dance to a joyful tune to the glory of the Holy Spirit who fills us with his gifts and binds our community with his Love.



▶ Meal or snack

We can set a nice table which will remind us of our eternal wedding feast, the communion with heaven : white tablecloth, red candles... all according to our traditions.

This month, our « friendship bag » is filled with new treasures : our white scarf and that little feather we can set in our prayer corner, next to our icon of Jesus and his friend Mena.

We ask each one to bring a picture of himself/herself the next time.

BETWEEN NOW AND THE NEXT MEETING : A FEW SUGGESTIONS



▶ The time of fidelity

◆ *Within small groups of friendship*

To deepen our faith, we invite our chaplain, a priest or a minister to help us meet Jesus in the Scriptures.

If our small friendship group is in charge of the time of welcome for the month of June, we may make a panel on which is written : « *I was born to love and be loved* ».

Another group could make a big heart and many small hearts of all colours, which will be used at prayer time.

May

◆ *In our personal life*

Every morning upon waking up, I think of the coming day and of what I have to do. I ask myself: « *Is there a moment in my day when I will give life ?* ».



As a coordinating team

The gospel of the man who had been blind from birth could awake some feelings of guilt among some of us. Let's take time to reflect on and deepen in

the way we conduct the time of sharing.

If, for us, the time of vacation is coming, have we thought of those who do not have any plans ? It is a long time to spend one or two months without a visit with a friend, without an activity that we eagerly wait for and that we will always remember !

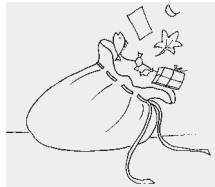
June

The man blind from birth

(Jn 9)

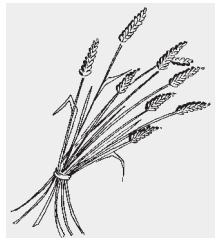


June



Welcome and gathering anew

The welcome team has set up in middle of the room the panel on which is written : « *I was born to love and be loved.* » Each one, upon arrival, is asked to stick his/her picture on it.



The word

We read the gospel of John 9, 1-13, then Jean Vanier's meditation may be read or is presented in one's own words :

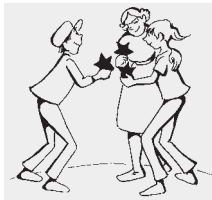
*Jesus is coming out of the Temple with his disciples. Jesus knows that he and his message are not wanted, that people want to exclude him. There is even talk about arresting and killing him. Jesus, the excluded one, is drawn to this beggar who is also excluded. The disciples ask Jesus a burning question : « Why was this man born with a disability ? Whose fault was it ? Is it because of his sins or the sins of his parents ? » A father once told me that when he saw his child's disability at birth, he cried out : « What have I done for God to give me such a misfortune ? » The disciples' question is also a real question today. Jesus replies : « **Neither he nor his parents sinned ; it is so that the works of God might be revealed in him** » (Jn 9,3). What are these « works of God » that he talks about ? Is it not love ? God is Love. **This man, like each one of us, was born to manifest love ; he was born to love and be loved.***

These words of Jesus are at the heart of the vision of Faith and Light. The people with disabilities are there so that the works of God might be manifested, that is to say, love. They have been born, like each of us, to welcome and to give love.

Jesus heals this man. After the healing John describes a marvellous scene. A group of Pharisees become more and more closed. They refuse to accept the reality and the consequences of this reality ; they become more and more blind. On the other hand the healed man becomes more and more clear-sighted. In the beginning, he speaks of the « man called Jesus », then he says that Jesus is « a prophet », that he « comes from God » and finally he believes in Jesus and gives witness to his belief in front of the Pharisees. The Pharisees throw him out. This man is excluded once again, but now it is because of his « yes » to Jesus. Jesus

approaches him and the healed blind man becomes His disciple. He lives this Beatitude: «Blessed are those who are persecuted because of me» (Matt 5, 1).

Each one of us may get closed off from reality, live in illusions about ourselves, about others and about the culture and religion of others. **So quickly we judge, even condemn others; we don't make the effort to listen to them, to really meet them as persons.** We live enclosed in prejudices and, because of this, we see less and less clearly. **When we become a friend of Jesus, we make efforts to see reality and others as Jesus sees them.**



Sharing

► Together

We can relive the scene of the healing of the blind man.

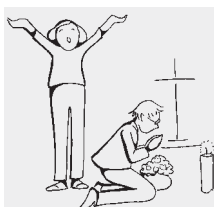
How difficult it is when we are diminished by a disease or handicap to let ourselves be consoled! When we are in despair, we do not see clearly, we do not understand, we have a hard time accepting. Sometimes we rebel. We look for someone to blame: God? Others? Myself? Going through all these reactions is quite normal.

The leader explains that disease or handicaps are great misfortunes, but that the greatest misfortune is not to be loved. Jesus wants to give us his heart for love. Sometimes we are «blind», not understanding what is happening within us and around us. We even not want to acknowledge the light that is brought to us. The healing Jesus speaks about is a transformation which gives an entirely different meaning to what we experience. We see things in another way, from a different angle, with more depth.

► In sharing groups

- ◆ What would I want Jesus to heal in me?
- ◆ Why am I afraid of opening up, of taking the first step?
- ◆ What are the dark corners of my heart that a friend has revealed to me?
- ◆ Has life with the community changed something in me?

June



Prayer « *Jesus, help us understand* »

We sit in a circle. A big heart lies on the floor in the middle of the circle. On it are all the small coloured hearts, one for each person. On one side of each heart is written : « *I was born to love and be loved* » ; on the other side is written the first and last name of one of the persons present.

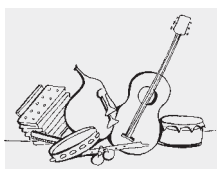
The leader, or the chaplain, calls each one in turn by his/her first name and tells him/her a few words. After four or five have been called, we sing : « *Beautiful...* » because Jesus has opened our eyes wide to the other person's beauty, and also to our own beauty.



We will send a little heart to each person who could not come to the gathering, with their name on it.

◆ Prayer of the poor

We sit two by two, side by side, with our eyes closed. The leader may read Appendix 4 (page 88). Our word of love is : « *Jesus, I open myself to you* ».



Fiesta

◆ The game of the portrait

By a mime, a drawing or an oral description, we describe a beautiful quality of a member of the community. Each person tries to guess who the person is. For each person, we may say or sing : « *Thank you for... (first name of the person)* ».

◆ The game of trust

One person is blindfolded. Another person stands at the back of the blindfolded one and guides him/her. Touch the right shoulder : turn right ; touch the left shoulder : turn left ; touch the head : step straight ahead ; touch the back : step backwards...

▶ Meal or snack

We tell the story of heaven and hell. Both are described as huge dining rooms with very long tables. The chosen ones are sitting face to face across the table, and so are those who are punished. For both the chosen and the punished, an abundance of the most delicious food is placed in front of them on the table.

The guests, in heaven and in hell, all have the same peculiarity : their arms are stiff ; extended horizontally in front of them and they cannot bend them. In hell, those who are punished suffer for eternity the most horrible frustration, because they cannot bring the food to their mouth. What a torture ! On the other hand, in heaven, there is joy for all eternity, because each one with straight arms may serve and nourish the friend across from him/her. It is the joy of love : to love and to let ourselves be loved !

The meal or snack can be an opportunity to experience together the love of heaven or the punishment of hell, where people refuse to love. For a few minutes, we'll live as if we were in hell, facing each other, arms stretched stiff as sticks, unable to bend them... and unable to eat ! Then, we'll imagine all of us are in heaven and, still keeping our arms stretched, we'll gently feed the person facing us and be wonderfully fed in our turn.

Let's not leave without putting our precious little heart in our « friendship bag » !

We will ask each one to bring his/her bag with all friendship treasures from the beginning of the year up to now next time, particularly the white scarf.

BETWEEN NOW AND THE NEXT MEETING : A FEW SUGGESTIONS



▶ The time of fidelity

◆ *Within small groups of friendship*

In small friendship groups we organise a relaxing outing in nature and bring back some souvenir.

Can each one tell about a moment in his/her life where a difficulty, a pain, a sorrow has been transformed by love ? « *The work of God is accomplished...* ».

June

If our group is in charge of the welcome for the next gathering, it will prepare oyster shells or « *treasure boxes* » that will be used during the next meeting. Each will contain a « *pearl* » and a little message (a beautiful sentence), or a drawing, or a word about the treasure of friendship (fidelity, tenderness, patience, sharing, joy...).

◆ *In our personal life*

Every morning, we contemplate the image of Jesus and his friend Mena, decorated with flowers, or a candle... We stay a few moments saying :« *Jesus, you love me* ».



As a coordinating team

We are nearing the end of this new path. How have we lived this year? What are our joys, our sorrows, our frustrations, our hopes... ? It is so important

to make an evaluation of our life as a team, of our work, and of the life of our community. Has fatigue set in, and do we question our involvement? Do we rejoice that our community has grown and has gained more depth? Or is it, perhaps, going through a time of mediocrity where we are comfortably passive? Let's share about this journey we have lived together. Let's ask the Lord for His light and His strength for the small step He asks us to make.

If we live in the Northern Hemisphere, let's do our utmost to hold at least one gathering during the Summer, even if many among us are away on vacation. Let's think of those who don't go away and who need more than ever to get together. The theme for the next month is indeed particularly important for the life of the community.

Let us give thanks to God facing the image of Jesus and his friend Mena.

The meal in Bethany

(Jn 12)

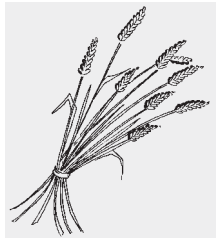


July-August



Welcome and gathering anew

Each one comes with his/her «friendship bag», full of all the symbols of friendship received in the course of the year. The welcoming team offers to each an oyster shell or a small treasure box which will remain closed until prayer time.



The word

We read the gospel of John 12, 1-8, then Jean Vanier's meditation can either be read or is presented in one's own words :

Two months ago, we saw how Jesus responded to Martha's grief and to Mary of Bethany's tears. He raised up their brother Lazarus who had died and been in the tomb for four days. We can imagine the great joy of these two sisters, Martha and Mary. A beautiful festive meal was given in Bethany.

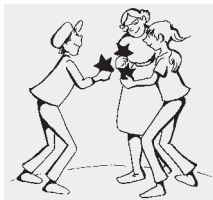
It was during that meal that Mary took « a pound of very costly ointment, pure nard, and with it anointed the feet of Jesus, wiping them with her hair ; the house was filled with the scent of the ointment » (Jn 12, 3-4). Jesus answered Mary of Bethany's prayer for her brother Lazarus. She was so moved, so thankful, that she took the most precious thing she had and poured it over Jesus' feet. The people in the room are dumbfounded by this act inspired by love. Judas, one of the disciples, is particularly shocked. He says : « We could have sold this perfume and given the money to the poor ! » Jesus, however, is so touched by this gesture, that he tells the disciples not to criticise Mary. In Mark's Gospel, Jesus says : « Truly I tell you, wherever the Gospel is proclaimed, throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her » (Mk 14, 9). Jesus strongly defends Mary. It is the only time in the gospel that Jesus speaks like this. Why this attitude of Judas ? How is it that he cannot see the intensity of Mary's love and the way in which she gives all of herself to Jesus ?

*In this very rich chapter, we notice two things : **the importance of the meal and the importance of Mary of Bethany's great love for Jesus.***

In John's Gospel, the public life of Jesus begins with the wedding meal and ends with this family meal in Bethany. Don't we need to reflect on the way in which we

live our family or community meals? **Celebrations are important moments in life.** They are the sign of our joy of being together. **They are also times of thanksgiving, where we are all together as a sign of the bonds that unite us.**

Mary's love: the way she gives and gives herself. We often seek to obtain and possess things. **Mary of Bethany teaches us the importance of giving and of giving ourselves.** We give ourselves when we see the need of others, when we are at their service. **Community life is where we learn to give and give ourselves.**



Sharing

▶ Together

The leader explains the meditation about the meal at Bethany, which is a time of intense and deep friendship. Starting from this passage of the gospel, what is our evaluation of the life of our community in this past year? We can use the evaluation questionnaire (see appendix 11, page 97) or make this reflection in sharing groups. What can we do so that this community will grow? (Not asking ourselves too many questions about what the community can do for us.)

If this is our last gathering before vacation, we could trace or represent a path on the floor with the eleven themes of this past year. The leader could get out of his/her « friendship bag » the various symbols received throughout the year and place them on each of the « monthly stations » representing the different gatherings, recalling what was most important in each gathering. Each one may say what he/she liked the best, and why.

▶ In sharing groups

- ◆ Have I, as Mary did, given something that was very precious to me this year? When? How?
- ◆ What would I do if I found a treasure or won the lottery?
- ◆ What could I, personally, do so that the community grows more in the love of Jesus and of others?

July-August



Prayer « Friendship is a pearl » (Mt 13, 45-46)

A beautiful text from John Henry Newman

« Lord Jesus, help me to spread your perfume everywhere.

Flood my soul with your Spirit and your Life.

Penetrate me and possess all my being so totally that my life be only a radiance of yours.

Shine through me, and be so totally in me

that each soul I come in contact with

feels your presence in my soul.

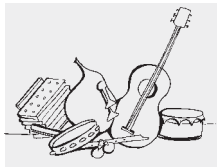
Make all lift their eyes and no longer see me but only You, Jesus. »

All of us sit in a circle round the banner of our community. The leader reads the Gospel about the meal of Jesus at the home of his friends, Mary, Martha and Lazarus (Jn 12, 1-8).

Now we open the oyster shells or the small treasure boxes we have been given at the beginning of the gathering and we find out a « pearl » which symbolises friendship. We also find a little sentence on the beauty of friendship that we read aloud. And we sing a song about friendship, or our community's theme song.

◆ Prayer of the poor

We sit in a circle holding in our hands the opened oyster shell or treasure box. The leader may read once more Appendix 4 (page 88). Our word of love may be: « *Jesus, you are my treasure* ».



Fiesta

All together we can once more take up the friendship dance we did at the beginning of the year. **Let us not be afraid to improvise!** We can do so many things together: start in a circle; it opens or closes up, changes into a spiral or into an arabesque. A beautiful dance can mean so much to the heart. It says: it is good to be together, we know each other, we truly form a community. God is with us... What a joy!... Try a spiral that will

July-August

gently bring all of us closer. The dance will evolve from the heart... What a beautiful opportunity to smile at each other and say : « *How are you ?* ».

We can also all raise our hands at the same time slowly towards the sky, in prayer. Let's look at our hands, the hands of the whole community which open up and lift towards the sky : we stop for a second appreciating the simplicity and the beauty of this gesture. How wonderful !

Let our songs and our music be so beautiful that we get carried away by them. Then our dance will be perfect and all our moves beautiful.

We can tie all our white scarves into a big band meaning that we'll remain united in spite of the separation of vacation.

▶ **Meal or snack**

The leader explains how, following the example of Mary of Bethany, we could today give the friend sitting next to us the most precious souvenir in our « friendship bag ».

We blow up all our coloured balloons and we throw them at each other over under the table.

BETWEEN NOW AND THE NEXT MEETING : A FEW SUGGESTIONS



▶ **The time of fidelity**

◆ ***Within small groups of friendship***

We'll live our time of fidelity, especially, with those who are not going away on vacation : exchanging addresses, dropping a card, a phone call...

◆ ***In our personal life***

We spend some time every morning with our oyster shell in our open hands and we think of the treasure of our friendships. Our word of love may once more be : « *Jesus, you are my treasure* ».

Some reminders to the coordinating team

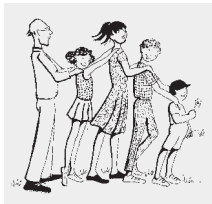


The community is carried by a coordinating team composed of four to eight persons ; parents, friends and a chaplain. (Sometimes the presence of a person with a mental handicap who has a gift of wisdom and discretion is very precious). The community leader coordinates the team.

- ◆ **The coordinating team meets together between each community gathering.** It will invite the regional or national leader – or his/her delegate – to one of its meeting during the year.
- ◆ The coordinating team must be really conscious of **the aims and vocation of Faith and Light**. In order to deepen its formation every time it meets, it can read and meditate on a passage from the Charter and Constitution, the booklets of Faith and Light, the special editions of « Ombres et Lumière » (if someone can read French), a book or a leaflet by Jean Vanier (for example « Letter to my brothers and sisters in l'Arche and Faith and Light »). Videocassettes on Faith and Light may also be watched and those who know English may have access to the 25 meditations of Jean Vanier on the gospel of John or « Quest for peace »... (see available documents page 99)
- ◆ The coordinating team makes sure that the community is faithful to its own vocation and to the priorities which it has fixed for itself.
- ◆ At each meeting the team makes **an evaluation of the last meeting of the community**. They consider what was good and what was not so good. Was the gathering carried and animated by the whole coordinating team ? Had each person carried out effectively the responsibility which has been entrusted to him ? Each member of the team also indicates what happened in the group of friendship in which he/she takes part : the good and the less good. They reflect on the growth of persons. Does each person feel at ease in the community ? In his little group of friendship ? Do certain persons remain isolated, ill at ease ? How can they be helped ?
- ◆ The coordinating team is responsible for the **preparation of the next meeting** of the community. How should they prepare the next meeting well ? To prepare means to have a global vision and to share the responsibilities. It is also sometimes to ask different members of the community according to their gifts to take charge of one activity or one aspect of the gathering.
- ◆ The ideal would be able to meet as a team, at least once a year for a longer period (a whole day or a weekend in a monastery, the one with which we are twinned, for example) in order to look back on things together, to take stock of the past year, to deepen our sense of our mission, to realize dreams and projects. To pray, to share, to work, to celebrate together... The unity experienced by the coordinating team together, is expected to be reflected in the whole community.

VIP

The small groups of friendship



In many communities the time of friendship, also called «fourth time» is not always lived as well as it should. For the past three years, the Guidelines have strongly urged that such small groups of friendship be set up. As a matter of fact, the Charter plans for them: «*Friendship deepens when we take the time to be together. Between the monthly meetings the members of the community like to be together in small groups... They talk of their lives, their fears, their dreams, their hopes... They pray, help each other, relax, share a meal or other activities which nurture friendship. It is the «time of fidelity».* (Charter 1,4)

What for ?

In a community of twenty to thirty persons or more, it is almost impossible to know each person's story, his/her work, joys, hardships, wishes. It is sometimes hard to remember everybody's name.

Some members may entertain more frequent contacts, but these do not involve all. Most have to wait a full month to hear again from Faith and Light.

For the members of the coordinating team, responsibility for starting a small group of friendship may be an extra load of work, but, at the same time, it is a true grace to be able to set up new personal links with five or six members of the community. «Nobody has to act by himself/herself any more. It becomes possible to know why someone has not been able to attend the monthly gathering. The small group of friendship is a family like mini-community.»

For the community coordinator, this «decentralization» lifts much of the burden of the responsibility off him/her. All phone calls and worries don't have to be funnelled to him/her. They can effectively be spread to all members of the coordinating team. A bit of news, whether good or bad, can easily be passed on through the «group of friendship» circuit.

How should the small groups of friendship be made up ?

Calling such a small group into being can be a lot of work, a true headache for some. Let's provide for a lot of lee time and ask the Holy Spirit to grant us all of His wisdom.

Appendix 2

Several factors have indeed to be considered :

- ◆ living not too far apart,
- ◆ balancing the group membership between handicapped persons, their families and their friends,
- ◆ availability of the person who is to coordinate the group,
- ◆ importance of the necessity to bring about changes within the group from time to time, so former members may link up with others.

Life within the small group of friendship

The group of friendship tries **to meet** at least once in between the formal monthly gatherings. The **activities** of the group are many : taking part in the parish Sunday celebration, having a meal at one or the other of the group members (each may bring some food or drink to share), having a meal in a low cost eating place, going together to a movie, going out together for a walk, calling on the religious community with which the community is twinned...

The Guidelines suggest for each month **a time of sharing** designed to allow for each other to get better acquainted, to receive better adapted help, to open up more to others...

Even if such meetings are not always possible, the small group coordinator (some call him/her : « small shepherd ») **keeps in touch** by way of calling on the phone, dropping a card, paying a short visit, whatever... Each is invited to **weave bonds** of the same type with others. A « spiritual appointment » may be set on a fixed day, Wednesdays, for instance, when all join through prayer...



Let's move on with hope. Those who have done it can bear witness to it. It is well worth the time and trouble it takes as these small groups of friendship allow life to flow as from a source all the way down to the smallest of their members, and to start again from them to shine forth a bright light.


Marie-Hélène Mathieu

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, longstanding 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 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 – see page 86)
- ◆ 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 expe-

Appendix 3

rience does not appear on the list, we can add it). We look for the biblical text which corresponds to this point (see page 87) 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 our 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.

This year we would like to concentrate on the theme of friendship. We choose from the following the points which best remind us of it.

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. These 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.

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 ; Jc 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
7. Phil 2,7-8
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

The prayer of the poor



The prayer of the poor is the prayer of those who are not able to reflect deeply: persons who are tired, sick, old, disabled; but also the prayer of those who want to relieve themselves of all that clutters them, or who want to become little before God.

During this prayer we are simply present and we completely give ourselves just as we are. Presence, alone, becomes a sign, a word: «*I want to remain with you because I love you*». We may add very meditative background music.

The prayer of the poor is a prayer of fidelity, even if interior agitation presses us to do something else. It's only a «being with». But in Faith and Light we know that this attitude is a sign of love: «*You, you are so precious to me; you, you are worth more than all other things that could attract me at this moment*».

The prayer of the poor is, in reality, a prayer of the body. We get in a comfortable position that lets us rest peacefully, without movement. We put our open hands on our knees. We breathe slowly and regularly. And we stay there. We may be helped by the repetition of a simple word, a word of love.

We remain there in trust, in the silence of the heart, for at least ten minutes, letting Jesus love us and transform us.

Father Joseph Larsen,
International Chaplain

Living the Gospel again : doing a mime at Faith and Light

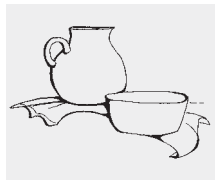
Miming is a mode of expression that is particularly well understood by our handicapped brothers and sisters. They understand from the deepest of their being what words cannot convey to them. We are growing more and more aware of the fact that doing a mime can be most helpful in making the gospel alive and easier to grasp.

In the community, doing a mime is not like acting at the theater. We are not actors. All we want is live the gospel again as if it were a real story happening today. We want it to be understood and lived through inwardly. Its texts are sometimes very well known to us, but they have not penetrated into our heart. We have failed to grasp that they are being addressed to us today. For example, going once more through the wedding in Cana, we get fully conscious that still today Jesus and Mary are present among us in the smallest details of our life. While miming the healing of the man who was blind from birth we can get deeply into the painful questions that so many parents and brothers and sisters are asking themselves while facing a handicap. But we can also face with new eyes and a new heart the answers that Jesus brings us.

It seems both beneficial and desirable that all those who do a mime be chosen among **all members** of our community : persons with a handicap, parents, friends, chaplain. The best would be for all to take part in the mime, so that no one remains a « spectator » but all become actors and witnesses!

- ◆ It is, of course, best to pick up only one text or one parable in order to emphasize it.
- ◆ The chaplain, or someone else, says a few words beforehand on what is going to be mimed, so our hearts get well prepared to grasp its full meaning.
- ◆ While the mime is on, someone slowly reads the chosen story.
- ◆ A few words may be said very distinctly while the mime unfolds.

Living together the washing of the feet



The meaning of our action

On the night before his death, Jesus washed the feet of his disciples with much love and humility and said « *For I have given you an example that you also should do as I have done for you* ».

What humility, what an example of service, of goodness! Jesus teaches us by this gesture, to put ourselves at the service of one another with love and gentleness. He teaches us to go spiritually on our knees before our brothers and sisters, especially the poorest ones.

We are going to wash each other's feet, in an atmosphere of prayer, of silence, knowing that it is a time of grace. Saint Bernard liked to say that the washing of feet was a sacrament, that is to say, a moment, when, Jesus, by his love, joins us.

To be sure, washing each other's feet is a symbol. However, it reveals our desire to forgive, to be forgiven, to serve with humility, to become smaller, poorer. Thus, to wash each other's feet becomes for each one of us a prayer.

This gesture has also a particular significance from the point of view of unity. If we cannot always eat together at the same Eucharistic table as our brothers and sisters of other denominations, we can already be deeply united to each other in living through the washing of feet together.

The procedure

Before beginning, several persons will have prepared the room. The chairs will be arranged in (a) circle (s) (one or several depending on the number of participants). At the center, there are placed a Bible, a candle and a basin, a jug filled with water and a towel. Water will have been placed in reserve, outside the circle, to refill the jug if necessary

The celebration begins. The candle is lighted. We sing some quiet songs and recollect ourselves to find peace and interior silence. After the songs, the leader will explain the meaning of the evening ceremony « *We are going to wash each others' feet as Jesus has asked us to do* ». And he reads the text of the Gospel of John (13,1-17).

Then he kneels down in front of the person who is on his right in the circle and washes his two feet very slowly, with a great deal of love and respect. This is a sacred gesture. He wipes the feet. When he has finished, he remains on his knees before the person. This latter person puts her hands on the head of the other, and they both pray in silence. This is a gesture of mutuality and reciprocity. After several moments of prayer, the who has had her feet washed, rises and kneels before the person on her right and washes his feet... and so on, until each member of the community has had his/her feet washed.

During all this time of the washing of feet, we can arrange for background music or softly sing a refrain (from Taizé, for example).

Certain persons with difficulties must be helped in order to be able to accomplish all these gestures. However, it is important for them to experiment with this responsibility of service. When the gesture of the washing of feet appears to be difficult, even impossible to carry out, it is up to each leader to intervene with kindness to make one or other of the participants not feel guilty, and suggest, for example, the simple washing of hands.

In sharing groups

After this celebration, we remain in a circle and we share our reflections on several questions.

- ◆ Why does this gesture collect us together, unite us ?
- ◆ What are the actions, the words, the attitudes in my life which can construct unity ?
- ◆ When I find myself with a person very different from myself, in whose presence I feel « frozen », or whom I find disagreeable, can I try to imagine in my heart, that I am kneeling down to wash his/her feet and then, that he/she in their turn, is washing mine.



At the end, we sing together « *Ubi Caritas* » and recite the « *Our Father* » holding each others' hands.



Jean Vanier

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'll 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».

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

[Teach us to accept our wounds, our weaknesses,
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, we entrust ourselves to Mary, your mother.

She was the first to welcome you.

Help us to welcome you into our hearts
and in our communities.]

[Help us to be faithfully present with her,
at the foot of the cross,

near the crucified of this world.

Help us to live as she did,
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.

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)

« Becoming a source of unity »

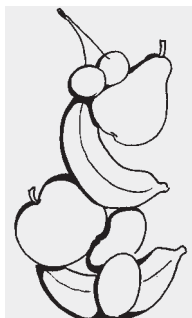
« Today, Faith and Light communities have their roots in different Christian traditions: Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican and Protestant. Most often the members of a community belong to the same Church, but some communities are inter-denominational; at community meetings, they seek how they may worship together, united as brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ.

Faith and Light believes that the person who is weak and disabled can become a source of unity in society and in each Church and also between Churches and nations...

Persons with an intellectual disability, by the very radiance of their poverty, lead Christians of different denominations into the beatitude of poverty of heart and thus allow them to rediscover the spirit of God. »

(Re Charter, I, 5)

« Announcement and Sharing Day »



We initiated this very important day two years ago. Let us remind 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 2003, a certain number of communities lived out their « *Announcement and Sharing Day* » 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 2005 !

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 !



Ghislain du Chéné

Faith and Light across the world



In March 2003, the International Association of Faith and Light grouped together some 1464 communities developing in 76 countries across 6 continents.

◆ CONTINENT « NORTHERN AND EASTERN EUROPE » (provisional name)

3 zones, 18 countries, 299 communities.

Zone 1, « Northern Europe » : 8 countries, 97 communities

Wales(5), Northern England (28), Southern England(15), Scotland (9), Ireland (28), Sweden (4), Norway (5), Denmark (3)

Zone 2, Poland : 4 provinces, 159 communities

Northern Poland (24), Western Poland (42), Central Eastern Poland (37), Southern Poland (56)

Zone 3 (No zone name for the moment) : 6 countries, 43 communities

Russia (7), Ukraine (16), Czech Republic (4), Slovakia (6), Lithuania (8), Georgia (2)

◆ CONTINENT « EUROPE, FROM THE ATLANTIC TO THE DANUBE »

3 zones, 21 countries, 445 communities

Zone 4, « Europe Atlantic » : 7 countries, 101 communities

The Netherlands (5), Luxembourg (5), Germany (9), Belgium (35), Spain (33), Portugal (11), Gibraltar (3)

Zone 5, France : 9 provinces, 283 communities

Northern France (35), Central France (32), Western France (33), West Ile de France (30), Paris Le Levant (25), Eastern France (33), France Entre Deux Mers (37), France Rhône Azur North (29), France Rhône Azur South (29)

Zone 6, « Danube » : 5 countries, 61 communities

Austria (5), Hungary (22), Yugoslavia (8), Romania (Romanian speaking) (11), Romania (Hungarian speaking) (15)

◆ CONTINENT « MIDDLE EASTERN EUROPE »

2 zones, 11 countries, 273 communities

Zone 7, « Mediterranean Alps » : 6 countries, 127 communities

Switzerland (19), Italy (59), Slovenia (32), Croatia (10), Cyprus (3), Greece (4)

Appendix 10

Zone 8, « Middle-East » : 5 countries, 146 communities
Lebanon North West (29), Lebanon South East (32), Syria (36), Jordan (2),
Egypt (47)

◆ **« AMERICAN » CONTINENT**

3 zones, 14 countries, 269 communities

Zone 1, « Northern America » : 4 countries, 97 communities
United States West (9), United States East (41), Canada East (35) and
Canada West (12)

Zone 2, « Central America and Caribbean » : 5 countries, 69 commu-
nities
Mexico (26), Haiti (6), Dominican Republic (28), Honduras (4), Martinique
(5)

Zone 3, « South America » : 5 countries, 103 communities
Peru (13), North Brazil (40), South Brazil (36), Chile (4), Argentina (10)

◆ **CONTINENT « AFRICA AND THE INDIAN OCEAN »**

one zone, one sub-zone, 19 countries, 104 communities

Zone « Africa Capricorn » : 5 countries, 43 communities
Uganda (4), Kenya (3), Zambia (15), Zimbabwe (13), South Africa (8)

African countries not included in a zone : 12 countries, 47 communities
Angola (1), Burkina Faso (1), Burundi (4), Cameroon (3), Ivory Coast(1),
Mozambique (1), Democratic Republic of Congo (Kinshasa) (1),
Democratic Republic of Congo (Lubumbashi) (18), Democratic Republic
of Congo (Kivu) (2), Rwanda (12), Senegal (2), Sierra Leone (1)

Sub-zone « Indian Ocean » : 2 countries, 14 communities
Madagascar (7), Mauritius and Rodrigues Islands (7)

◆ **CONTINENT « ASIA /SOUTHERN CROSS »**

3 zones, 1 sub-zone, 13 countries, 64 communities

Zone 1, « East Asia » : 5 countries, 27 communities
South Korea (8), Japan (8), Taiwan (2), Hong Kong (3), Philippines (6)

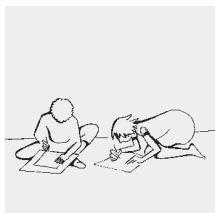
Zone 2, « West Asia » : 5 countries, 11 communities

Sub-zone « Indian Sub-Continent » : 3 countries, 7 communities
Pakistan (1), India (1), Bangladesh (5)

New countries : 2 countries, 4 communities
Malaysia (2), Singapore (2)

Zone 3, « Oceania-Southern Cross » : 3 countries, 26 communities
Australia (13), New Caledonia (1) New Zealand (12)

Evaluating for progress



Many communities, or sometimes only their coordinating team, set aside a day or a week-end to think back on the past year. They often do it with the religious community with which they are twinned.

If we are in a community, we can lead this reflection in small sharing groups. It will be up to the leader to write down everything that is said and « report » it to the community. These notes will be of great use to the coordinating team in helping them organize the coming year.

Here are a few suggestions :

Our life within the community and the time of fidelity

- ◆ Do the four groups (parents, handicapped persons, friends, chaplain) of our community make up a good **balance** ? If not, how could we improve on that ?
- ◆ Does our community **meet regularly each month** of the year ? If not, what could we do for a better performance ? What about the holidays ? Couldn't we « go out » 2 or 3 days together next year ?
- ◆ How have the several **parts of the gatherings** (welcome, the word, sharing together, sharing in small groups, prayer and prayer of the poor, fiesta) been lived through ?
- ◆ What about the time of fidelity ? The small groups of friendship, their formation and vitality ? Do they put into practice Faith and Light every day ?

The life of the coordinating team

- ◆ Is the coordinating team acting as one ; is it motivated, creative ?
- ◆ What are its weaknesses and strengths today ?
- ◆ Could it still be more at the service of the community ?
- ◆ Is it both stable (its members committed at least for a year), and often enough renewed ?

Appendix 11

Missions, projects

- ◆ Is it our concern to bear witness of Faith and Light to the young, to new families, to our parish, or our church?... Do we wish to start a new community? Are we determined to be more open to our brothers and sisters and to move forwards on the way to unity between all Christians?
- ◆ Are there two or three projects that we'd like to develop next year? Write them down carefully.

Reconciliation, thanksgiving

After a long and well conducted time of prayer, we could find an opportunity to beg forgiveness, to reconcile. We finish giving sustained thanks.

Supports

- ◆ We can get support from the Regional Correspondent, or if he/she is not available, from a former member of the community, who will help us out of his experience and will watch our efforts.
- ◆ Let's constantly refer to the Charter and Constitution of Faith and Light.

Available documents

Building community

Charter and Constitution	free
Guidelines for the first year	3 €/US\$
Leaders' pack handbook for the community leader	3 €/US\$
Leaders' pack handbook for the regional/national/provincial/zone leader	3 €/US\$
Handbook for the elections (to be published)	3 €/US\$
Sharing our responsibility in Faith and Light	3 €/US\$
Annual guidelines (by 10 ex : 30 €/US\$)	3,80 €/US\$

Deepening our life together

Deepening our spirituality in Faith and Light	3 €/US\$
Retreats in Faith and Light	3 €/US\$
The ecumenism in Faith and Light	3 €/US\$
Fioretti	2,30 €/US\$
On holidays together	3 €/US\$
Formation weekends and sessions in Faith and Light	3 €/US\$
Finances in Faith and Light	1,50 €/US\$
« At the heart of our communities » (the booklet of l'Arche in several languages)	4 €/US\$

International pilgrimage Lourdes 2001

Video « They are opening up a way » (PAL/SECAM/NTSC)	7.50 €/US\$
« Venez boire à la Source » : special issue of « Ombres et Lumière » (French only) (free contribution)	
Faith and Light badge	1,50 €/US\$

Getting to know us better

Leaflet (new édition)	free
Les messages des Papes à Foi et Lumière	free
Letter to my brothers and sisters in l'Arche and Faith and Light (J.Vanier)	1,50 €/US\$

Some others books to help you

Mieux vaut allumer une lampe que maudire l'obscurité (M.H.Mathieu) (French only)	7 €/US\$
Dieu m'aime comme je suis (Marie-Hélène Mathieu) (French only)	13 €/US\$
Community and growth (Jean Vanier)	17 €/US\$
The scandal of the service (Jean Vanier)	9 €/US\$
I meet Jesus, small format/large format	5,50 / 9 €/US\$
I walk with Jesus, small format/large format	5,50 / 9 €/US\$
Pilgrims together, a vision of ecumenism (Jean Vanier)	3 €/US\$

And also the videos of Jean Vanier :

(further information can be requested from Faith and Light International or on the website of Faith and Light International)

The 25 meditations of Jean Vanier on the Gospel of John (in English)	
By videocassette (PAL/SECAM)	35 €/US\$
Serie of 4 videos (PAL/SECAM)	120 €/US\$
Quest for peace (video in English) (PAL/SECAM)	20 €/US\$

(NTSC standard have to be ordered at l'Arche - Daybreak Canada)

*(The prices indicated have no commercial character
but represent a share of the cost of printing. Port in sup.)*

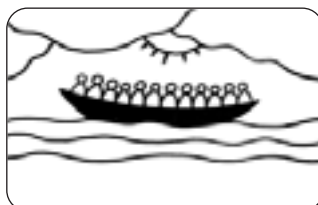
Origin of the Icon of cover

This piece of art is one of the very few wood paintings dating from the VIth or VIIth century. It is the only Coptic icon kept at the Louvre museum.

Christ is easily recognised at right as the bearded person with the halo marked by the cross and his name written in Coptic language : « The Saviour ».

He is holding in his left arm the Book of the Gospels and has his right arm around the shoulders of « Abba » Mena. Father Mena heads the monastery of Baout, in Egypt. He is here shown as almost equal to Christ.

They both look serious. Their composure bears witness to their inner life. They ceaselessly live close to the heart of God. A very simple bond is felt between Jesus and Mena : this is a time when wonderful stories are told about encounters of the saints with their Lord.



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« I no longer
call you
servants
but friends »
(John 15)

