



GUIDELINES
2006-2007

FRIENDS OF JESUS

Faith and Light International



Summary

◆ Introduction	Jean Vanier	1
◆ Letter to the coordinating team	Corinne Chatain	3
◆ September	John the Baptist	6
◆ October	John, the beloved disciple	14
◆ November	Zacchaeus	21
◆ December	Mary and Joseph	28
◆ January	the Samaritan woman	34
◆ February	Simeon	41
◆ March	The good thief	48
◆ April	Peter	55
◆ May	The little children	62
◆ June	Mary from Bethany	68
◆ July August	The man born blind	74

APPENDICES

1. The Feast of Light	81
2. Announcment and Sharing Day	82
3. Getting to know Faith and Light across the world	83
4. The prayer of a poor person	85
5. Mime : The story of Faith and Light	88
6. The evaluation of the guidelines 2005-2006	92
7. List of Internet websites	93
8. Available document	94
9. The friends of Jesus	95
The Faith and Light prayer	96

Introduction

Jesus brought about the birth of Faith and Light as a response to pain ; the pain of parents who feel impoverished, destitute, excluded from society and from the Church because of the birth of a child who is « not like other children » ; the pain of children and of men and women who feel unloved and rejected due to their weakness and their disabilities.

Our world has a tendency to exclude any person who is not « productive » or who is « different ». The gap between the rich and poor, between those who have power and wealth, and those who do not, is growing. A thick wall separates them.

*Through Jesus, God became flesh. He came to reduce this gap, to bring down those walls and to create unity through love. He calls on the rich to share and on the poor to have hope. For God each human being is important, whatever abilities or inabilities he or she may have. Each person is unique and precious. We are all called to form a single body, with each person in his/her place. But to build this body with Jesus, our hearts need to be changed. Jesus came into the world to change our hearts of stone into hearts of flesh, vulnerable and loving. Jesus' answer to the gulf between people is **compassion**.*

Compassion is not just about giving material goods to a someone in need or about suffering with them. Compassion means being with people in their weakness when they feel lonely, destitute, excluded and when they have lost all confidence in themselves. It's about giving our heart to them, becoming their friend, revealing to them how beautiful they are and thus helping them to get back on their feet. Of course, compassion often begins by

giving someone a material gift, but it implies going further than that, leading to a true encounter between people.

Faith and Light communities are communities of compassion where we become friends together and where, little by little, our selfish hearts are changed by Jesus into hearts full of goodness.

This year, we are going to take a journey through the four gospels to meet some people who became Jesus' friends. In becoming their friend, Jesus opened their heart to others. He gave them his heart so that they would become men and women full of kindness and compassion. Jesus' greatest desire is that each one of us becomes his friend, so that we in turn become friends of people who are suffering and afflicted. Each one of Jesus' friends that we meet in the Gospel has something unique to pass onto us. If we put our hand in their hand, they will always bring us closer to Jesus.



Jean Vanier



Letter to the coordinating team

Dear friends,

Here we are again on the road together for another year. We are going to meet a few friends of Jesus, we are going to get to know them better. They are going to help us to deepen our faith, our trust, our friendship.

As you know, the proposals and agenda for each part of the meeting are only suggestions. It is up to you to adapt them to the personality of your community, your culture, your religious tradition. Let your creativity, your imagination spring forth!

We have, for example, made several suggestions for the time of welcome. They are sometimes difficult to put into effect, for the members of the community don't always arrive together... So the little actions which are suggested can be performed during the time of sharing together, when the whole community is gathered together.

It seems a good idea that the leader of the community as guide and shepherd should say a few words at each meeting : he could perhaps remind people of one aspect of the mission, present the theme of the year and of the month. The word of the month written by Jean Vanier, is real nourishment. It can be read by a member of the coordinating team or by the chaplain. Better still, having studied it well, the chosen person could present it from the heart.

Some other examples : the prayer for the poor can perhaps be integrated into the prayer made together during the meeting, or given during the little sharing groups, or in the friendship groups, or as a personal prayer at home...

Each month, a little friendship group could be invited to copy out, for each of the members of the community, the text of the prayer suggested for the

next meeting, or the words of the prayer of a poor man. In that way, each person will be able to keep it and say it over at home. It could also be sent to those who are sick or absent.

In the choices that you make, always try to do what will help everybody to live in communion together as much as possible.

Starting in the month of February, it is suggested to make Faith and Light across the world known, to open our hearts to the international dimension, to solidarity. We are happy to be able to offer you the map « Faith and Light in the world » which shows the position of the « six » continents of Faith and Light, the zones and countries as well as « The family album » brought out on the occasion of the international meeting last July that will be given to you in November.

Finally, certain communities prefer drawings to photos, that is why you will find in appendix 9, page 95 the illustrations showing the friends of Jesus.

Before leaving you, a big, big thank you to the members of the team : Armelle, Souleymane, Lucia, Don Marco and Reverend Geoffrey. They have each put all their heart and their faith into producing this new set of guidelines !

I wish you a good journey with Jesus and his friends !



Corinne

*For the guidelines team
Corinne Chatain
General Secretary*

Don't forget to send us stories, information, new ideas, photos of the life of your community. Then we can share them on the FLI site...



A few suggestions for the organisation of the year for coordinating teams

The ideal would be to meet over a weekend in order to have the time to think ahead and organise :

- ▶ The dates of all the meetings
- ▶ The service of dedication for the year
- ▶ Friendship groups
- ▶ The festival of Light, appendix 1, page 81
- ▶ The Day of Sharing, appendix 2, page 82
- ▶ Finding out about Faith and Light across the world, appendix 3, page 83
- ▶ The day of renewal in the community I
- ▶ A pilgrimage...

It is an advantage if our coordinating team meetings can run along the same lines as those of the community. We should perhaps spend together a time of sharing or reflection, share a meal or a bite together, pray... and work on preparing for the next meeting.

Forward !

1 Free booklet available at the international secretariat : 3, rue du Laos, F- 75015 Paris - France. - T. (33) 1.53.69.44.30 - foi.lumiere@wanadoo.fr



September

John the Baptist

(Luke 3 : 1-2)





The word of the month

John the Baptist was the son of Elisabeth and Zechariah and also Jesus' cousin. He received the Holy Spirit when he was in his mother's womb. He became a great prophet. His mission was to prepare people's hearts to receive Jesus. Jesus came to free hearts, to give them the Holy Spirit and to lead them to the Father, the God of compassion and goodness.

In Jesus' time, God's people had become half-hearted : many of them had lost hope. They were discouraged. The Romans had invaded their land. The representative of the Roman Emperor, Pontius Pilate, was a cruel man, their King, Herod, too. When John the Baptist grew up, he went to live like a hermit in the desert. He lived an austere life : he dressed like a prophet and ate like a prophet, just a small amount of very frugal food.

The inhabitants of Jerusalem and Judea came to listen to him. He spoke in a strong voice and with great conviction like a prophet and he baptised people in water, the waters of purification. This is how he was preparing the way for Jesus. When Jesus himself asked John to baptise him, John didn't want to do it because he sensed that Jesus was the Messiah. BUT Jesus was so humble he told John : « Let it be so now, it is proper for us to do this ». (Mt 2 : 15)

*Again, in view of preparing the coming of Jesus, John told those who asked him what they should do to avoid God's anger : « **The one with two tunics should share with those who have none, and the one who has food should do the same.** » (Lk 3 : 11). To avoid God's anger, to prepare for the coming of the Messiah, one had to become compassionate.*

Later, John called Jesus « the Bridegroom », the one who brings God's love to the people ; and John calls himself « the friend of the Bridegroom ».

**« He who is with the bride is the bridegroom ;
the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him,**



**greatly rejoices at the bridegroom's voice.
Therefore this joy of mine is now full
He must increase
and I must decrease ».**

(Jn 3 : 29)



John the Baptist is so humble ! He prepares people's hearts to receive Jesus by calling them to be compassionate. Once Jesus is there and is recognised, he can disappear. At Faith and Light, we too are called to become men and women of goodness and compassion.

People came to John and listened to his words because he was so humble. He wanted Jesus to fill his heart and therefore Jesus would be recognised by all. How can we, like John, give Jesus more space within ourselves and in our lives? How can we fade into the background so that others may be recognised and valued ?



Welcome and Reunion

In numerous countries, this is the first meeting after the holidays. We are beginning the year. A song or a very simple little game in which each person can give his name, brings us together. Those who wish to are invited to say in a few words what has struck them the most during the month of August, perhaps to show a photo, a postcard, a leaf, a dried flower...

We create something like the atmosphere of a baptismal celebration, hanging white balloons everywhere in the room, or white flowers, either fresh or made of paper...



Sharing

▶ Together

The leader presents the theme of the year : «*The friends of Jesus*» and the theme of the month. it is a good idea for the leader to say a few words at each meeting.

Each month, either he or the chaplain or a member of the coordinating team will read the **word of the month** or, better still, having studied it well, will present it from the heart.

If indicated on the programme, he can present the friendship groups whose members will have special links between each meeting. The leader will also talk about the service of dedication for the year and its meaning.

John the Baptist knows who Jesus is, he knows his friend well and reveals to us who he is. One feels in him the loving bedazzlement before the Bridegroom, his joyous marvelling before His beauty. Loving someone, is it not discovering who that person is at a deep level, getting to know him, marvelling before the beauty of his person ?

We can mime one or two passages from the Gospel which will allow us to get to know John the Baptist better.

- First scene : the Visitation, Lk 1 : 39-56.
It is the meeting between Mary who is expecting Jesus the Saviour, and Elizabeth who is expecting John, already filled with the Holy Spirit. John trembles with joy in his mother's womb for he recognises Jesus and Mary known as the *Magnificat*.
- Second scene the prediction of John the Baptist, Mk 1 :1-8.
John has grown up, he goes and lives in the desert as a hermit then he sets about announcing the coming of Jesus while asking the crowds to convert.
- Third scene : the baptism of Jesus, Mk 1 :9-11.
Jesus comes and meets John to be baptised. The Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove reveals Jesus, the Son of God.



► In sharing groups

During this meeting, the sharing groups could be made up of the friendship groups we had planned in the coordinating team. The leader says the names of each group and each person in the group comes forward in turn and forms a little circle. Then, in each group, people get to know each other better because the members of the groups are called to be particularly united during this coming year. At this point they can decide upon a gesture of friendship to be exchanged in the months to come.

John the Baptist is an instrument of God to prepare hearts to receive Jesus, to welcome him, by calling all men to be converted.

John helps us to welcome Jesus as he, himself, welcomed him : he gave his whole life to him.

- What place do I give Jesus in my life ?
- How can I give him more of a place in my life ? (Prayer corner, time for prayer, call to Jesus throughout the day, Sunday mass...)
- What place do I give to the community ? Could I be more committed ? At what times ? (Regular attendance at meetings, punctuality, being present to others, responsibility...)

Each person can draw or write what he could do to be more committed to the community.



Prayer

Little candles are lit, the prayer can begin with a hymn about humility, gentleness. The leader of the prayer can read the passage from the Gospel of Lk 3 : 10-14. In procession, we lay down our drawing, our prayer or our sentence that we have written in the prayer corner asking Jesus to help us to give him more room in our hearts and to become more committed to the community. Then we dip our hands into a bowl of water and make the sign of the cross.

We finish the prayer with an Our Father holding hands and with a special hymn.



Festival of Dedication for the year

In the chapel or in our prayer corner, a large candle is lit near the altar or in front of a large cross. Beside it, the banner of the community. After an introduction, the leader of the community or the chaplain will put the following questions inspired by the prayer of Faith and Light to all the assembled members of the community (the coordinating team can, if it wishes, choose other questions) :

- *Do you wish to follow Jesus in our community ?*
All those who wish it reply : «Yes »
- *Do you wish to commit yourself to the meetings with all your hearts ?*
All those who wish it reply : «Yes »
- *Do you wish to be the friend of each person in the community ?*
All those who wish it reply : «Yes »

We can finish with a hymn of rejoicing.

► **Prayer of a poor person** (See appendix 4, page 85)

We are in calm and silence. We close our eyes. We are on the banks of the Jordan. John is busy baptising. Jesus appears out of the crowd. Jesus and John smile at one another, and Jesus himself allows himself to be baptised by John.

We can say : «*Thank you, John, for preparing hearts for the coming of Jesus... Thank you, Jesus, for coming and revealing to us how God the Father is loving, loving and full of compassion* ».



Figsta

We can organise a game, improvise a dance and finish with a meal or a snack.

Suggestions for games

- **Simon says**

The leader of the game gives orders referring to parts of the body (for



example : « *Touch your nose, point to your left knee* », etc.). The players have only to carry out the actions when the order is preceded by the words : « *Simon says...* »

If there are a large number present, we can break into several groups. Each player who makes a mistake (does the wrong action or moves when the order was not preceded by the words « *Simon says* ») becomes the leader and watches the other players ; the winner is the last to be put out. We can adapt the game to the theme of the day by asking, for example, for gestures of compassion : stroke the hand of your neighbour on the left, wipe the tears of the person on your right, say a kind word, etc.

- **Classification**

We form a circle, standing, each one on the page of a newspaper. we can arrange ourselves according to a chosen category : height (from the shortest to the tallest), age (from youngest to oldest), in little groups according to the first letter of our first names, how long we have been in Faith and Light, etc. But we can only move by walking on our newspaper page !

When all the members are in the order which has been called out, we start singing an action song to say thanks for being gathered together all so different and so loved by God especially the smallest and the humblest.

We begin again at the beginning, choosing a different category.

Thinking ahead to next month, we can take a photo of each person or draw a picture of him, or take a few photos of the community, arranged into the different categories. The coordinating team will bring them to the next meeting.



The Charter :

«Each meeting includes a time of getting together to talk and to listen to one another. The essential thing is to form personal relationships within which we discover the suffering and the gifts of one another, where we learn to know someone else by name. Sharing in small groups enables each person to express him/herself through words or other forms of communication, e.g. drawings, modelling, mimes or gestures. In this way we **try to be together**² to carry one another's burdens , to encourage and support each other and to respond to the needs of each one. Through friendship, made up of tenderness and fidelity, we become signs of the love of God for one another.» (I, 1)

The time of faithfulness



▶ In little friendship groups, if we can meet in these

If we have decided to meet, we can do so, around a cup of coffee or tea, to exchange our news, to talk about our holidays, our plans, pray together...

We can reflect on the way in which our hearts have opened. How can we help to prepare other hearts to open ?



▶ In our personal live

Let's try to arrange a prayer corner, even a very small one, with a cross or an icon or a picture of Jesus, or a statuette of Mary. This prayer corner will help us to give time to Jesus, each morning or in the calm of the evening.

We could say the prayer of the poor, every day for a few minutes

² The passages from the Charter in bold have been put forward as amendments at the general assembly in July 2006.



John,
the beloved disciple





The word of the month

It appears that the author of the fourth gospel is indeed John, brother of James, close friend of Peter. He calls himself «the beloved disciple». This did not mean that the other disciples were not loved by Jesus, but that John had understood that his deepest identity was to be loved by Jesus, chosen by him. Perhaps he called himself this so that each of us may understand that our deepest identity is to be loved by Jesus and to be chosen by him ?

John saw how close Jesus was to the poor, how compassionate and good he was for all those who were suffering from being marginalized and even rejected from the temple.

One of the first places that Jesus visited in Jerusalem (Jn 5) is the asylum where «a great number of disabled people are lying around-the blind, the lame, the paralysed.» John was no doubt with him when Jesus met a man who had been there for 39 years. Jesus was moved by the man's suffering. He asked that man : «Do you want to be healed ?» And he healed him. Was that not why John, in his letter to his community, insisted on love and compassion ?

*«This is how we know what love is :
Jesus Christ laid down his life for us.
And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.
If anyone has material possessions
and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him,
how can the love of God be in him ?
Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue
but with actions and in truth.»
(1 Jn 3 : 17)*



At the last supper, before the passion and death of Jesus (Jn 13 : 25), John is reclining his heart against Jesus chest. Just before that, Jesus in great anguish had just declared to his disciples in a trembling voice : «I tell you the truth, one of you is going to betray me.» John must have been distressed by Jesus' anguish ; perhaps he bent over Jesus' heart to support and to console him.

John was one of Jesus' first friends. At the cross, he was the only disciple who remained with Jesus. It's there that Jesus gave Mary to him as his own mother. The gospel says that as from that moment onwards, John took Mary into his own home.

John's heart was opened by Jesus and now John wished to guide his disciples with this same love. We too are called on to become Jesus' friend. This is how our communities will be full of life and compassion.



Just as John welcomed Mary into his house, let's welcome Mary into our community. She too, in her attentiveness to the suffering of her children, will teach us compassion.



Welcome and Reunion

Whenever everyone has gathered, we look at the photos or drawings produced at the last meeting put up on the notice board. You can point out something beautiful in each one. In the middle of the board, there is a heart, the heart of Jesus. We can mark with an arrow the loving connection which leaves the heart of Jesus and which comes towards each one of us.



Sharing

▶ Together

The leader says a word of introduction. He reminds us of the theme of the year, the theme of this month.

Reading of the **word of the month** by the leader or a member of the coordinating team or the chaplain.

We can go over again one or two passages from the Gospel (With Jesus and John always being mimed by the same people to help with the comprehension) :

- First scene : Andrew and John follow Jesus, the Lamb of God (Jn 1 : 35-39).
- Second scene : Jesus at the pool of Bethesda, with a large number of sick and disabled people. (Jn 5 : 1-9).
- Third scene : Holy Thursday at the last supper before the Passion, John rests on Jesus' heart (Jn 13 : 25).
- Fourth scene : John and Mary at the foot of the cross (Jn 19 : 25-27).

Our profound identity is to be loved by Jesus : the coordinating team gives to each person a label or a little piece of paper bearing the name of another member of the community, and then this person will go and stick it on the notice board, around the photos and say : « *(First name), you are loved by Jesus* ».

It is sometimes more difficult to allow yourself to be loved than to love others ; more difficult to accept their help than to offer one's own.

John felt how much Jesus loved him and his heart opened to the love of Jesus and of others. He has the courage to meet Jesus at the cross, whereas all the other apostles fled.

▶ In sharing groups

Like John, we also need, to discover that we are loved by Jesus. a lot of us came to Faith and Light to love others and then discovered that we ourselves are loved.



- And what was I like when I came into the community ?
- Do I really believe that Jesus loves me infinitely as I am ?
- Do I believe that he needs my love ?
- By what signs do I recognise that I am loved ? What do I like having done for me, which allows me to feel that I am loved ?
- I do not see Jesus but he is present in every member of the community. By means of which words, which gestures can I express my friendship, my affection ?



Prayer

We prepare our prayer corner with an icon or a drawing of the cross of Jesus with Mary and John, and we place in front, a lit candle : John and Mary represent the community of Faith and Light.

We can begin the prayer by calling upon the Holy Spirit and we can ask it to help us to understand even more the depth of the love of God for us. We can re-read the Gospel of John 19 :25-27.

After a few moments of silence, each person can say if he wishes : *« I feel loved because... »* adding the reason why he feels loved. When everyone has finished, someone can read Psalm 121 (120) : *« I lift up my eyes to the hills »*. Between each verse, we say together : *« Jesus, thank you for loving me as I am »*.

We finish with an action song saying thank you for the love of God revealed by Jesus : during the hymn, each person can come and say thank you to Jesus for his love and kiss the icon or the cross.

► Prayer of a poor person

We are in the calm and silence. We close our eyes. We are with John, one of Jesus' closest friends. John knows that Jesus loves him. John also loves Jesus. Our prayer could be : *« John, the love of Jesus fills you with joy, and you love him... the love of Jesus for me fills me with joy and I love him... Jesus, I love you... »*



Figsta

Suggestions for games

- **«Air, earth, sea» : each has its place in Creation**

The players form a large circle. The first player throws the ball to another player saying one of the three words : *air, earth or sea*. The player who catches the ball must name a creature which lives in the medium named. If it is «*air*» : he has to name a bird ; «*earth*» : an animal which lives on Earth ; «*sea*» : a marine creature. if he fails he is given a forfeit. If he succeeds it is his turn to throw the ball.

- **First names**

We are seated in a circle. One of us shows a little object which belongs to him (glasses, pencil...) and says : «*I am called Jerome and this is very useful to me*». He gives the object to the person sitting beside him, Sophie for example, who has to say : «*I am called Sophie and Jerome says that this is very useful to him*». Sophie passes on the object to Mark who has to say : «*I am called Mark and Sophie says that Mark says that this is very useful to him*»... In this way, each person says his first name and has to repeat the first names mentioned before. The one who makes a mistake has a forfeit.

The table for the meal or the snack could be decorated with a goblet of wine and a little round loaf or a sheaf of corn and a bunch of grapes, if they can be got hold of, to remember the Last Supper when John rested his head on Jesus' breast.

We could find ourselves seated beside someone whom we haven't had as a neighbour at table for a long time and after Grace could begin the meal following John's gesture, by placing our head on the chest or the shoulder of our neighbour.

The Charter :

«Faith and Light is a community movement. The essential lies in the links of trust and in friendship created between its members, links having their source in Jesus and reaching fulfilment in Him.» (III, 1)



The time of faithfulness



▶ In little friendship groups, if we can meet in these

A member of the little group can bear witness : how the community has helped me to understand that I am loved by God and my brothers ? We can think together about the way we can grow in love.



▶ In our personal live

Every day, we can say quietly to ourselves : « *thank you, Jesus, for loving me as I am* ».



Zacchaeus

(Luke 19)





The word of the month

«Today, I would like to eat at your house».

Zacchaeus was a tax collector, who in Jesus' time was called a «publican». The pious Jews considered the publicans as traitors because they worked for the Romans. They demanded taxes from the Jewish traders and workers and gave the money to the Roman enemy. Of course, they also put some aside for themselves and so they were often rich. Zacchaeus was from Jericho, about forty kilometres from Jerusalem. He had often heard people talking about «Jesus», this prophet from Nazareth, and of all the miracles that he was accomplishing. Zacchaeus wanted to see him. One day, when Jesus came to Jericho, an enormous crowd was following him. Zacchaeus, who was a small man, couldn't see him. So he ran ahead of Jesus and climbed into a sycamore tree so that he could see better. When Jesus arrived, he must have smiled seeing this important head of the tax collectors clinging to a tree branch ! He must have seen that Zacchaeus had a heart like a child. So Jesus said to him : «Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today».

Zacchaeus was totally surprised and happy that Jesus wished to come and eat at his home, he a publican, who was despised by the people from the synagogue. It would have been more acceptable for Jesus to have eaten his meal with respectable people. The Jews murmured among themselves : «How is it that the prophet has gone to be the guest of a man like Zacchaeus who does not practice his religious faith ?»

Zacchaeus hurried back to his house. Perhaps his wife found it hard to believe the astonishing news : Jesus was coming to their house ! Perhaps she hadn't done the house work, maybe the children weren't very clean... Jesus arrived and shared the meal with Zacchaeus and his family. He became their friend. As Jesus was leaving, Zacchaeus told him : «Look Lord, here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay it back four times the amount».
(Lk 19 : 8)



Jesus asked Zacchaeus, who had an open heart, to come down from the tree, to put aside his pride, his need to have power over others, and above all over poor people, and to become humble. By coming to Zacchaeus' house, Jesus changed his heart of stone into a heart of flesh. He understood Jesus' compassionate heart. He became a friend of Jesus. He in turn, becomes a man of compassion.

Zacchaeus hadn't changed his job. He kept his place in society, but his heart had changed. Jesus invites us to the communion table so that our hearts may change, and that we open our hearts to those who are poorer than ourselves to weaker and frailer people. Jesus gives himself to us in the Eucharist in order to give us his own heart. « Because without him we can do nothing ».



Welcome and Reunion

The coordinating team welcomes everyone. The room is decorated with a drawing of a big tree, or branches, which can then decorate the meal table.



Sharing

▶ Together

The leader says a word of introduction. He reminds us of the theme for the year, the theme for this month.

Reading of the **word of the month** by the leader or a member of the coordinating team or the chaplain.

We can play out together the meeting between Zacchaeus and Jesus (Lk 19: 1-10). For the meal at Zacchaeus's house, we thought of a table for about ten people.



At the end of the mime, Jesus calls each one by his first name and says to him : « *(First name) Today I want to stay at your house* » handing him a little invitation card to the meal or the snack. Each person goes and puts it on the table at the place where he will sit during the meal.

► In sharing groups

Zacchaeus wants to see Jesus. Jesus anticipates his wish and gives him much more than he had wanted : He goes and stays at Zacchaeus's house.

- Do I also feel the desire to see and meet Jesus ?
- Jesus asks Zacchaeus to « *come down* » from the tree of his pride, to put aside his need to have power over others, to become more humble. What is the name of the tree from which I must come down in order to meet others ? Selfishness ? Contempt for others ? The taste for power ? Indifference ? Self-absorption ? Fear of others ? The desire to be perfect?...
- Jesus said to Zacchaeus : « *I want to stay at your house* » He says it to each of us. Am I aware that Jesus wants to stay in my heart.



Prayer

We begin with a hymn on the theme of « *Letting oneself be looked at by Christ* » and we will reread the Gospel of Lk 19 : 1-10. Then, with music playing in the background, we pass around an icon of Jesus. While holding the icon in our hands, we repeat the words which Jesus addresses to us personally : « *Today I want to stay at your house* ». We can finish with this prayer :

*Lord, pardon me for what you know better than me.
If I begin again, Lord,
grant me your pardon once more.*

Lord, forgive me if,



*when I have committed myself to doing something,
you find that I have failed to keep my promise.*

*Lord, forgive me if,
I have said with my words that I want to come closer to you,
and my heart does the opposite.*

*Lord, forgive me.
If I have sinned with my eyes, or with wicked words,
with the desires of the heart or the faults of my tongue.*

*Lord, deal with me with mercy
and not with justice.*

Ali ibn abi talib (Moslem prayer)

We finish with the Our Father holding hands and with a special hymn.

► **Prayer of a poor person**

We are in calmness and silence. We close our eyes. We are there, with Zacchaeus. There is a large crowd and Zacchaeus is small ! He climbs into a tree to see Jesus. Jesus looks at him and reads what is in his heart. «*Today, I want to stay at your house*».

Jesus says to me : «*I know everything that is in your heart... I want to be with you today... I want to be with you*».



Figsta

Miming game

We sing : «*The farmer wants a wife, the farmer wants a wife*». The farmer chooses his wife (he chooses her from those in the gathering, goes towards her and takes her by the hand dragging her along



into a dance to the music). The wife chooses her child (same game), the child chooses its nurse, the nurse chooses her dog, the dog gets the cat, the cat gets the mouse, the mouse gets the cheese, the mouse gets beaten (everyone surrounds the mouse and beats him - not too hard - on the back). If you don't know this song, you can choose one with a good rhythm.

You can also do a conga-type dance to lively music where the last person to join the line invites a new person from the community into the dance by taking him by the hand.

For the meal or snack, we decorate the table with branches and we sit where our little invitation card is.

The Charter :

« In order to help people with intellectual disabilities to find peace of heart, hope and the desire to grow, it is certainly necessary to see them in the light of the Gospel, but also to understand their human needs in their suffering, and to know how to respond. For this, we must gradually acquire human experience and the necessary knowledge. Those who are involved in Faith and Light must become competent in the way they accompany people who suffer or are in difficulties. » (II, 3)

The time of faithfulness



► **In little friendship groups,
if we can meet in these**

« Jesus invites us to the communion table so that our hearts may change and so that we may become open to those weaker than ourselves ». We could celebrate communion together and then meet to share in a meal.



► **In our personal live**

I will try to make my prayer corner more beautiful : a flower, a pretty branch, a pebble, a doily... I finish each day with a time of thanksgiving, I ask myself in particular : « *Where, have I seen and met you today, Lord ?* ».



Mary and Joseph





The word of the month

An angel was sent to Mary in Nazareth to tell her that she was going to become the mother of the Son of the Most High ; he would receive the throne of David and reign over the house of Jacob for ever and his kingdom will never end. Mary was bewildered ; she didn't see how this could be possible. The angel told her : «The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow. And so the child will be holy and will be called the Son of God.» (Lk 1 : 35).

Mary was engaged to a righteous man whose name was Joseph. The angel also appeared to Joseph to explain to him that the child that Mary, his wife, was carrying was conceived of the Holy Spirit, and that he had nothing to fear ; he could take Mary home to be his wife. (Mt 1 : 18-22)

*Every child is a gift from God, but Jesus was a very special one because he was conceived through the action of the Holy Spirit. Jesus is the Word of God, the Son of God in communion with God. He **is** God. Like God, he exists first and foremost. It is he who chose Mary, his mother, and Joseph, his adoptive father.*

The birth of Jesus was therefore an event that was both very human, very poor, and very unimaginable because he is the beloved son of God. We can therefore understand the extraordinary joy of Mary and Joseph to be able to hold Jesus in their arms and to contemplate the face of God in and through him.

The hearts of Mary and Joseph were filled with an immense love for this child. His presence filled them with elation. God is Love. In living with Jesus, they received the very heart of God who is Love. This heart, God's heart, is goodness, love, compassion. Their hearts also became hearts of goodness, love and compassion. This small community of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, was happy, radiant and prayerful. There was so much love between



the three of them. This community must have been very welcoming for the poor, suffering and isolated people around them.



How can we, in our community, our family, wherever we live, take the life of Jesus, Mary and Joseph in Nazareth as an example ?



Welcome and Reunion

A few members of the coordinating team, dressed in white could symbolise angels. They welcome each person arriving as though it was Jesus himself who is being welcomed.



Sharing

► Together

The leader says a word of welcome. He reminds us of the theme of the year, the theme of this month.

Reading of the **word of the month** by the leader or a member of the coordinating team or the chaplain.

We can play out together the Annunciation to Mary (Lk 1 : 26-28), then that given to Joseph by an angel in a dream (Mt 1 : 18-25). Background music will create a meditative atmosphere. At the end of the mime, the angel says to all the members of the community : Mary agreed to carry Jesus, the Son of God in her womb. Do we, for our part, agree to carry Jesus in our hearts ? We will have a moment of silence before saying the same « Yes » as Mary.



► In sharing groups

With their faith, Mary and Joseph show us the joy and the difficulty of accepting Jesus, a son whom we were not expecting but whom we recognise as a gift of God. The parents of Jesus are not immediately ready to welcome their son : at first, Joseph is afraid, and Mary does not understand.

- What are the difficulties that I have and what do I not understand in accepting Jesus ?
- The Holy Spirit descends upon Mary to open her heart to trust and to free her from fear. Have I myself also experienced the anxiety, but also the joy of Mary and Joseph in welcoming Jesus ?
- Is our community ready to welcome new people ? We can write on a piece of paper the name of a person whom we would like to welcome into our community. Perhaps we could welcome that person to the Festival of Light in February ?



Prayer

We can carry out this time of prayer in front of the crib or in front of a picture of the nativity. We can also decorate our prayer corner with an Advent crown.

We begin with an Advent hymn. Then, we read the Gospel of Mt 1 : 18-25. After a few moments of silence, we pray for all families, particularly for those of our community and for those we wish to entrust to the Lord. Each person in turn places, before the baby Jesus the pieces of paper on which we have written the names of those we would like to welcome into our community. Between each one, we can sing an Alleluia.

Then, we can read the prayer :

*Come, Jesus, in swaddling clothes, not in tears,
in humility not in grandeur ;*



*in the crib, not in heavenly clouds ;
in the arms of your mother, not on a king's throne ;
on a donkey not surrounded by cherubim ;
with us, not against us ;
to save, not to judge ;
to visit us in peace, not to condemn in anger.*

*Since you come in this way, Jesus,
instead of avoiding you, we will run towards you.*

Pietro di Celle

We finish with an Our Father holding hands and an Advent hymn (or a Christmas hymn if we are meeting on Christmas Day or after Christmas). If we wish, we can pick up our piece of paper with the name on it and entrust it to Jesus in the prayer corner in our house.

▶ **Prayer of a poor person**

We are in calmness and silence. We close our eyes. We are with Mary and Joseph. God says : « *Mary, will you be the mother of my son Jesus ?* » and Mary says : « *yes* ». God says : « *Joseph, will you welcome my son Jesus into your family ?* » and Joseph says : « *yes* ».

Our prayer can be : « *Me too ! Come, Lord Jesus. I welcome you... yes, I welcome you...* ».



Fiesta

We can organise a little workshop : we prepare simple presents which we make together, or we decorate Christmas cards which we will send to those who cannot come regularly, to people we wish to invite to the next meeting. We decorate the meal or snack table with our Advent crown.



The Charter :

*«Jesus came to announce the Good News to the poor. They are loved by the Father. Jesus gives His life for his flock. He feeds them with his Body. **Jesus is present in our meetings and our celebrations. He helps us to lead the life of the community with love and loyalty. We meet Him in a special way in prayer, in the celebration of the Eucharist and other liturgies.**» (1,3)*

The time of faithfulness



▶ **In little friendship groups,
if we can meet in these**

We can look up in magazines or on the Internet the accounts of the young people at the last World Day of Youth in Cologne which had as its theme: *«We have come to adore Him»* and we could read them together.

Here is a beautiful Oriental tradition : at Christmas time and for the New Year, friends and family pay each other short visits, simply to wish each other a happy time and to eat a few pastries together.



▶ **In our personal live**

We prepare our hearts to welcome Jesus. In our prayer corner, we set up a little crib for His coming.

We place near the crib, the piece of paper with the name of the person for whom we prayed together at the last meeting or whom we have invited to the next meeting. In this way, we continue to pray for that person and to keep

him in our hearts. We could make a little present for him, pay him a visit, or telephone him to wish him a Happy Christmas.



January

Unity Week

The Samaritan woman

(John 4)





The word of the month

On the way to Galilee, after a long and tiring day on foot with his disciples, Jesus stopped near a well and encountered a Samaritan woman. She was a poor woman with a history of many broken relationships and an accumulation of suffering. She belonged to a religious group in the minority, despised by the Jews who considered the Samaritans as heretics, worthless before God. This woman came to draw water. Jesus was there, he's tired and he's thirsty. Like a beggar with much humility, he asked the woman : « Will you give me a drink ? » She was astonished because in the Jewish culture of that time, Jews and Samaritans never talked to each other. She replied : « How is it that you, a Jew, are asking of me, a Samaritan woman to drink ? »

Jesus knew that this woman had lost all confidence in her self and in her ability to have a stable and loyal relationship. He knew that she was discouraged. However, Jesus treated her with great respect, kindness and compassion. He helped her to discover who she was. He started a conversation with her. He had a profound encounter with her. He led her to discover that if she trusted him he would help her to experience beautiful things. « If you drink this water I give to you, you will never thirst. The water I give will become a spring of water welling up in eternal life ». The woman was deeply moved. Little by little she discovered that Jesus was not only a prophet sent by God, but the Messiah himself ! She was transformed by his respectful and loving attitude which helped her to no longer consider herself as « less than nothing ». Through Jesus' love she knew that she was someone. She then ran to the village to tell everyone that she had met a marvelous man. « Perhaps he is the Messiah ? »

Through this meeting with a compassionate Jesus, this discouraged woman became a lively and confident woman. She wants everyone to meet the gentle and humble Jesus.

For centuries Samaritans and Jews had been living in reciprocal hostility.



Jesus' first mission in John's Gospel was with the Samaritans. Jesus wanted to help the Jews and Samaritans to live in peace and find unity.



Jesus calls Faith and Light communities to yearn for and work unity through their compassion for those who are weakest : unity within each community, unity between the different Christian churches, each person showing respect for the gifts of others, learning from each other. If we drink the water (a symbol of the Holy Spirit) that Jesus wants to give us, we will become instruments of unity and peace. We will also become so by praying with Him that all his dispersed children may be assembled in unity. With Him we beg our Father « Father may all be one so that the world may believe. »



Welcome and Reunion

In order to show that everyone is important in the eyes of God, as is done at big, official receptions, a master of ceremonies proclaims in ringing tones the name of each person as they arrive and those who are already there applaud their arrival.



Sharing

► Together

The leader says a word of introduction. He reminds us of the theme of the year, the theme of this month.

Reading of the **word of the month** by the leader or a member of the coordinating team or the chaplain.

We can mime the meeting between the Samaritan woman and Jesus (Jn 4 :



5-15) choosing the easiest, most accessible passages.

- First scene : Jesus arrives near a well. It is hot, Jesus is tired.
- Second scene : the Samaritan woman approaches the well with her pitcher and Jesus asks her for a drink.
- Third scene : dialogue between the woman and Jesus.

► In sharing groups

The coordinating team will have prepared a great number of little characters shaking hands. Each one receives the character on which you write your name. You can colour it in and come and join it (with sellotape or glue, or a pin) to the hand of the one in front, interspersing the characters of the invited guests, to rebuild the «string», the image of the community. (If there are no guests, we can intersperse characters from other countries, other denominations). The «string» thus created can, with its variety of colours, be used to decorate the table.

Jesus approaches those who are different, who are excluded and scorned, towards those who feel worthless.

- Have I, for my part, felt excluded, worthless ? When ? How did I react ? I try to say which gestures, which attitudes have given me back or would give me back my confidence.
- Jesus goes and meets this Samaritan woman, he takes the first step towards her. He asks her to do him a favour. Am I, too, capable of taking the first step, like Jesus, towards those who feel small and worthless ? Towards those who feel different in the community or in society ? Each person can talk about what he is doing or what he can do.
- Jesus is sensitive to the particular needs of this woman : and what about me ? Am I sensitive to the particular needs of others ? How, in our community, to help and show off to advantage each individual, especially those who feel small and who have lost confidence in themselves ?



Prayer

We can begin the prayer with a hymn of praise.
We can read Psalm 63 (62) : *« God, You are my God.
From dawn, I look for you... »*.

In the word of the month, Jean Vanier says : *« Jesus calls upon the Faith and Light communities to work at and yearn for unity through their compassion for those who are weakest unity within each community unity between the different Christian churches, each one showing respect for the gifts of others learning from each other »*.

We turn to our neighbour and give a sign of peace : a kiss, a caress on the cheek...

We finish with the hymn : *« Father, make us one »* while holding hands.

► Prayer of a poor person

We are in calmness and silence. We close our eyes. We see this woman coming alone to the well. Jesus comes along and asks her to give him a drink. She is amused because she is a Samaritan and Jesus is a Jew. At that time, the Samaritans and the Jews shared nothing, not even a conversation !

Our prayer can be : *« Jesus, you bring peace and friendship. I want to help you and bring peace and friendship into the whole world... peace and love to each and everyone... »*



Fiesta

We will try to experience the joy of a moment of unity in a collective dance in which our aim will be to be particularly attentive to each other.

We could, for example, choose Syrian or Lebanese music : the Dabka. For



the dance, we hold hands. We take six steps to the right, starting with the left foot. Then we strike the floor twice with the left foot and start again.

Suggested game

- **The ball of wool**

Roll a length of wool into a ball. Everybody is in a circle. The first person throws the ball to another, holding on to the end of the wool and saying his first name. This second person catches the ball of wool, holds onto the yarn and throws the ball to another player saying his first name, and so on and so on. At the end, the whole ball has been unrolled and we find ourselves with a beautiful piece of cloth joining together all the players. You could also use several balls in different colours.

The Charter :

*« **All Christians** are called to find a deep expression of their faith and their love of Jesus within their own Church. At community meetings, they seek how they may worship together, united as brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ. » (1, 5)*

The time of faithfulness



► In little friendship groups,

We could, for example, read together a passage from Jean Vanier's book *« Together towards a unified earth »*³ or talk about the boxed text attached next page.

We could approach someone from a different Christian denomination or from another religion, visit them, suggest an outing together, pray together. It is important to take the first step between communities, between different denominations.

³ Available from the international secretariat.



We can try to come together with those people in our group whom we tend to exclude, in an effort to give them their proper value. I am talking about a person for whom I feel no natural warmth : what steps can I take to get closer to this person ?

If we have not been able to invite people of a different denomination to the meeting, we should try to deepen our knowledge of another denomination so that we are taking seriously our ecumenical vocation and mission. And quite simply, we pray for unity : « *Father, unite us all* ».

«Unity is only possible, when stone by stone, the walls around our hearts and our intelligence have fallen down and that we are living an experience of God present in our vulnerability... So, we contemplate the light and the Love of God in others. There is no longer any emptiness, anguish, feeling of abandonment but a new life, the very life of God arising within us. It is an experience of freedom, of light, of truth, of fullness in which our human identity mysteriously gives way to a new identity springing directly from God. This marvellous unity, a source of peace is the promise of what is given to us when we allow ourselves to be transformed in God. It is the fruit of a struggle, in us first of all between the darkness and the light.»

Jean Vanier (lecture given in Brussels, 24 March 2006)



The Presentation of our Lord

Siméon

Luke 2 : 22-32





The word of the month

The Gospel of Luke tells how Mary and Joseph brought their child Jesus to the Temple to present him to God 40 days after his birth. We cannot say that Simeon was their friend since they didn't know him. But through a gift from the Holy Spirit, Simeon realized that Jesus was the Messiah. He had even received a divine sign from the Holy Spirit that he wouldn't die before he had seen the Messiah. He took the infant Jesus in his arms and he blessed God announcing that Jesus is the light for revelation to the world and the glory of God's people (Lk 2 : 32).

After having blessed Mary and Joseph, Simeon said to Mary «This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel and to be a sign that is opposed and a sword will pierce your own heart too - so that the secret thoughts of many hearts will be revealed.» (Lk 2 : 34-35).

This is one of the founding text for Faith and Light which announces Jesus as the light of the world. We want to be a small light for our world. The light that we have received in our communities is this : the weakest people, who are often rejected, are precious to God. If we welcome them with love, we will be transformed.

Jesus will be the «falling and the rising of many». Welcoming Jesus means going toward the light, inner liberation, opening up to others, compassion and forgiveness. Refusing Jesus means closing ones heart and thus rejecting others, living in rivalry and jealousy.

Similarly, if we welcome those who are weak and vulnerable, they open our hearts and transform us, they become a path towards God. If we reject them, we retreat into ourselves and we cut ourselves off from God.





Faith and Light is a precious gift which has been entrusted to us. We do not own this gift, but we are responsible for it. How can each one of us, each community, help to share the light has been given to us? Do we know that there are almost 1500 Faith and Light communities in the world? Let's stay in communion with them. Let's pray together so that Faith and Light may be known and other communities may be born in order to respond to the loneliness and distress of so many people with disabilities and their families.



Welcome and Reunion

You could leave the room dimly lit and welcome each new arrival by offering them a little lit candle saying to them : « *Jesus is the light of the world* ». Gradually, as the community gathers, there will be more and more light. You could begin singing a hymn about the light while waiting for the latecomers. Then everybody goes and places them in the prayer corner. They will be relit during the time of prayer.



Sharing

▶ Together

The leader says a word of introduction. He reminds us of the theme of the year, the theme of this month. Reading of the **word of the month** by the leader or a member of the coordinating team or the chaplain.

We can act out together the presentation of Jesus in the Temple (Lk 2 : 22-35) or mime the story of the birth of Faith and Light (appendix 5, page 88).



► In sharing groups

Faith and Light is a precious gift which has been entrusted to us : we do not own it, we are its « leaders », its « managers ». Each one of us is responsible for making Faith and Light known and loved.

The Holy Spirit gives to Simeon the ability to recognise the presence of God in a little child just like all the others.

- Are we capable of recognising the presence of God in the « little ones » ?
- We are called to bear witness to the attitude of Jesus to the smallest among us, recognising them fully as children of God, capable of a spiritual life and of true holiness. How do I bear witness to this attitude ? Through which actions and which behaviour ?
- « *Better to light a lamp than to curse the darkness* » Where ? How ? For whom can we light a new lamp ? What are we going to do to make the light of Jesus spread among us ?
- Do we talk about the Faith and Light community in a happy way ? Do we invite other disabled people, other parents, other friends to join us ?



Prayer

We are seated in a circle. Each person receives a small unlit candle. We can begin the prayer in dimmed light. In the middle of the circle, a single large candle is lit. We begin a suitable hymn about Jesus the light of the world. The chaplain or the leader lights his small candle from the large candle and then goes and lights the little light of the person next to him saying : « *May Jesus, the light of the world light up your heart.* » Each person performs the same action of lighting up the little light of the person next to him, accompanied by the same words. When all the little candles are lit, we will read the prayer :

*Oh pure, sincere and perfect love !
oh eternal light !*



*Give me light
so that in it I may recognise your light.
Give me your light so that I may see your love.
Give me your light so that I may see your heart, the heart of a father.*

*Give me a heart to love you,
eyes to see you,
give me ears to hear your voice,
give me lips to speak about you,
give me a sense of taste that I might savour you.*

*Give me a sense of smell that I may appreciate your perfume,
give me the hands to touch you
and the feet to follow you.*

*On Earth and in Heaven
I long for you alone, my God !
You are my only desire,
my consolation,
the end of all anguish and all suffering.*

Tichon de Zadonsk (Orthodox prayer)

We pray

- for all the communities in the world,
- that our community might transmit a light which warms and illuminates,
- that people suffering the dark night of the soul might join us,
- that one day, through the grace of God, might give birth to a new community

We finish our prayer with an Our Father holding hands with the same hymn as at the beginning on the theme of light. Each of us will keep his little light so that we can light them at home, during the evening prayer.



► Prayer of a poor person

We are in calmness and silence. We close our eyes. We go to the Temple of Jerusalem. There, we meet Simeon. He is a holy man. Mary and Joseph come into the Temple, bringing with them their little boy. Simeon takes Jesus in his arms. He raises up the one who will bring light into the lives of many, many, many people.

Our prayer could be : *«Jesus, let your light come into my heart... I want to be a little light for others... A little light like Jesus...».*



Fiesta

The map of the world showing the countries where there are Faith and Light communities is put up.

The leader can explain the rather special geography of the six Faith and Light continents. He will lay particular emphasis on the necessity of being open to the national, continental and international dimension of Faith and Light. He will explain the significance of « The family album » and will tell his community about it. The suggestion is that we find out about each of the six continents in turn each month so that the communities will be able to take an interest in each other, will be able to open their hearts to each other, and pray for each other.

To make the world flourish, a flower and the gift it symbolises, represents each continent. We can make it of paper or copy the picture (see appendix 3, page 83) and stick it each month around the map of the world.

The family album

This month, we are finding out about the Europe Middle-East continent, whose flower is the hibiscus, which symbolises brotherhood.

We can share the meal or the snack together, in the light of the candles on tables decorated in a particularly festive way.



The Charter :

«Faith and Light communities across the world form the branches of one big international family. Within each continent, zone, country, we carry one another's burdens, sufferings and joys. Solidarity is expressed by sharing financial support for the life of Faith and Light but also by sharing the benefits of their particular gifts, their friendship, the wisdom of their experience, and their faithfulness in prayer. As members of a single family, communities seek to live in love and unity.» (III,4)

The time of faithfulness



► **In little friendship groups,**

If we are able to meet, we can make paper flowers together which could be used for the service of penitence of the next month. We can also go for a walk to collect branches which will be used to decorate the prayer corner for the next meeting.



We can light at home the candle that was offered to us during the prayer in community, and say the words : «Jesus, you are the light of my hearth». We can remember all the people who are living through a period of darkness, and more especially for our friends of the Europe and Middle-East continent.



Lent

The good thief

(Luke 23 : 39)





The word of the month

Jesus is on the cross, he's dying. He is being crucified between two other men condemned to death, who have probably committed the murders of Roman soldiers. One of them hurls abuse at Jesus: «Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!» But the other one rebuked him and declared: «Don't you fear God, since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.» Then he said, «Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.» Jesus answered him, «Truly, truly I tell you today you will be with me in paradise.»

When almost everyone was mocking Jesus, when his friends had fled and abandoned him, Jesus is left all alone. At that moment this poor man, who is also dying, this criminal, who's also suspended from a cross, turns with trust towards Jesus. He expresses his faith. He doesn't call him «Lord» or «Rabbi» but «Jesus», his informal name. He looks tenderly at Jesus. He asks nothing of him, except one thing «Remember me». Jesus must have been deeply moved. This person was the last person to become Jesus' friend during his earthly life. Jesus, full of goodness and compassion, reveals to this man that on that very day, they will be together in the joy of the Father's kingdom. Jesus and this good thief, two poor people who look at each other and who love each other.



When we are in distress or we're having difficulties, when we feel that we are very unattractive, we too can turn towards Jesus and call out to him. He will look at us with tenderness and will promise us peace in our hearts. Through his suffering, Jesus gives us the strength to bear our own suffering. Our hope is that we are already in the Kingdom of God, and that one day we will rise up with Jesus and in Jesus.

After the Resurrection, one of the first things that Jesus does is to send his disciples on mission with the power to forgive sins. He asks us to accept



and to give forgiveness. During this Easter time, it is good to open up our hearts to a priest or pastor who represents Jesus, to tell him about our mistakes and to ask forgiveness. For some, this can take the form of the sacrament of reconciliation.



Welcome and Reunion

We will place a large image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus at the entrance or a large heart at the centre of which is written «Jesus». On arriving, each person will receive a heart on which is written : «Remember me».



Sharing

► Together

The leader says a word of introduction. He recalls the theme of the year, the theme of this month.

Reading of the **word of the month** by the leader or a member of the coordinating team or the chaplain.

The chaplain could, this month, help us to deepen our understanding of the word of the month with a short, simple word of reflection.

Then, each person could leave a print of their finger on the image of the heart of Jesus. This gesture would symbolise our presence near Jesus on the cross. (provide a bit of ink or paint.)

► In sharing groups

«Remember me.» The good thief asks nothing more of Jesus.

«Remember», in Latin : «recordare» means «carry me in your heart». A parent, a friend makes the same request of us : «Remember me, carry me in your heart, pray for me, telephone me, come and see me...».



- Who do I carry in my heart? Whom do I forget more easily?
- Of whom is it that I ask: «Remember me?»
- The good thief calls Jesus by his name; he trusts him, even if his own life is a wasted life, a sinner's life. I trust Jesus. I am sure that he pardons all my sins as soon as I say to him: «*Jesus, forgive what I have done*». After that, am I like the good thief, I trust Jesus and do not think about my sin any more?
- How are our relationships within the community: do we express trust, closeness and forgiveness?
- To finish, we can write on the heart which we received on our arrival, the name of someone to whom we wish to show friendliness, especially during the coming month.



Prayer

This month's prayer can be connected to the sacrament of reconciliation or to a service of penitence.

It can begin with a special hymn, after we have made the shape of a cross on the floor with branches, surrounded with little candles.

After the reading of the Gospel of Luke 23 : 33-43, each person will ask Jesus' forgiveness by repeating the sentence: «*Jesus, remember me.*». If he wishes, he can add a particular request for forgiveness, for example: «*Because I judged others...*». After having asked for forgiveness or received the sacrament of reconciliation, he can place a coloured paper flower on the cross, prepared by one of the little friendship groups. After each request for forgiveness, we can strike up a chorus.

When everybody who wishes to has asked for forgiveness, we read the prayer:

*Lord Jesus,
I am poor and you also are poor.
I am weak and you also are weak.
I am a man and you also are a man.
All my greatness comes from your littleness.*



*All my strength comes from your weakness.
All my wisdom comes from your foolishness !*

*I will run to you, Lord,
For you heal the sick,
you strengthen the weak,
and you give back joy to hearts plunged into sadness.
I want to follow you, lord Jesus.*

Aelred de Rievaulx

We finish the prayer by reciting an Our Father by holding hands then singing a hymn full of joy.

◆ Prayer of a poor person

We are in peace and quietness. We close our eyes. We are at Calvary, we look at Jesus on the cross. There are two other crosses, with two thieves. One of the thieves has little respect for Jesus. The other speaks with humility and understanding.

Our prayer can be : *«Jesus, even on the cross, you have compassion for someone who is also suffering and he has compassion for you. Soon, very soon, you and he are going to go through suffering and death to come to a new life, a marvellous life... Soon, very soon, it will be Easter !... »*



Figsta

We can think up a quiz on Faith and Light putting forward three questions, one real and two which are rather amusing or unusual.

We can also prepare personal questions like : *«Close your eyes and tell me the colour of mine»*. *«What is the date of my birthday? My address? What's my brother called ?...»* or we could try a few tests : hopping round the room, travel a certain distance without dropping a ping pong ball from a spoon held in the mouth...



The family album

This month, we are finding out about the continent of Africa Indian Ocean, whose flower is the passion flower, which symbolises peace.

The Charter :

«*But in the community we must not forget those who are not able to enter into the celebration and shut in with their sadness and their fears. They also have their place at the heart of Faith and Light. They need to receive special attention so that gradually they may know **the peace** and the joy of heart that Jesus came to bring us, **even when difficulty and suffering remain..***» (1, 2)

The time of faithfulness



▶ In little friendship groups,

We could watch a film about Jesus or about the Passion together, or an album with beautiful illustrations.



We can say the Our Father in a special way, emphasising the words : «*Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors*» and trying to reconcile ourselves with people with whom we are having difficulties.

We will also remember in our prayer all those who have asked us : «*Remember me*», particularly our friends from the continent of Africa and Indian Ocean.



In the coordinating team

Will you please take the time together to do the evaluation for this year's guidelines (appendix 6, page 92) and send it to the international secretariat before the **15th April**. Your thoughts, remarks and suggestions are essential for the editorial team for next year. A big thank you !



Peter





The word of the month

Peter was deeply human ; his feet were firmly on the ground. He was chosen by Jesus and became his friend. But he continued to see Jesus as the political liberator of the people of Israel who were being subjected to Roman occupation. Peter found it very difficult to understand that Jesus, through his suffering and the gift of his life, came to liberate people's hearts from sin and from their refusal of God. He couldn't allow Jesus to wash his feet. At one time, with lots of bravado, he affirmed that he would give his life for his friend Jesus. Jesus then predicted that Peter would disown him three times. And this is indeed what happens : on three occasions Peter tells some women : « I do not know this man ». Was it out of fear ? Or was it because of his inner turmoil ? He really believed that Jesus was going to liberate Israel ! And here he was being condemned to death and not even doing anything to defend himself !

Peter, who was chosen by Jesus to be the rock or the stone on which the Church was going to be built, was the one who disowned Jesus.

Peter was filled with shame ; he was a traitor ; he felt insignificant and poor. He was sorry for his fault ; in his heart he must have asked God's forgiveness a thousand times. His reconciliation with Jesus took place in Galilee, near the lake of Tiberius. Three times Jesus asked him : « Simon son of John, do you truly love me ? » These three questions were a painful reminder to Peter of the three times he disowned Jesus. Confused and humiliated, he replied to Jesus « You know that I love you ». And each time Jesus confirmed like the shepherd of the flock : « Feed my lambs ; Feed my sheep ; Feed my sheep ».

Yes, « Feed my lambs, watch over the smallest ones. » Is that not the role of a shepherd : to be full of goodness and compassion especially for the smallest and the weakest ones ?

The specific gift of Faith and Light is to be centred on those who are the weakest and most vulnerable ; those that God has chosen in a special way.



Being a leader, a shepherd, a minister or a priest in Faith and Light means watching over the smallest of the flock.



They have their place at the heart of the Church. But often, they are absent from their parish because they are disrupting or because people think that they don't understand what is going on. One of the missions of a Faith and Light community is to be present and integrated into the local parish, to raise the awareness of the pastor, to participate as a community in the services, to make sure that people with disabilities are accompanied to church, whenever possible, on the Sunday's on which the community doesn't meet.

For the Catholic and Orthodox members, there is also a mission to make sure that they are able to receive the sacrament of reconciliation, be prepared to receive the sacrament of the Eucharist and/or confirmation.



Welcome and Reunion

Since the beginning of the year, we have walked and navigated in the company of the friends of Jesus and of Jesus himself.

We also want to be the friends of Jesus, setting off with him on his boat. So, like Peter, we are going to bring our little stone to build Jesus' boat, for us the little craft of Faith and Light. We each bring a little pebble, a nice pebble picked up outside, and with everybody's pebble, we will mark out on the ground a craft big enough for everyone to find a place in it. You could also form the outline with string, ribbons...

Once everybody has arrived and the boat is built, we take our place inside and we celebrate by rowing all together and singing. The leader introduces the friend of Jesus whom we are going to meet today : Peter.



Sharing

▶ Together

The leader says a few words of introduction. He recalls the theme of the year, the theme of this month.

Reading of the **word of the month** by the leader or a member of the coordinating team or the chaplain.

We can act out together two passages from the life of Peter.

- First scene : the denial of Peter (Mt 26 : 69-75)
- Second scene : Jesus' appearance at Lake Tiberias (Jn 21 : 1-19)

After the mime we could reflect on the task which Jesus entrusted to Peter to watch over his flock, the Church. The leader and the coordinating team watch over the community in the same way, but the community is entrusted also to each one of us. It is very important, in fact, that each person in the community should have a task for which he is responsible carried out with tact and love.

We could write down how the responsibilities are divided up, we could inform those who are not present and could remind each other about them regularly or we could do an evaluation of each person's workload at the end of the year.

We could also have a think about our links with the parish or our local church. Could we be more integrated ? Could we help people with a disability to take part in Sunday mass ?

▶ In sharing groups

Jesus really knows us : he knows our name and our whole story.

- I think of certain times when I have not been loyal to Jesus. Do I personally feel, known by Jesus and loved in my weakness, even when I have been disloyal to him ?
- In our community we try to welcome each other just as we are : has my



pathway in Faith and Light helped me and does it continue to help me to reconcile myself to my weaknesses ?

- Thinking about my responsibilities within the community, am I obsessed with «doing», with my need to be useful, or do I feel that I am known by Jesus who calls me by my name and trusts me ?
- Have I already, like Peter, had the experience of not being able to do anything by myself ?
- We all have responsibilities, each one of us in his own place, towards the smallest ones and also towards the Church : what difficulties have we encountered, especially in our parish, and how can we move forward? We can read the last paragraph of the word of the month.



Prayer

We begin with a special hymn and we read the Gospel of John 21 : 15-19.

The chaplain represents Jesus. He calls each person by his first name : « *(First name) do you love me ?* ». « *Yes* ». « *Take care of my sheep, take care of my lambs* ». He gives him a little lit candle.

When everybody has been called, we read the prayer :

*Take, Lord, and receive
all of my freedom,
my memory, my intelligence
and all of my will,
all that I have
and all that I possess.*

*It is you who have given me everything,
to you, Lord, I give it back.
Everything is yours, use it
according to your will.*

Give me only the right to love you



*and give me your grace,
it alone is enough for me.*

Saint Ignatius of Loyola

We finish with the Our Father and a hymn, all together in a circle, joining our hands together in a special way : we take the hand of the person next to us, on the one side supporting the hand of the other person, on the other being supported by the other person.

▶ **Prayer of a poor person**

We are in calmness and silence. We close our eyes. Peter is beside us. He is there : Peter the fisherman, the disciple, the man whom Jesus called : « *the Rock* »...

Our prayer can be : « *Peter, you let Jesus down. You were not as strong as you thought. You felt bad about yourself. You thought that you had abandoned Jesus for ever. But Jesus is still coming to you !* » « *Help me to remember that Jesus always comes to us... Jesus always comes to us...* ».



Fiesta

Suggestion for a game

*** The chain of hands**

8 to 15 people (above this number it gets too complicated) get into a group. Each takes the hand of another participant, if possible not the person next to him. When we are sure that all of the hands have found another, the group tries to untangle itself without letting go hands. At the end, only one chain should remain, but often, several chains will have formed...

We can place all our lit candles on the table for our meal or snack.



The family album

This month, we are particularly interested in the continent of «Faith and Light of the Americas» whose flower is the poinsettia. It symbolises justice.

The Charter :

« In order to live his/her faith, everyone, even the person with the most severe disability, needs to meet real friends in order to create together a warm environment in which each one may grow in faith and love. Those who come to Faith and Light to meet people with intellectual disabilities must come in a spirit of receiving from them their specific gifts while sharing their own gifts with them. » (II, 2)

The time of faithfulness



► In little friendship groups,

We can prepare our hearts for the May meeting by thinking about, either in groups or alone, the word of the month and by choosing together photos of children which we will take to the next meeting.



Each morning or in the calm of evening, I look at the image of Jesus and I say to him : «*Lord, you know everything, you know that I love you*».



The little children

(Mark 10 : 13)





The word of the month

In the Gospel, small children are loved by Jesus in a particular way. One day, people were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch and bless them.

But the disciples rebuked them ; they wanted to send the children and their mothers away. Perhaps the children were disturbing them at a time when they were trying to discuss serious matters ! At that time in history, it's true

to say that children were not treated with much respect. Consideration was reserved for grown ups.

Seeing what was happening Jesus was angry with his apostles and told them «Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.» And he took the children in his arms to embrace them, put his hands on their heads and blessed them.

*Why was he so tender with the children ? Is it not because the children listened with their hearts and the disciples who were adults, listened with their minds ? Jesus' message is one of love, selflessness, trust, simplicity and communion. The children were attracted to Jesus' goodness and to him as a person. Jesus enjoyed being with them. It is the only time in the Gospel where it is said that Jesus embraces someone. The message of Jesus is Jesus himself : receive him with trust and live in communion with him. The disciples try to **understand** Jesus' vision, they want to participate in the power he has ; the children want to be embraced by him and experience a loving and trusting relationship with him. Jesus was happy to take them into his arms and to love them.*

Is it not true that children, through their simplicity, help us to understand Jesus, to live with him and to enter into the Gospel ? Children don't want ideas ; they search for the heart ; they want a relationship with communion. Is this not also true of men and women who are not able to develop their capacity to reason but who have developed the capacities of their hearts ?



The specific mystery of Faith and Light is that we are centred on those who are weak and vulnerable and whom God has chosen in a special way. Through the very simplicity of their love, they often astound intellectual and powerful people.



How can we love and live in the way that small children do ? How can we learn from the poor ?



Welcome and Reunion

We can begin the meeting with a hymn on the spirit of childhood and dance in a circle.



Sharing

▶ Together

The leader gives a word of introduction. He recalls the theme of the year, the theme of this month.

Reading of the **word of the month** by the leader or a member of the coordination team or the chaplain.

All ages encounter Jesus : from the oldest like Simeon, to the youngest as in today's passage from the gospel. At every age, in every condition, one can become the friend of Jesus. He understands the needs of everyone. The disciples deal with children distantly. Jesus deals with children with respect, like whole human beings. We can feel his happiness in being with them ; he is free to show them his affection.



There is a way of dealing with children which is condescending or of infantilising people with disabilities.

We could play out again together the meeting between Jesus and the children (Mk 10 : 13-16).

- First scene : parents present their children to Jesus to have them blessed but the disciples reject them.
- Second scene : Jesus becomes angry and explains.
- Third scene : Jesus embraces the children and blesses them.

We can then make a sign which expresses our desire to welcome and our need to be welcomed : a kiss or a blessing, which each person receives and gives to his neighbour.

► In sharing groups

Each person has brought the photo of a child.

- Why have I chosen this photo ? What is it I like, what is it that touches me about this little child ?
- What is Jesus trying to tell me when he calls me to become a little child again ? (Trust in the love of others ? Ability to live in the present ? Thirst for life ? Simplicity ?)
- Who are the smallest and weakest people in our community ? With what respect and what attentions do we surround them ?



Prayer

Today it's a prayer of thanksgiving. We sing a hymn and the chorus will be repeated between each thanksgiving said spontaneously by the members of the community as they think specially about children and their mums :

- « *Lord, I give you thanks for...* »
- Chorus
- « *Lord, I give you thanks for...* »



We can pray very particularly for the little children, especially for those who have been abandoned, unloved. We will pray for the creation of a community of children in our region, our country. If our community is a community of young families, our prayer will then be a thanksgiving. The chaplain says the Psalm on the spirit of childhood, 131(130). If it is part of our tradition, the chaplain will invite each to come forward to him to receive a blessing. He can say a personal word to each one. We end with an Our Father holding hands and a hymn of thanksgiving.

► Prayer of a poor person

We are in calmness and silence. We think of our friends, little and small, young and old. We think of all the things we do together... all that we give and all we receive...

Our prayer can be : *«Jesus, give me the heart of a child which calls for love and gives love».*



Fiesta

Suggestion for a game

- **« 1, 2, 3, Sun »**

The players stand side by side at a starting line, ten metres from the opposite wall, with the leader of the game facing it. When the leader of the game counts *«One, two, three»*, he is facing the wall and cannot see the other players at his back, who can then move forward. When he says *«Sun»*, he turns round and the other players have then got to stop moving. All those whom the leader sees moving when he turns round have to return to the start. When a player has succeeded in touching the wall, he replaces the leader and everybody goes to the starting line again.

If there is a garden near at hand, and if we have permission, or if we are in the country, we can pick a few wild flowers and offer them to all the mums present and they will be the centre of our celebrations during our meal or snack.



The family album

This month, we are having a closer look at the continent of «Gate of the Dawn» (North and East Europe), whose flower is the anemone, it symbolises life.

The Charter :

«Lack of humility and of simplicity of heart is a serious obstacle to communion between Christians. 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.» (1, 5)

The time of faithfulness



► In little friendship groups,

Embracing a friend is a gesture of communion. If we can meet, we exchange a kiss of peace and friendship. We make the best of nature to go out in the open air and why not, play like children. We can also think together: *«How can we help each one to grow in the community? In order to achieve that, what do we need to do?»*



We can be attentive to the children we meet every day and make an effort to carry out with simplicity our relationships with others, avoiding any kinds of useless complications.

We entrust to Jesus all the children, particularly those of the continent of «Gate of the Dawn».



Mary from Bethany

(John 11 and 12)





The word of the month

Martha, Mary and Lazarus form a family that is particularly close to Jesus. The Gospel of John says: «Jesus loved Martha and her sister Mary and Lazarus» (Jn 11 : 5). The two sisters tell Jesus, when talking about Lazarus: «Lord, the one you love is sick» (v. 3). Jesus speaks of «our friend Lazarus» (v. 11). Jesus enjoys visiting this family.

One day when Jesus went to eat a meal at Martha's house, Martha was distracted and stressed by all the preparations that had to be made to organize a good meal for him. But Mary had sat down at Jesus' feet and was listening to what he said. Martha complained to Jesus, but he replied to her «Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.»

Lazarus died after a short illness and the two sisters were in immense grief. Jesus was deeply moved by Mary who was weeping over the death of her brother. He raised Lazarus from the dead. What joy and amazement for Mary and Martha !

This extraordinary miracle sparked things off ! The Jewish religious authorities met and decided that Jesus must be put to death, that they must get rid of him. Mary knew that it's because of her and her tears that Jesus performed the miracle.

A week later, Jesus returned to Bethany. A feast was organised at Simon the lepers' house. Maybe Martha, Mary and Lazarus' house was too small and too poor to receive friends. In the middle of this feast, Mary broke open a jar containing pure nard, which was a very expensive perfume. She poured the nard onto Jesus' head and feet and wiped his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. The apostles were indignant, particularly Judas who declared «This perfume could have been sold and the money given to the poor». Perhaps their indignation was tainted by jealousy. Mary from Bethany seemed to have a more familiar relationship with Jesus than they had.



Jesus defends the loving and extravagant gesture «Leave her alone», said Jesus. «Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me. She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial. I tell you the truth, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her.» (Mk 14 : 6-9). How well he defended Mary ! What a reproach for the disciples !

Mary gave all she had because she knew that Jesus had given all he had. It's because of that miracle that Jesus will be killed. She gave abundantly because Jesus loved her abundantly. Yes, Jesus loved Martha, Mary and Lazarus.

Mary's heart was transformed by Jesus' love. Her heart became such a loving heart for him.



Welcome and Reunion

In the same way as Mary of Bethany found to tell Jesus just how precious he was to her, the welcome team puts a drop of perfume on the hand of each person as he arrives and says to him : «You are precious in the eyes of the Lord and He loves you» (Is 43 : 4) «You will understand presently why we make this gesture».



Sharing

► Together

The leader gives a word of introduction. he reminds us of the theme of the year, the theme of this month. Reading of the **word of the month** by the reader or a member of the coordinating team or the chaplain.



The leader underlines the fact that we must not confuse Mary of Bethany whom we are finding out about here and Mary, the mother of Jesus.

We can act out together two passages from the Gospel which speak of Mary of Bethany.

- First scene : Martha and Mary welcome Jesus at their home (Lk10 : 38-42)
- Second scene : the anointing at Bethany (Jn 12 : 1-8).

After the mime, we could immediately have our snack or meal if the time is appropriate. In this way, everybody will be able to feel the homeliness of the presence of Jesus in the house at Bethany with Martha, Mary of Bethany and Lazarus. We can eat sitting at the feet of Jesus at the house of Simon the Leper.

► In sharing groups

Let's look together at the way in which Mary shows her love for Jesus (she listens at his feet to his words, she needs the word of Jesus, she trusts him completely, she is sure that Jesus can revive her brother Lazarus, she spends all that she has to give Jesus a very precious gift).

- And how can I, personally, show my love for Jesus ?
- Jesus welcomed the affection of Martha, Mary and Lazarus. He needs their presence and their love. How am I during meetings with my community : am I also capable not only of giving, but also of receiving goodness and love from others ?
- Mary sits at Jesus' feet to hear his word : What place has the word of Jesus in my life ?



Prayer

We can scent our prayer corner by lighting incense sticks or scented candles...

We begin with a hymn on the theme of love, for example : « *Ubi caritas et*



amor... » We will reread the Gospel of John 12 : 1-11. Then, we can repeat the gesture of welcome which we made. Against background music, each person in turn puts perfume on his neighbour's hands and says to him : « You are precious to the Lord and to the community ». The one who receives the perfume can reply : « I am precious to the Lord and to the community ».

When all have made this gesture, we can read Psalm 23 (22) : « *The Lord's my shepherd* ».

We finish the prayer with an Our Father holding hands and a hymn expressing the joy of knowing that one is precious to the Lord and the community.

▶ **Prayer of a poor person**

We are in calmness and quietness. We close our eyes. We come to Bethany, to the house of Mary, Martha and Lazarus. Jesus also arrives in the house. The streets are dusty, and the people walk barefoot and in sandals. When Jesus arrives, they wash his feet, it's the custom.

Mary knows that Jesus loves her very much. She also loves Jesus. With a great deal of perfumed oil, she anoints Jesus' feet and she dries them with her long hair. The perfume is exquisite and fills the room.

Our prayer can be : « *Mary, you show how love can be generous... In my own way, I want to be generous in my ability to love and to allow myself to be loved... »*



Figsta

Suggestion for a game

- **Who am I ?**

We blindfold one or two players, we introduce someone (who must say nothing) to each player. The latter, solely by touch, must try to find out who the person is who is in front of him.

We can often be surprised by the results...



The family album

Today, we will find out about the continent of «Europe from the Atlantic to the Danube» whose flower is the sunflower, it symbolises joy.

The Charter :

«From faithful friendship springs the joy characteristic of the Faith and Light community. It is God who calls us together and enables us to discover the covenant that unites us: we are no longer alone. Meetings are characterised by moments of joy when we sing or dance or share a meal. From time to time a day of celebration enables us to invite guests who are moved by the discovery of the capacity of someone with an intellectual disability to create this joyful atmosphere. When it comes to celebration the person with an intellectual disability is often less disabled than others, because he/she is not imprisoned by convention, worry about efficiency or fear of what others may think. People with disabilities live more simply in the present moment; their humility and transparency make them naturally disposed towards community festivity.»(1, 2)

The time of faithfulness



► In little friendship groups,

In the spirituality of Faith and Light, it is less about «doing» things than «being» with a person. Let us be careful to listen or guess, in what action, at what time the members of our little group would like our presence or a sign of our friendship.



We can choose to make each day a little unasked-for gesture of love towards someone, even if the person doesn't know it, and at the end of the day we can offer it to Jesus. We also entrust to him all our friends from the continent of «Europe from the Atlantic to the Danube».



The man born blind

(John 9)





The word of the month

Near the Temple in Jerusalem, Jesus and his disciples come across a man who was born blind. He was a beggar. When they see him, the disciples ask Jesus : « Who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind ? » This is a very current question. When a child is born with a disability, many parents ask the question : « Whose fault is it ? Why us ? » Jesus replies strongly to his disciples' question : « Neither this man nor his parents sinned ; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him ».

The work of God is life itself ; it's love. This blind man is called to reveal love. Each of us is born so that God's work may be accomplished in us. Yes, we have been created for love.

Then, « Jesus spat on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes. He told him « Go wash in the pool of Siloam » So the man went and washed and came home seeing. (Jn 9 : 6 -7)

A difficult discussion then ensues. The Pharisees didn't want to admit that Jesus had performed this miracle. They were looking for all sorts of ways to discredit Jesus. They called him a sinner. They hid behind their preconceived ideas. The man who was healed by Jesus is a simple and truthful man. He knew. He knew that he had been healed, that he had been blind and that now he can see. It is obvious to him that Jesus had been sent by God, that he's a prophet. The Pharisees got angry with this man and they threw him out, forbidding him to enter the synagogue.

« Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, « Do you believe in the Son of Man ? » « Who is he, sir ? » the man asked. « Tell me so that I may believe in him. » Jesus said, « You have now seen him ; in fact, he is the one speaking with you. » Then the man said, « Lord, I believe », and he worshiped him. (Jn 9 : 35-38).

This man, as a blind man, was excluded from society. Now he has been



excluded from the synagogue because he bore witness to Jesus. But Jesus welcomes him. He became Jesus' friend.



A friend of Jesus is like this blind man, someone who trusts in him, obeys his words and bears witness to Jesus' goodness, mercy and compassion. «I was blind but now I see». Perhaps each of us can say : «My heart was closed, I met Jesus, I believed in his word, I trust in Him and he changed my heart. He is teaching me to be compassionate.»



Welcome and Reunion

The leader reminds us of those who are already on holiday but who are present with us in our hearts. We could send them a little card signed by all those who are there today.



Sharing

► Together

The leader says a word of introduction.
Reading of the **word of the month** by the leader or a member of the coordinating team or the chaplain

We can act out together the meeting between Jesus and the man born blind.

- First scene : the curing of the blind man (Jn 9 : 1-8).
Jean Vanier explains : *«A difficult discussion then ensues. The Pharisees do not want to admit that Jesus has performed this miracle. They look*



for all sorts of ways to discredit Jesus. they call him a sinner. They hide behind their preconceived ideas. the man who was healed by Jesus was a simple and truthful man. He knows. He knows that he has been healed, that he was blind and now he can see. It is obvious to him that Jesus has been sent by God, that he's a prophet. The Pharisees get angry with this man and they throw him out, forbidding him to enter the synagogue. »

- Second scene : Jesus reveals himself to the man he has just healed (Jn 9 : 35-38).

► In sharing groups

- Do I sometimes ask myself the question : «*But what have I done that this has happened to me ?*» How do I live through my difficulties, my trials, my disability ?
- When I am tempted to revolt, to be discouraged what do I do, what can I do ?
- When I was going through my trial, did I experience the love of Jesus, capable of healing the spirit and opening us up to trust ?
- It is asked of the man born blind to witness to the love of God. How can I, in the sufferings of my life witness to the love of Jesus ?



Prayer

We begin the prayer with a hymn of thanksgiving and joy to thank Jesus for the times when we were being challenged, closed in on our suffering and Jesus came. If we welcome him, he gives us back our confidence, changes how we feel.

The chaplain reads the story of the healing of the blind man (Jn 9 : 1-12).

We can also give thanks for all the beautiful things that we have experienced this year in the community : pilgrimage, arrival of new members, the discovery of something beautiful... Each person can say something. For



each thing that we remember we can sing a chorus, for example, «*Magnificat anima mea Dominum*» or a joyful alleluia.

We can read the prayer :

*Lord Jesus,
Help us to spread your perfume wherever we may go.
Fill our spirits with your Spirit and your life.
Fill and take possession of our entire being
so that our lives may be but a reflection of your own.*

*Shine through us, let us give off so much of your radiance,
that all the souls whom you give us the opportunity to meet
may feel your presence in us.*

*Stay in us, it is then that we will shine as you shine,
It is then that we will be a light for others.
It will be you who is giving light to others through us.*

*Let us proclaim your name, not by words but by example,
by the contagious strength and the powerful attraction of what we
are doing,
by the obvious fullness of the love which our hearts bear for you.
Amen.*

Mother Theresa

► **Prayer of a poor person**

We are in peacefulness and silence. We close our eyes. We are in Jerusalem where the man is begging. He has been blind since birth. Why? It seems so unfair. It's no-one's fault. Jesus speaks of «the glory of God»... Our prayer can be : «*Father God, I want to live in the light that Jesus brings... I want to see your presence everywhere... I want to see you, see you spread goodness everywhere...*».



Figsta

Suggestions for games

- **To establish trust**

The whole community gets into teams of two. One has his eyes blindfolded and must not be able to see anything. The other one guides him and everybody begins to walk around the room which can be strewn with obstacles. Each guide sees to it that his blindfolded partner bumps into neither the furniture nor the other players. After a time, when trust has been established, they change places.

- **The king of silence**

Material : a scarf or elastic bandage to hide the king's eyes, noisy objects (one per player).

The subjects of the king are seated at a respectful distance from his majesty who is taking his siesta.

To be valued and admitted into the court, you have to give presents to the king, but not wake him. Now, what the king prefers as presents are noisy objects : a bottle containing a pen, a little saucepan containing two bolts, little bells, big bells, a big sheet of wrapping paper. Only those who manage to carry their present to him without waking him, will be admitted to the court. Watch out, if sometimes the chosen king is a little deaf, certain kings have very sharp hearing !

Variation : instead of having to carry the object to the king, the players have to join the king by crossing a piece of ground sown with «noisy» traps. For example, to pass under a taut thread on which is hung a bell, between two sheets of tissue paper, over a stretch of gravel setting this up takes longer but is great fun too.

The family album

Today, we are finding out about «Asia Southern Cross» whose flower is the lotus. It symbolises unity.



The Charter :

«Friendship deepens through time and presence. Between the monthly gatherings the members of the community choose to spend time together in smaller groups or just meeting one-to-one. They share stories, fears, dreams, hope, prayer, fun, service with others, a meal, and other activities which nurture friendship: it is « the time of fidelity », also called the «fourth time».» (1, 4)

The time of faithfulness



► **In little friendship groups,**

If it is holiday time in our country, we are doubtless going to be separated for a few weeks. How will be able to remain in contact ?

This year, we have lived in little friendship groups. What have we liked ? What was less good ? What would we wish for next year ?



We can place near us a photo or a post card with a beautiful landscape and begin or end each day with a prayer of praise for all the beautiful things the Lord has let me see, and for my friends in the continent of Asia Southern Cross.

I. The feast of light⁴

The feast of Light takes place in many different ways according to the countries, regions or communities. If the Feast of Light can rarely be celebrated on February 2nd because it is difficult to get the community together on that date, we can nevertheless encourage that we pray «together» on that day regardless of where we are. Whether we are alone in our prayer corner, with a few others, our friendship group, or with the monastery or the contemplative community that prays specially for us, we are in communion with the Faith and Light communities all around the world.

A Faith and Light community can organize its celebration with the parish or the ecclesial community to which it belongs. At the welcome, the priest or the pastor, briefly presents the community. Faith and Light songs will have been specially chosen, for example : «*My friends, let's sing all our joy*». The members of the community, parents, friends, persons with an intellectual disability will take part in the procession of offerings, or may take the collection. At the end of the celebration, the community leader or a member of the coordinating team will wholeheartedly announce Faith and Light and invite those present to a friendly drink or to a meal or even to a party.

On their departure, we will make sure that each person receives a leaflet and a small note of the life of the community, its address...

The Feast of Light can also be organized by two communities who will get together in one of the parishes or local Churches to which they belong. The preparations and actions are more or less the same.

Finally, the regional or national council can also gather all the communities for a meeting in common.

4 Why does February the 2nd, the day of the Presentation of Jesus at the Temple became the feast of all the Faith and Light communities in the world ?
See the origin at www.faithandlight.org

Whatever way we choose of celebrating it, the Festival of Light can be the opportunity to invite new people and old members of the community. Each person can invite a person with a disability, a parent or friend... If we are short of young friends, for example, let us direct our efforts towards them... The Festival of Light can also be the opportunity to organise our Announcement and Sharing day.

2. « Announcement and sharing day »

The Lenten season is very suited to organizing the «Announcement and Sharing Day». We can organize it in February during the Feast of Light. The preparation of this day which will mobilize the whole community, will give everything a fresh boost ! Here are a few thoughts to help the process :

- Prepare together the main activity of the day. Either a show, mime, concert, (as in Japan and in France) or a sale : cakes, pancakes, jam in nicely decorated little jars, flowers, rummage sales, yard sales, bazaars, raffles... calendars (as in Lebanon) or cards, which can easily be produced with a computer ! (The International Secretariat can send you pictures of communities from throughout the world.) Or you can even plan a meal or a dinner dance... Invite all your friends, relatives, neighbours, acquaintances...
- Announce Faith and Light in the parish, on the local or Christian radio stations, in local newspapers... You can find a lot of information on the international Faith and Light website : www.faithandlight.org
- Everyone should be present that day with their best smile.
- When everything is over, the coordinating team should assess to see what was good and what should be improved next year. Write it down. We forget so quickly ! And finally, don't forget to send the money collected to the national coordinator.

3. Getting to know Faith and Light across the world

From the month of February on, it is suggested that each community try to get to know more about Faith and Light across the world. We can do this thanks to the map which is attached to the guidelines and thanks to « The family album » that will be given to us in November. We will find out about the very special geography of the « six » continents of Faith and Light and the communities which live so far away from us !

To symbolise each continent, a flower. We can make it of paper or copy the picture and stick it on the map so that the world may flourish !

Europe Middle-East :
the hibiscus
BROTHERHOOD



Africa and Indian Ocean :
the passiflora or passion flower
PEACE



« Faith and Light of the Americas » :
poinsettia
JUSTICE



« Gate of the Dawn »
(North and East Europe) :
the anemone
LIFE



Europe from the Atlantic to the Danube :
the sunflower
JOY



Asia Southern Cross :
the lotus
UNITY



4. The prayer of a poor person

We can do the prayer of a poor person when we are doing the community prayer during the meeting or in the little sharing groups, or in the friendship group so each of us in his own home, and also, of course, when the coordinating team meets...

God is so close to us. Closer than we are to ourselves. A long time ago, Saint Paul said : « *In reality, God is not far from each of us, for it is through him that we live, that we move and that we are.* » (Acts 17 : 27-28) That is why we have an unconquerable desire to turn to him, to be in communion with him. This communion with God is called « prayer ».

And yet prayer often proves so difficult. The disciples asked Jesus : « *Lord, help us to pray* » (Lk 2 : 1) And we still go on asking him the same thing.

In Faith and Light we ask ourselves the question about our friends with an intellectual disability : where do we find the thoughts, the words ? But the same question is asked about so many others among us : when we are tired or sick, when we are old or disabled, when we are preoccupied with problems or distracted, when we want to become very small before God in contemplation. It is for all those poor people that we are suggesting a way of praying which we call « *the prayer of a poor person* ».

It is a prayer of the body : « *I am there because I love you. I am there because you are precious to me. I put aside everything else for you : you are more important than anything* ». Our presence becomes a sign, words without words. It is how friends show their friendship : « *I am happy to be with you. I want to stay with you* ». It becomes a prayer of faithfulness : « *I stay with you even if my interior agitation urges me to do other things* ». It is not easy to persevere in a concretely useless situation, one without results we can show off with pride. It is thus that the prayer of a poor person becomes a school of love. Little by little, our heart changes : we are no longer centred on ourselves, but on the Beloved. We become a person of love and that filters through in our daily life. We will spread something of goodness.

We can sit on a straight back chair, in a well-balanced position : this will

prevent movements that would break our concentration. We place our hands palms up on our knees and we close our eyes ; this creates an interior space where nothing can enter. The back is straight. This is an attitude of presence and of gift of self. We breathe slowly and calmly. Our face is relaxed, as with a slight smile. And we remain there.

We can help ourselves with a simple word, a word of love that we repeat ; we should choose it before starting to pray. It can be, for example : « *I love you, Jesus* », « *I am here for you* », « *Jesus, my friend* », or simply « *Jesus* ».

We remain there, trusting, in the silence of our hearts, for ten minutes at least, allowing Jesus to love and change us. At first we will have many distractions. Peace will only come after a certain amount of time, perhaps not until near the end of the time. We must not worry, this is our poverty. Peacefully, let us return to our little word of love.

The prayer of a poor person will change us. It will bear many fruits, fruits of astounding quality, « *Faith and Light* » quality.

A fioretto

«Our friends with an intellectual disability are very fond of this prayer. It was in Assisi, during a national pilgrimage, that I was invited to say a few words. In conclusion I said to myself : « Why not do the prayer of a poor person with the whole assembled company ? »

It was like an inspiration from the Holy Spirit since it was almost madness : we were in an enormous hall with three thousand people. I explained to them the basis essentials about the prayer of a poor person and then I asked the crowd if they wanted to spend five minutes doing this with me. All the hands went up. A profound silence fell upon the crowd. Thanks to that I felt reassured. When the five minutes were up I started up a hymn to indicate the end of the silence. The noise started up again slowly. However, I could see some people still praying. Suddenly someone got up on the platform. It was a young man with Down's syndrome. He came up to me. He hugged me with all his strength. He held me in his arms for a very long time ; yes, for a very, very long time. I couldn't do a thing. Finally, he let me go. In his state of enthusiasm, he showed me his mum in the

Appendix 4

crowd and asked me to come down from the platform. Down there, his mum had already come forward to meet us. After exchanging a few words, we parted. I was bowled over for a long time.»



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "F. Joseph". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent flourish at the end.

Father Joseph Larsen

5. Mime : The story of Faith and Light

First scene

Gérard and Camille

Loïc and Thaddée

the leader of the diocesan pilgrimage

The hotel keeper

Gérard and Camille are the parents of Loïc and Thaddée. These two children have a profound disability of their motor and intellectual functions : they cannot walk, they cannot speak, even if they can make themselves understood through signs and their smiles ; they cannot feed themselves... they are a real family but life is difficult.

There are days when life is so difficult, that in 1968 Camille and Gérard decide that they want to set off on a pilgrimage to Lourdes to ask Mary to help them. They want to put their names down for the pilgrimage organised by their diocese, but the organisers refuse to let them sign up :

- The leader : *« Sorry, but your children are too disabled, they will not be able to understand the meaning of the pilgrimage and they might embarrass the other pilgrims... »*

Camille and Gérard are terribly disappointed : but they are determined to set off for Lourdes no matter what happens, at their own expense, even if it is very complicated.

In Lourdes, the hoteliers are very doubtful when they see the children :

- A hotelier : *« But Madame, their place is in the Accueil Notre Dame ».*

However, one hotel keeper accepts them, but on one condition :

- Another hotel keeper : *« We will serve your meals in your room, so as not to disturb the other customers... »*

Camille and Gérard distraught. They set off in search of hope and comfort from Mary who had appeared to Bernadette ; but they come back, more alone and more dejected. They feel marginalized in the Church.

Hymn :

Chorus : *What does it matter if our paths, are dark or filled with light,
If you take me by the hand, for me everything becomes prayer.*

Verse : *For this world full of suffering, Oh Jesus you are Love. You welcome all men, Oh risen Jesus.*

But....

Second scene

Jean Vanier and Marie-Hélène Mathieu

On their return, they talk to Jean Vanier and Marie-Hélène Mathieu about it. Jean has just created the first L'Arche home, a house where people with an intellectual disability share their lives with assistants. Marie-Hélène has just founded the Christian office for disabled people in Paris to help and support parents.

- Gérard : *« We know that other parents are experiencing the same suffering as us. »*
- Camille : *« Something has to be done. But what ? »*

From the prayers and compassion of Jean and Marie-Hélène grows an immense project :

- Jean : *« I have an idea : what if along with families and friends, we organise a pilgrimage to Lourdes with those who have been affected by an intellectual disability. »*
- Marie-Hélène : *« Oh Yes ! Disabled people would be at the heart of the proceedings. Each family could be accompanied by a young friend. »*
- Jean : *« We could make our preparations in little communities of 20 to 30 people who will go on the pilgrimage together. »*

It took three years of work, of meetings, of organisation to get ready for the departure : reserving hotels, organising transport, plan a programme and a liturgy which would be accessible to those whose intelligence is limited but whose hearts are so open.

Hymn :

*« The foolish in this world, these are the ones that God has chosen
The weak of this world, these are the ones that God has chosen... »*

Third scene

The pilgrims

The shopkeeper, the police, the inhabitants...

In Lourdes, before their arrival, there is some panic :

- An inhabitant : « *What is going to happen if a crowd of disabled people turn up, the ones that they call subnormal, feeble-minded ?... »*

The police are mobilised, national servicemen are protecting the banks of the Gave :

- A policeman : « *Can you imagine... if they were to get the idea into their heads of jumping in the river !... »*
- A shopkeeper : « *As for me, I am going to lower my iron shutters and close up shop !... »*

All the other shopkeepers behave in the same way. As for the hotelkeepers, they expect the worst...

But, on the morning of Holy Thursday, there are 12000 of them who meet together in Lourdes. They come from fifteen countries which have heard about this great project and have also made their preparations in communities :

- « *Hello, my name is (John) »*
- « *Guten tag (John), du bist mein freund... »*
- « *Io mi chiamo (Sandra). Sono italiana. Et tu ?... »*
- « *Me liamo (Juan)... »*
- ...

On this Holy Thursday, Mary welcomes for the first time thousands of disabled children, with their parents and friends, thanks to Thaddée and Loïc. It is an immense movement of love, joy and hope. They are happy to be together...

Together, we discover that this grave wound, which disability is, does not close us in, but it pushes wide open for us the door of the love of Christ and of his mother. For four days we meet together, we pray, we sing, we have parties, we celebrate this love of God given to all :

Hymn : « *Friends, let us sing our joy ! God is alive, Alleluia ! »*

Fourth scene

Jean and Marie-Hélène

Appendix 5

Community leaders
pilgrims

On this Easter Monday, Jean and Marie-Hélène have organised a meeting of 300 community leaders, before parting from each other :

- Jean and Marie-Hélène : *« We want to say goodbye and thank you !... Goodbye ! Thank you ! »*

But they all say :

- The community leaders : *« We do not want to find ourselves alone again. We want Faith and Light to continue !... »*

Jean Vanier decides to encourage them :

- Jean : *« Do everything that the Holy Spirit inspires you to do ! »*

That is how Faith and Light was born.

And now, they all get back into their coaches, their trains, a little sad that it is over already. But each one knows one thing for certain in his heart :

- A pilgrim : *« What we have just experienced, was not an ending. But what it really was, is a beginning... »*

The communities which had formed around the people and the children with an intellectual disability, their parents and friends, are going to go on meeting. Each month, they will spend time meeting, sharing, praying and celebrating... and they will take on the job of welcoming all those who are alone and who will come to them.

Faith and Light is about meeting, praying, celebrating and joy !

In 1975, the Faith and Light communities of the whole world go on a pilgrimage to Rome, where they are received by Pope Paul VI :

- Paul VI : *« Dear friends of Faith and Light, you are the heart of the Church. That is why I encourage you to continue to share your light and I give you my apostolic blessing in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen. »*

Today, there are 1500 communities in all the continents, in 75 countries who can sing like us... and with us !

6. The evaluation of the guidelines 2005-2006

To be sent to the International Secretariat before 15 April 2007

Name of my community :

First name and name of leader :

Address :

Country : Zone :

1. Does the guidelines of 2005-2006 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 a poor person
- ◆ Fiesta
- ◆ Small groups of friendship
- ◆ Living Faith and Light in our daily life
- ◆ In coordinating team

7. List of Internet websites

- Faith and Light International : www.faithandlight.org you will find there the international agenda, news, what is going on in Faith and Light now, documents and news about the continents being sent to the national leaders (intranet) the coordinates of Faith and Light sites in your country...
- Games on the Faith and Light site of Canada East :
<http://pages.infinit.net/canest/index.html/> pedagogic tools/ access code : foi192 (in French)
- Songs of Jean-Claude Gianadda (words, song parts...)
www.gianaddaje Claude.com
- Taizé : www.taize.fr/prayers and Hymns/Learn the hymns /
- Search engine : www.google.fr
With Google, you can find all sorts of sites, among others how to make paper flowers...
- The site of l'Arche in Trosly, to order all the books of Jean Vanier :
www.lafermedetrosly.com
- *The site of l'Arche international* : www.larche.org
- The site of OCH (The Christian office of disabled people in Paris) and subscriptions to Ombres et Lumière : www.och.asso.fr
- Orthodox pages : www.pagesorthodoxes.net/index.htm#index
- Catholic Church : www.vatican.va/phome_fr.htm

8. Available documents

Building community

Charter and constitution 2006	free
Guidelines for the first year	3 €
Leader's pack handbook	3 €
Sharing our responsibility in Faith and Light	3 €
Annual guidelines	5 €

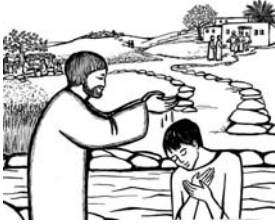
Deepening our life together

Deepening our spirituality in Faith and Light	3 €
How to prepare and live a Faith and Light retreat (2004)	3 €
Ecumenism in Faith and Light	3 €
Fioretti	2,30 €
Formation weekends and sessions in Faith and Light	3 €
On holiday together	3 €
Let Faith and Light live, grow and shine forth (financial booklet 2006)	1,50 €
Day for a renewal in the community	free

Getting to know us better

The history of Faith and Light on DVD, Marie-Hélène Mathieu (French, English, Spanish, Italian)	22,00 €
Leaflets	free
The messages of the popes to Faith and Light	free
The family album, November 2006	3 €
Document : « Do you want to help us » (2006)	free
Solidarity leaflet (2006)	free

9. The friends of Jesus



John the-Baptist



John,
the beloved disciple



Zacchaeus



Mary and Joseph



The Samaritan woman



Simeon



The good thief



Peter



The little children



The man
born blind



Mary from Bethany

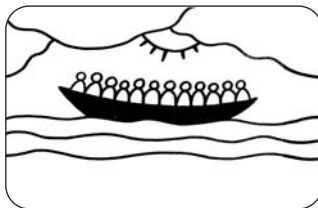
The Faith and Light prayer

Jesus, you came into our world,
to reveal the Father to us, your Father and our Father.
You came to teach us to love one another.
Give us the Holy Spirit, according to your promise,
so that he will make us
instruments of peace and unity,
in this world of war and division.

Jesus, you have called us to follow you
in a community of Faith and Light.
We want to say «yes» to you.
We want to live a covenant of love
in this big family you have given us,
where we can share our sufferings and difficulties,
our joys and our hope.
Teach us to accept our wounds, our weakness,
so that your power may be revealed.
Teach us to find you in all our brothers and sisters,
especially in those who are the weakest.
Teach us to follow you in the way of the Gospel.

Jesus, come and live in us and in our communities
as you lived first in Mary.
She was the first to welcome you.
Help us to be faithfully present, with her, at the foot of the cross,
near the crucified of the world.
Help us to live your Resurrection.

Amen.



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"De l'amitié fidèle
jaillit la joie
qui caractérise
la communauté Foi et Lumière

C'est Dieu
qui nous appelle ensemble"

Charte de Foi et Lumière I, 2