"You shall receive power, that of the Holy Spirit.

And you shall be my witnesses to the ends of the earth" Acts 1, 8-9

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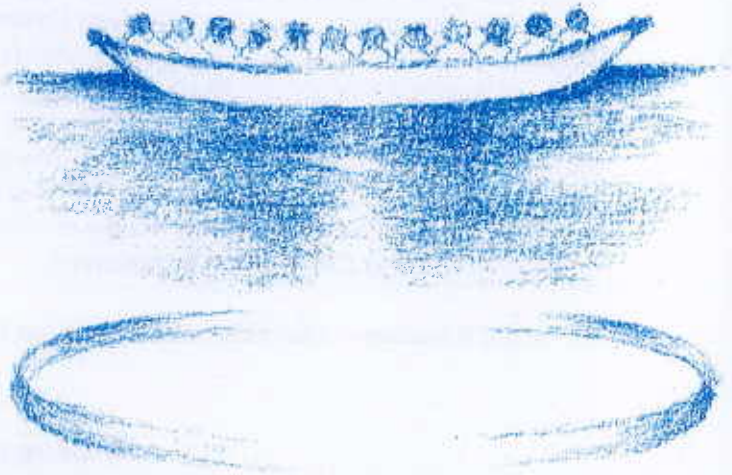
In the steps of the first Christian communities



Guidelines 2001-2002

FAITH and LIGHT

Dear friends,

This year again, the production of the Guidelines is the fruit of the collaboration of se eral persons who ha e gi en, without counting their time, their creati ity, their experience, and their wisdom.

Thank you with all my heart to those who ha e agreed to be concerned in this project, in particular to Jean Vanier, Marie-Hélène Mathieu, Father Joseph Larsen, Vi iane le Polain, Corinne Chatain, François and Marie-Noëlle Bal, the teams from Canada, Spain, and France-Centre and all the translators in your countries. A special thank-you to Father Joseph Larsen for the illustrations of the 'Guidelines'. Thanks to you all, here we are, ready to take the road ***in the footsteps of the first Christian communities !***

Ha e a good journey ! Our pilgrimage continues !

Maureen O'Reilly

International Coordinator

And if today...

If, during the Faith and Light pilgrimage at Lourdes
and the pilgrimages of the whole world,
the parents, in spite of their sufferings, have again found hope,

If for them, after the darkness of Good Friday,
the dawn of Easter has come,

If they have discovered, in spite of his or her limitations,
their child is loved by God,
He, who reveals his mysteries to the weak and small,

If parents have made bonds of friendship with other parents
and have left behind their solitude,

Then there is a little more happiness on earth
and much joy in heaven.

And if, today, friends witness
that this child is a source of riches for those around him,

If this discovery prevents from becoming a banality, the abandonment
or suppression of the child who does not correspond to the norms of society,

If each Faith and Light community is a place of love, forgiveness and festiveness;

If, throughout the whole world, the Faith and Light communities increase

If the thirst for unity among all Christians increases around the littlest ones

If the parishes, and the communities welcome with a great heart
the poor, the infirm, the lame and the blind,

Then, that which was a desert will become like a watered garden,
Like a source of unfailing waters.

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

5. Has your community created small groups of friendship ?

6. What are your suggestions for improving the next Guidelines ?

Do not hesitate to use another sheet to indicate all your replies, suggestions, witnesses. Thank you !

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And if today...		

Introduction

This year, after having celebrated the 2000th anniversary of the birth of Jesus, we shall look at the birth and growth of the Church. For this, we shall follow, step by step, the Acts of the Apostles. This book, written by the Evangelist Luke, tells us the sacred story of the first disciples of Jesus and their growth in faith. It is good, and even essential, to go back to the beginnings of our faith and of the Church. The first Christians can teach us how to live out our faith in Jesus today. Without forgetting, obviously, that the Holy Spirit has guided Christians for centuries, and has made them discover new things. In fact, the origins of the Church are like seed in which everything is contained. And then, with the passing of years, the flowers and the fruit appear. Going back to the origins of the Church invite us to go back to the origins of Faith and Light. Is it not important for us to look at the first blessing that was given to us?

Evaluation of the Guidelines

To be returned to the International Secretariat
before 30 March 2002

Name of my community :

Name of leader :

Country

1. Has the "Guidelines 2001 -2002 answered your needs ?

2. What have you appreciated most ?

3. What have you found least good ?

Available documents

These documents are available through the international secretariat of Faith and Light:
3, rue du Laos 75015 Paris – France - Telephone : +33.1.53.69.44.30 - Fax : +33.1.53.69.44.38
e-mail : Foi.Lumiere@wanadoo.fr
Or through your national coordinator

Building community	**contribution to expenses***
Charter and constitution	free
Guidelines for the first year (new edition)	20 FF / 3,00 €
Leader's pack hand book for community leaders	20FF / 3,00 €
Leader's pack handbook for region, country/province/zone leaders	20FF / 3,00 €
Hand book for elections (to be published, Oct. 2001)	20 FF / 3,00 €
Sharing our responsibility in Faith and Light	20 FF / 3,00 €
Annual guidelines	25 FF / 3,80 € (per 10 : 20 FF / 3,00 €)
Song booklet –International meeting, Quebec 98	10 FF / 1,50 €
Deepening our life together	
Deepening our spirituality in Faith and Light	20 FF / 3,00 €
Morning and evening prayers: suggestions for their preparation	15 FF / 2,30 €
Retreats in Faith and Light (new edition Oct. 2001)	20 FF / 3,00 €
The ecumenism in Faith and Light	20 FF / 3,00 €
Ecumenism: a gift of friendship	20 FF / 3,00 €
Faith and Light fioretti	15 FF / 2,30 €
Formation weekends and sessions in Faith and Light	20 FF / 3,00 €
On holiday together	20 FF / 3,00 €
Finances in Faith and Light	10 FF / 1,50 €
International Pilgrimage Lourdes 2001	
Message of the Pope to the pilgrims (French, English, Spanish, Italian, Polish)	free
Video (PAL/ SECAM/ NTSC)	
"They are opening a way" (in English)	50 FF / 7,50 €
"Ils ouvrent un chemin" (in French)	50 FF / 7,50 €
"Venez boire à la Source", special edition of "Ombres et Lumière"	35 FF / 5,30 €
Faith and Light badge (pin)	10 FF / 1.50 € each, 70 FF / 10,70 € per 10
CD of Joe Lee Wilson, Songs, Negro Spirituals	30 FF / 4,60 € , 100 FF / 15,20 € per 5
Getting to know us better	
Leaflet (new edition)	free
The messages of the Popes to Faith and Light	5 FF / 0,80 €
"Letter to my brothers and sisters in l'Arche and in Faith and Light" Jean Vanier	10 FF / 1,50 €
Further reading	
"The scandale of the service". Jean Vanier	59 FF / 9,00 €
"I meet Jesus". Jean Vanier -small format / large format	36 FF / 5,50 € - 59 FF / 9,00 €
"I walk with Jesus". Jean Vanier - small format/ large format	36 FF / 5,50 € - 59 FF / 9,00 €
"Pilgrims together, a vision of ecumenism". Jean Vanier	20 FF / 3,00 €
In French only:	
La revue Ombres et Lumière (avec ses pages Foi et Lumière)	
"Dieu m'aime comme je suis". Marie-Hélène Mathieu	89 FF / 13,60 €
90, avenue de Suffren 75738 Paris Cedex 15	
Abonnement France	120 FF / 18,30 €
Abonnement étranger	140 FF / 21,40 €

(* The postage expenses are not included.)

In Faith and Light, as in every movement and in the Church, there are two aspects:

- The inspirational aspect: human hearts which grow in the love of Jesus and of their brothers and sisters.
- The structural (or institutional) aspect: every human grouping needs structures which define their vision and membership.

The inspirational aspect is the gift of the Holy Spirit which is given to each person: it is the growth in the love of each person; the structural aspect is called to evolve and change as the movement grows and expands; it defines the functions of each person.

Jean Vanier

How to advance with these Guidelines ?

The *Guidelines* are a tradition of Faith and Light which date from the first years after the founding pilgrimage of 1971 at Lourdes. They have, little by little become more substantial, but from the beginning they aimed at several objectives:

❑ **to nourish** the life of each community and each one of its members

❑ **to contribute to the unity of the big family of Faith and Light**. Each month all the communities throughout the world meet together around the same theme, live out the same message; this allows us to be in communion with one another.

❑ **to be a tool of formation for the Coordinating teams**. There is always a lot of advice for deepening the life of the community in the spirit of Faith and Light.

❑ **to help the Coordinating teams** to prepare and animate the community gatherings by giving concrete suggestions.

This year, 2001 – 2002 follows on the year of pilgrimages, which has mobilized the efforts of numerous communities and given them a new breath. We have a mission to support this impetus. It will be good to evoke these pilgrimages often during the year: by using the Faith and Light album "Come to the Waters" (the special number of the journal "Ombres et Lumière"), by watching the video "They are opening a way", to reflect on these together

4) Mission – Projects

It is not a question of our community working well, but of bearing fruit...

- Are we open to the mission? to the witness of Faith and Life among young people, new families, the parish? to the prospect of giving life to a new community ?
- What are the three precise projects/points of growth which we are retaining or planning for next year ? Write these down carefully. They will be communicated to the community. We shall look at them again regularly in the course of the year.

5) Reconciliation – Thanksgiving

In the course of a long and well-guided prayer, we can offer an occasion to ask each other forgiveness, to be reconciled. Finish by a long and nourishing thanksgiving.

Points of support

- Invite the regional leader, or if he cannot come, a former community leader who will help you by his experience and be witness to our resolutions.

- Depend on the Faith and Light Charter, the community leader's pack handbook (in particular the role of the Coordinating team), the three times of each gathering (see appendix 1)

"I called you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should abide."
(Jn 15,16)

Fr. et M-N. Bal

Suggestions

1) The call of Faith and Light

- Read the Charter together. After a time of silence, each person will underline a phrase or a word which seems particularly important to him or her.
- In the course of a sharing, each person will speak of the expectations, disappointments, difficulties, joys, which he or she has experienced this year in the community.

2) The evaluation of the community

- How do the three times of the gathering (prayer, sharing, fiesta) and the time of fidelity help us to progress?
- Is there a good balance among the four components? (persons with a handicap, parents, friends and the chaplain). If not, have we a plan for progress?
- Does each member have his/her place in the community?
- Does each person know every other person by name?
- Is each person helped to progress? to commit him/herself?

3) The evaluation of the Coordinating team:

- How does the Coordinating team live? Is it united? motivated? creative?
- What are its strengths and weaknesses today?
- How can it be of more service to the community?
- Does it need to be renewed ?

and make them known around us. We can also look again at the text "*And if today*" (last page).

asking ourselves where we are in the search for young friends, the call to new families, the desire to raise up a new community, the desire for the unity of Christians, peace and communion in our own community, and above all, the communion with Jesus, our Source.
It is he who will make rivers of living water spring out from our hearts.

Every meeting of the community, after a sufficient time for the welcome, will allow us to live out three essential times:

- The **sharing** of the word and that of our friendship (together, then in sharing groups)
- The **prayer** and the liturgy
- The **fiesta** of which one of the most unifying aspects is the meal or the snack

(For these three times of each gathering , please go to appendix 1).

The presentation **of these *Guidelines*** is slightly different from that of previous Guidelines. Special emphasis is given to the three aspects on which leaders often ask for advice and nourishment: **the word, the sharing, the prayer**. It is left to the Coordinating team to arrange imaginatively the **welcome** and the **fiesta, in the most appropriate way for the community**.

- **Listening to the word**. Written by Jean Vanier on the theme for the month, the word is not reserved for the Coordinating team. It is essential nourishment for each and everyone.
During the gathering, the chaplain, the community leader or a

member of the coordinating team will read it, or better still, after having thoroughly assimilated it, reinterpret it through his heart.

- **The sharing together**. After listening to the word, the guidelines bring suggestions as to how to give concrete expression to what has just been heard, letting it penetrate our hearts and transform, however slightly this might be, our lives. There is always also a time of sharing **in small groups**. The Guidelines propose two or three questions to guide this exchange. Each group is led by a member of the Coordinating team or a person who has been well prepared.

- **The prayer**, proposed by Father Joseph Larsen, international chaplain, introduces into the silent prayer of the heart, the prayer of the poor person, so important to Faith and Light. This does not prevent the prayer from also being the moment when what has been expressed in the sharing groups is put into the hands of the Lord. We praise him, we give thanks to him, we ask him to help us. We commit our community and each of its members into his loving care.

The order of the different times shown here has nothing compulsive about it. You can modify it according to the theme or the characteristics of your community. You will do different things depending on whether the community welcomes children or adults with a handicap, young and very dynamic friends or a majority of older parents, if the community is new or if it has been there for many years.

It is the same with the activities proposed. Choose those that seem best adapted to the community. Do not hesitate to look for others. The creativity of the coordinating team and of all the members of the community must be encouraged.

Evaluation for progress

There are more and more coordinating teams who take a day or a weekend towards the end of the year, in order to take stock. Here are some suggestions to guide their actions.

Who takes part ?

The members of the coordinating team. A regional leader or a former leader may be invited. Beforehand, the whole community will have been consulted on the joys, the strong points, the points of growth in the life of the community, the wishes of each person. Several simple questions may be asked (see June).

The objective

- To go back to the sources of Faith and Life, as a gift and a call
- To rediscover the specificity of the Faith and Light community gathering: with its different times
- To get back into a movement of growth: how to grow, for each person and for the community.
- To be more open to the mission, pave the way for tomorrow.
- To offer an opportunity for forgiveness and reconciliation
- To give thanks to the Lord for what he has given us to live through;

To live with these objectives in a community way, the ideal is to take a weekend for it ; if this is not possible, a day would already be a good first stage.

Appendix 7

Prayer for Christian Unity

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

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

Amen !

(Extract from the prayer by the Abbé Couturier)

After the parts concerning the gathering itself, there is the paragraph : "**Before the next gathering : some suggestions**" It has two aspects :

- **"The time of fidelity"**

This time concerns all the members of the community. This year, it is proposed to live through it especially "**in small groups of friendship**" (see appendix 2).

It is suggested, on the other hand , to live this out personally, each day in the spirit of Faith and Light. A simple suggestion is proposed "**In my personal life**"

- **"In the Coordinating team"**

This heading does not indicate the procedure of the coordinating team meeting (referred page 10), but it simply presents a key-idea to be deepened, in relation to the month to come. This heading is always placed on the page preceding the meeting itself.

The *Guidelines* are an instrument indispensable to the leader and to each member of the coordinating team. But it would also be good if all the members of the community, who so wished could have it in their hands. It is a good travelling companion.

Marie-Hélène Mathieu

❑ In the Coordinating team, the preparation of the September gathering

The year is centred on the Acts of the Apostles. It would be good if each member of the team could read the theme for the month in advance, and that he should bring his/her Bible or New Testament as well as his/her Guidelines to each meeting.
During this first meeting, we will take the time needed to look at the priorities for the year and to get acquainted with these new *Guidelines*. This view of the whole could give us ideas: for example, why not ask some persons to draw, month by month, a great fresco of the Acts of the Apostles... it is proposed to use this at one of the last gatherings of the year (see the suggestion for July).

The preparation for the next gathering will start with the words of Jean Vanier. Each person can say the phrase which touches him or her most personally and which seems to them most important for the community. After this, they will continue by working on the activities of the gathering and then the sharing of the responsibilities.

During the course of this month, it is suggested that there should be a celebration of personal and community commitment for the year. This is a tradition which comes to us from the Middle East and which is very fruitful. The preparation for this step will give a chance to look again at the list of members of the community and to make contact again with those who are more or less regular. This will help them to realize the importance of their presence to the community.

To Share

Sharing can be a good way of "announcing" Faith and Light.

We form a great family dispersed in 75 countries throughout the world. As in a family, some are very rich; others are very poor. As in a family, we must help each other.

This family would disappear very quickly if there were not numerous links formed by meetings, visits, formation sessions, telephones, letters... All this, when it concerns the whole world is expensive, very expensive.

In order to live, our family has a vital need of sharing and solidarity. Our family can meet its annual budget if each community in the most developed countries became as inventive and active as it did for the pilgrimage 2001, thanks to the very diverse activities (cake sales, flower sales, lotteries, collections in parishes, washing cars...) which, at the same time, made Faith and Light known.

In the countries in great economic difficulty, we were very touched to see that the communities also showed prodigious ingenuity and efforts to bring their contribution. Thus, in a poor country of Africa, the members of Faith and Light decided each to bring three dollars, which is minimal for a rich country, but considerable for them.

To Faith and Light, financial support is indispensable, but we share also by the specific gifts of each country, like wisdom, fidelity, living prayer;

Appendix 4

A day of "Announcement and Sharing" from 2002

Why this day?

To Announce

Faith and Light has an **essential mission**: to witness to the world to the beauty and vocation of the **mentally handicapped person**, to bring to the **parents** hope and support, to open to the **friends** a way of friendship and commitment towards the weakest. But Faith and Light is still almost unknown. At Lourdes, parents reproached us: "*Our son is eight years old, why have we had to wait for the pilgrimage to learn of the existence of Faith and Light?*"

If we want Faith and Light to be a sign for the world, it is the duty of each one of us to go into the parishes, schools, chaplaincies, movements, associations…, to tell the "good news" of Faith and Light and invite people, proposing "*Come and see !… They are opening up a way*".

To set up the groups of friendship, as suggested (see appendix 2), it would be good if the leader, helped by one or two other members of the team, should have already reflected and presented a plan for the distribution, which could be improved by the observations of one and another.

A community which receives a promise

Acts 1, 1-11

September 2001

them to experiment with this responsibility of service. When the gesture of the washing of feet appears to be difficult, even impossible to carry out, it is up to each leader to intervene with kindliness to make one or other of the participants not feel guilty, and suggest, for example, the simple washing of hands.

In sharing groups.

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

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

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

The procedure

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

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

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

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

Certain persons with difficulties, must be helped in order to be able to accomplish all these gestures. However, it is important for

❑ Welcome

❑ The Word

"Before many days you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit. You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be my witnesses... to the end of the earth". **Several days after, on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit descends on the disciples: this is the birth of the Church. Faith and Light was born at Lourdes when the Holy Spirit inspired the pilgrimage in 1971 and when people decided to remain together, to meet each other in little communities and to do what the Holy Spirit would inspire them to do**
Living in Faith and Light is not easy. There is the daily suffering born by the parents and their children. There are choices to be made and remade by the friends committed to Faith and Light, but sometimes torn between Faith and Light and other commitments, such as their family, their work, their Church or their friends. Then, there are the difficulties of community life: disputes, misunderstandings, lack of adequate preparation, etc. It is so easy to get discouraged, to give up this community life or to get angry with oneself or others.
Faith and Light is founded on suffering. It was born out of the suffering of parents and their children. It desires to be a response to suffering. But this response is always inadequate. But we want to lean on the promises of Jesus. Humanly speaking, suffering and daily difficulties are something unacceptable. But Jesus has promised to send us a new power, that of the Holy Spirit, which has come upon all of us, so that we should become, by our hearts, his witnesses to the ends of the earth

❑ Sharing

➤ Together

Since its creation, the community has developed. Persons have changed, grown. In the course of this gathering, we shall try to recover the original inspiration of the community.

- We can reread the history of Faith and Light (see appendix 5),
- mime the history of Faith and Light while reading it,
- tell the story or relive the first gathering of the community
- find the list of persons who constituted the community at its beginning
- if not already done, start an album which tells " the history of our community"

- If Faith and Light has been able to be born and grow, it is because persons have committed themselves and have remained faithful. This year, could each person commit him/herself to participate regularly at the gathering and try to arrive on time ? At the end of the prayer time, it is proposed that each person should take on this commitment for one year and that we should help each other mutually to be faithful.

- To help us to live out the time of fidelity, the leader will then propose small groups of friendship. These should be determined in advance by the coordinating team. Their aim will be explained to the whole community.

- Two or three persons can say what they expected from the community when they came for the first time, and what they have found since. They will thus introduce the sharing in small groups.

Living together the washing of feet

The meaning of our action

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

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

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

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

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

prayer. The life of the small groups of friendship do not, to be sure, prevent informal relationships which grow up between members...

At the community gathering, we shall have the opportunity to tell everyone all about our small group of friendship.

❑ Something lighthearted

Do not be afraid. The group of friendship is not a supplementary burden or a constraint, but something lighthearted, simple, happy, which lets life circulate right down to the smallest of its members, and to return to invigorate the whole body.

M-H. Mathieu

➤ In sharing groups

- What did I expect from the community the first time I came?
- What did I find there?
- Am I ready today to commit myself to being as faithful as possible to the community during the whole of this year ? Do I often experience difficulties in doing so? What can help me to improve ?

❑ Prayer

We are going to try to follow the invitation of Jesus to pray in the peaceful silence of our heart (Mt 6,7-8). It is very important that the place should be calm and prayerful. The chairs are arranged in a semi-circle before the prayer corner. A large candle is surrounded with flowers and perhaps some drapery. We create an atmosphere of silence with soft and meditative background music.

The person responsible for the prayer [1] will speak little and in a calm voice. He invites us to sit down comfortably so that we are relaxed. He reminds us that we have need of the Holy Spirit for the new year which is starting. He reads, slowly, and very clearly, perhaps even twice, the passage from the Acts of the Apostles 1,8 : "*You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you. And you shall be my witnesses...to the ends of the earth*".

We then have a moment's silence. We shut our eyes, keeping our hands with the palms open, on our knees, waiting for the grace of the Holy Spirit.

[1] Obviously, the leader for the time of prayer does not always need to be the same person

Then, softly, someone sings the Taizé song "Veni Sancte Spiritus". Other voices follow, then more, then still more. Certain persons can sing the second voice, the third, the fourth. If some persons are not singing in tune, that does not matter. We are all poor.

Our hearts implore. We pray like little children. Our voices become stronger. Then, after a moment, they almost become silent, and then start again. After a time, we again take up a great silence.

During this time, the person responsible for the prayer has lit a large candle. When we reopen our eyes, he or she distributes a small candle to each person.

After having received in silence the power of the Holy Spirit, it is proposed that we should commit ourselves with fidelity to the community during this year. The community leader will put the following questions inspired by the prayer of Faith and Light to all the members of the community collected together (the coordinating team may have chosen other questions) :

"*Do you want to follow Jesus in our community*"?
All those who wish to reply say "Yes"
"*Do you want to commit yourself to taking part in the gatherings with all your heart*"?
All those who wish to reply say "Yes"
"*Do you want to try to be the friend of everyone in the community*?
All those who wish to reply say "Yes"

After the reply to each question, we lift up our candles singing: "*Lumen Christi, Alleluia!*"
When the celebration is over, we sing with fervour: "*Thank you, Alleluia (3x) Amen!*"

Together, we all say the Faith and Light prayer.

Coordinating team or if there are not enough of them, a person well integrated into the community who is capable of being the "link" between everyone.

The small groups thus allow the community leader to feel really supported to carry out his or her mission.

❑ Its life

The ideal would be that each small group of friendship could get together once in between each gathering. This reunion could take place in various ways.

- participation in a Sunday church celebration
- meeting for lunch or dinner at the home of one of the members. Each person brings a picnic.
- meal in a Mac Donald's or Pizzeria
- meeting to see a good film
- hike together, visit to the swimming pool
- visit to the religious community with which the community is twinned

When it is not possible for everyone to get together, we could meet up in twos or threes. At the least we could phone each other during the month, or could write a small note, or call in to say hello… it is these signs of practical fidelity which allow us to feel that we are not entirely alone.

In these *Guidelines*, the monthly meeting always ends with one or two suggestions for the life of the group of friendship. The small group can give free range to other ideas, to other desires. The essential thing is that our getting together allows us to give each other news, to talk about the last gathering in the community, to live together an intense experience, to spend a few moments in

of their lives, their fears, their dreams, their hopes…; they pray, help each other, relax, share a meal or other activities which nurture friendship . It is the 'time of fidelity' (Charter, I, 4.)

If we insist this year on the working of these small groups, it is because many communities are noticing the difficulty in really living out the time of fidelity. We see that some members have numerous and varied contacts, but that, after the monthly gathering, many must wait until the following month before having a contact with Faith and Light.

❑ Of what does it consist?

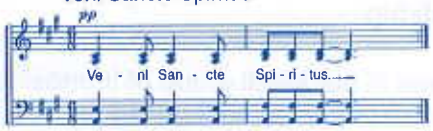
The group of friendship consists of five to six persons: persons with a handicap, parents and friends, (ideally two persons with a handicap, two parents, two friends). In certain communities, there are few parents, or even none at all. In others, few friends, or even none at all. This is the sign that it is urgent to call on the members we are lacking, go and look for them, invite them, pray to the Lord. He has promised to grant the prayers of the little ones. While waiting for their arrival, we must ensure that at least each handicapped person is accompanied by another member. The chaplain will be invited to take part in a small group.

At the beginning of the year, the Coordinating team of the community will make up small groups of friendship, taking into account, if possible, their geographical proximity. This is the chance to renew contact with persons who are unable to participate regularly in the gatherings. It will be suggested that they should be included in a small group which will be a link with the community.

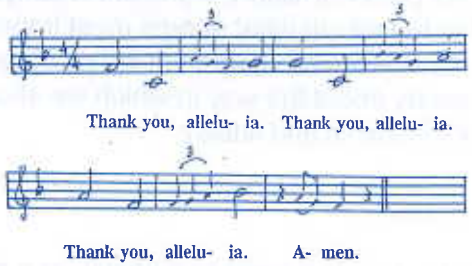
In each small group of friendship there will be a member of the

We sing the Magnificat we put out our candles all together. Everyone will keep his or hers throughout the year as a sign of fidelity.

Veni Sancte Spiritus



(Come, Holy Spirit. / Viens, Saint Esprit. / Ven, Espíritu Santo. / Komm, Heiliger Geist. / Vinde Espírito Santo. / Przybądź, Duchu Święty. / Приди, Дух Святой.)



Merci, alleluia.- Danke, alleluia - Grazie, alleluia - Gracias, alleluia - - Dziękuję, alleluia, - Dank u, alleluia..

❑ Fiesta

❑ Between now and the next gathering: some suggestions

➤ The time of fidelity

In the small groups of friendship

We get together for the first time in our small group of friendship. We can read together what is written in the Guidelines, page . We shall take time to get to know each other, to say several words about our family, our work, a little of our personal history, a present anxiety, a joy… Then we can look together to find out what seems most important in the suggestions offered. At the October gathering we shall say some words to the whole community about the way in which we should like to live through this time of friendship and fidelity.

In my personal life

Each morning, I take into my hands a seed or a flower, or a blade of grass…which is like a promise of spring in my life.

➤ In the coordinating team

We take care not to spend all the time of the team meeting in organizing the details of the next gathering. After evaluating the preceding gathering, we shall set aside a considerable time in order to say what we expect of prayer in the community. We shall also spend a time in prayer, being inspired by the "word" for October.

The time of fidelity: the small groups of friendship

The time of fidelity is lived in many diverse ways according to the countries and the communities. Besides the monthly meetings, nearly all the communities arrange for a special activity each year: holiday camps, retreats, pilgrimages, days spent in the religious community with which the community is twinned…In certain countries the time of welcome, of activity, of spiritual sharing, are organized between the community gatherings - for the persons with a handicap.

In the Middle East, the program usually provides for an activity each week. (meeting for the persons with a handicap or formation of young people or a meeting of the Coordinating team)

This year, these *Guidelines* will especially encourage the small groups of friendship.
We shall find here several indications on their aim, their constitution and their life.

A suggestion: the small groups of friendship

❑ What for?

The charter plans for it: " *Friendship deepens when we take the time to be together. Between the monthly meetings the members of the community like to be together in small groups… they talk*

sing or dance or share the same meal". (Charter I,2)

By the fiesta which ends our gathering (certain communities begin with it), we celebrate our friendship.

It is good to sit round the same table, particularly if it has been well prepared, well decorated. This is the time when the joy of eating and drinking mingles with the joy of meeting. In certain countries, it will only be some fruit shared among everyone, but we can also share what usually constitutes the usual meal: rice, beans, sweet potatoes…

The communities like celebrating everyone's birthday : its unique character, its particular place, its gift are recognized. They also celebrate the anniversary of a blessed moment for the community, its beginning, a particular event where the hand of God has evidently protected it.
We thank God; we celebrate his mercies. "*The fiesta is a celebration, when it reminds us that God is always present, watching over his people and the community, like a Father who loves his children*". (Jean Vanier)

A community which prays

Acts 1, 12-14

October 2001

❑ Welcome

❑ The Word

A community inspired by Jesus, created to announce the Good News to the poor and called to bear witness to love, is necessarily a praying community. All the brothers and sisters of the first Christian community, with one heart and soul, were constant in prayer with Mary, the mother of Jesus.

This prayer is the prayer of the poor; it is a cry of hope. Jesus has gone. The brothers and sisters do not know what to do, nor what is going to happen. But they lean on the risen Jesus, who has made them a promise. They wait in trust, and firmly united and patiently. We also sometimes call on Jesus to make up for our shortcomings, our needs, our poverty. We do not know what to do, we wait, peacefully and united, for the Holy Spirit to show us the way.

This waiting can become a prayer which is a cry for help. Sometimes disputes and divisions arise in the community; the members seem far away from each other. Fatigue and aggressiveness are in the atmosphere. How can we pray in the community at these moments? Perhaps by finding a passage of the Gospel, a psalm or another text from the Bible, which will interpret what is happening in the community. It is then a cry of "Help". "*Come, Lord Jesus, come!*"

There is also the prayer of presence and repose. This is made up of trust in the presence of Jesus, who becomes present in our community. He is there, in the midst of us when two or three are gathered together in his name. These

Often we can express what is in our heart and mind through an activity, coloring, cutting out, modeling, constructing. The objects made will be included in our prayer. Sometimes, they will be handed back to the persons who made them; they will remind them of the theme of the gathering.

The prayer and the liturgy

"*Jesus came to announce the good news to the poor. They are loved by the Father. Jesus gave his life for his flock. He feeds them with his Body. That is why the human meeting and the celebration find their culmination in prayer, in union with God and the celebration of the Eucharist and (or) other religious celebrations.*" (Charter, I,3)

The whole community gathers again together and, with a song, gets ready to turn towards the Lord. We shall have prepared a "prayer corner" or else we shall go to the chapel if there is one nearby.

The prayer is the moment when we entrust to the Lord what has been expressed in the small groups. We praise him, we give him thanks, we call on him for help. We commit to his tenderness our community and each of its members. Let us be attentive, inventive, so that every person, particularly the most wounded, can take part.

The fiesta

"*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 which unites us: we are no longer alone. Gatherings are characterized by moments of joy, when we*

To celebrate this message it is good to use means such as mime, symbols (water, light…), songs, musical instruments, a procession with all the riches of our cultures and our traditions.
Mime of the Gospel is a mode of expression particularly accessible to our brothers and sisters with a handicap. They understand in their being that which words cannot convey. Mime helps to give life to the Gospel. It is not theatre; we are not actors. We simply want to **relive** the Gospel as a true story which is happening at present. Sometimes we know these texts very well, but they have not penetrated our hearts. We have not felt that they are speaking to us today. For example, by reliving the call to the disciples, we too feel ourselves to follow Jesus also. If at all possible, each member of the community should be involved in the mime. This is done so that each one can be more deeply touched by the Gospel story, and not simply be part of an audience.

➤ In sharing groups

Together we have received a word which has nourished us. Now, in sharing groups of five to eight persons, usually led by a member of the coordinating team, each person can express him/herself and say what has touched them in the message. Several very simple questions are suggested. For those who cannot speak, we shall arrange for other means of expression, drawing, modeling clay, gestures…

Sometimes, but not necessarily at every meeting, the parents can get together in the same group, with (or without) friends. The persons with a handicap and several other friends will get together in other meeting areas. It can be good to open up more fully to the riches of others. Thus, we can organize sharing groups where there are found together, parents, persons with a handicap and friends.

are moment blessed with peace, joy and light. The members of the community feel united, in communion with God and with one another. This prayer of repose is a source of liberation: we feel liberated from our fears and our cares. It is important in our community to leave this space where Jesus can give himself to the community. There are prayers expressed in hymns and words, but it is important also that there should be times of silence where we remain in Jesus or where Jesus remains in us, and where we are listening to Jesus. Let us remember little Samuel who understood that he had simply to place himself before God and say: "Speak, Lord, for your servant hears". So we adopt this attitude of an open-minded child, listening to Jesus, ready to receive his presence and his words.

❑ Sharing

➤ Together

After a song each small group of friendship presents itself, says what it has lived through this month and its plans.

"With one accord they devoted themselves to prayer". How are we going to revive this desire in the community? Here are some ideas:

- We can organize this part of the gathering into a preparation for the time of prayer, bringing to it a particular carefulness. The prayer corner is decorated with flowers and branches which we can go and gather or make. The lighting can be made beautiful with candles. Practice the song; try to learn it in different voices or as a canon…

- We remember the Wednesday prayer (the Faith and Light prayer) which is common to all the communities throughout the world.

➤ In sharing groups

What are the "holy words" (for example: " *I am come that they might have life in abundance…*" which might help the community to deepen itself? We can write them or draw them on some good paper.

- Prepare prayer intentions for the Faith and Light communities of such and such a country (which one has met at Lourdes or which some members have visited), to express realistically the bonds which unite us all.

- Jesus says: "*When you pray, go into your room*". What helps me to pray in my room?

- Read together the Faith and Light prayer, which will have been handed to each member of the small group. Each person can underline the phrase or the word which touches him or her the most and say why.

❑ Prayer

The words for this month evoke in a magnificent way the prayer of poverty which consists in an interior silence, since we do not know what to say.

Today, we want to be in this spirit of poverty. So we sit in a big circle. In the centre, the large candle is alight and decorated with beautiful leaves and flowers. Each one of us holds a Bible, a

The welcome at the beginning of each gathering is a very important moment in which are already included sharing and fiesta in the joy of meeting together again. We greet each other and exchange news.

Arrivals are often spread out over a short period. Even when trying to be punctual, we shall wait for the latecomers by beginning with a song or by one or two games. A game is often suggested, which enables people to know the name of each person and to remember it. The community is a family where we know everyone by his or her face, their baptismal name and their heart. The names of absent people are often evoked – the list of members will help us not to forget anyone -, the events which have marked the month…

Together

"*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,, modeling, mimes or gestures…Through friendship made up of tenderness and fidelity, we become signs of the love of God for one another*". (Charter I, 1)

❑ The sharing together

After the welcome, we arrange for a time where we live through the sharing together around the theme for the month. This is essential nourishment for our hearts and spirits. A "word" is given by the community leader or a member of the coordinating team or the chaplain. It opens our hearts to the message of Jesus.

Appendix 1

The three times of each gathering

The whole of our community gathering is like a celebration. It is marked by **three aspects**. We live through **the sharing**, that of our relationships and our friendship, that of the word of God, with which we nourish ourselves together, but which touches each person differently in his heart.
We live through the **prayer** and the liturgy. We live through the **fiesta**, which includes a meal or some form of sharing food together.

The experience of Faith and Light communities shows that these three times are rather like three springs which will feed our gathering. We have indicated them clearly for each meeting, by suggesting an order of events. This order is not systematic and often in a gathering these three components overlap each other. Choose for your gatherings the process which to you seems most natural, knowing that the welcome is a special time to be given particular attention.

To fully live through the gathering and allow the creation and deepening of relationships, sufficient time must be arranged for, at least three hours.

The welcome

" The important thing is to meet together, to listen to each other, so that real relationships can be formed. Thus we get to know one another, love one another, try to bear one another's burdens, to encourage one another to develop". (Charter III, 3)

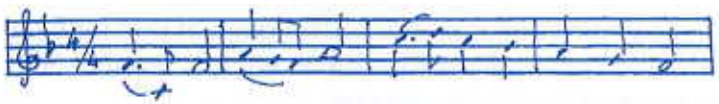
prayer book, or even just a sheet of paper on which is written the "holy words" chosen by the small group.

The prayer leader reads slowly and clearly, perhaps even twice, these words from the Acts of the Apostles, emphasizing the faithfulness of the apostles in prayer :
"*And when they had entered they went up to the upper room, where they were staying. All these with one accord devoted themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers*".(Acts 1, 13-14).
Then, each person is invited to put down his book or his "holy words" near the lighted candle, and to come back and sit down in a relaxed position.

As in the month of September, the person responsible for the prayer leads the community in singing "Veni, Sancte Spiritus".

When the song is ended, slowly, one after the other, we go to get our "holy words" or our book and, after having returned to our place, we keep it in our arms, our open hands or place it on our knees, perhaps after having kissed it with respect. We stay a long time in silence, waiting.

The prayer leader indicates the end by singing the Negro spiritual: "Amen, Amen, Amen" or another appropriate song. When the song is over, she invites one of us to blow out the candle.



A- men. A- men. A- men. A- men. A- men.

❑ Fiesta

❑ Between now and the next gathering: some suggestions

➤ The time of fidelity

In the small groups of friendship
In this month of the Rosary, certain small groups of friendship, could pray with the rosary. Others will choose a different form of prayer. We can go and pray in our parish or a place which fosters contemplation.

On the occasion of All Saints (1 November), we shall pray especially for those who have returned to be with the Lord. We could go to pray together at the tomb of a member of the community or a member of one of our families.

In my personal life
Each morning, I stretch out my arms for several moments, offering myself to the Lord.

➤ In the coordinating team

We shall make an evaluation of the strengths of the community, as well as the strengths of persons and of the solidity of the community to face its difficulties. Above all, we shall look at the strengths which come to us through our attachment to the Gospel.

Next meeting: think about preparing "tongues of fire" for each member of the community and write on each a "word of fire". Each person will give his suggestions.

Appendix

❑ Fiesta

❑ Between now and the next gathering: some suggestions

➤ The time of fidelity

In the small groups of friendship

We put into practice the decisions taken in our small group of friendship for the last time, in order to remain united to one another and to Jesus.

If there are two or three of us staying at home, we could organize a relaxing get-together.
And why not make a pilgrimage together to a holy place near our homes?

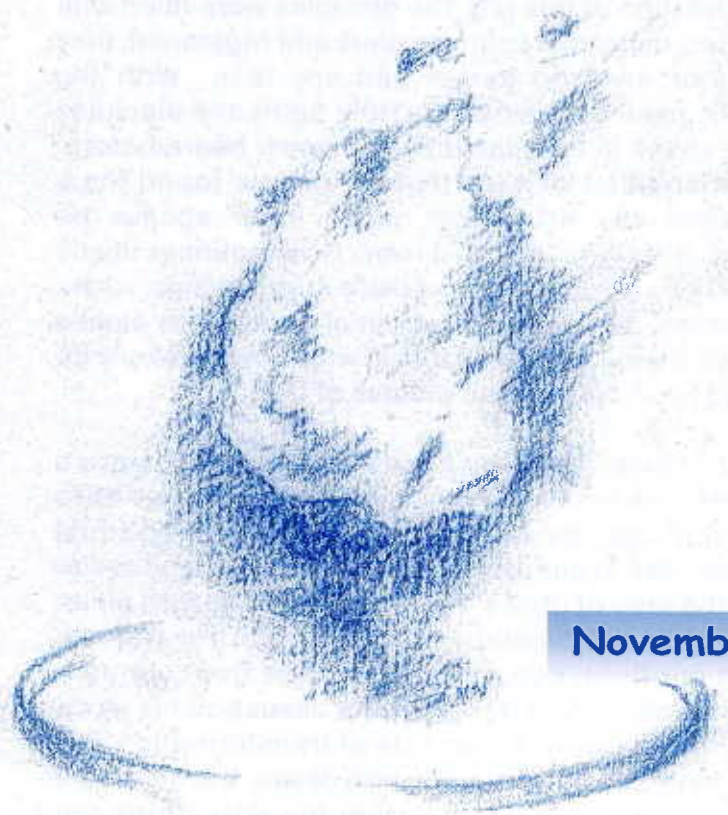
In my personal life

I shall write down the most beautiful fioretti experienced during this year in my community; the one which has touched my heart the most.

Every day this month, I shall read again slowly the Faith and Light prayer (appendix 6).

A community which receives a new power

Acts 2, 1-13



November 2001

❑ Welcome

❑ The Word

We could have waited for the Festival of Pentecost to speak of the gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church at its birth. But in these guidelines, we want to follow, step by step, the Acts or the activities of the apostles. There has been the preparation for the gift of the Holy Spirit, and then, one day, the manifestation of this gift. The disciples were filled with a new power. Instead of being anxious and frightened, they were upright; they no longer had any fear. With the charismatic manifestation of the Holy Spirit, the disciples started to speak in tongues they had never heard before. They were so filled with joy that the people round them thought they had drunk too much. Peter speaks so powerfully. He is a transformed man. He announces Jesus with confidence. In more or less hostile surroundings, where so many people had wanted the death of Jesus, Peter stands up and says a large number of things which many people do not want to hear. He is a true witness of God;

The Spirit is given to us by baptism, but our lives are a mixture. We look to ourselves and our own glory; we have fears, prejudices, psychological, moral and spiritual weaknesses. But in our deepest self, there is also the desire to live in the love of Jesus and of the Gospel, with all its demands of love. Sometimes the Holy Spirit manifests himself in our lives, calling for us to pass from our self-seeking and vainglory to the search for Jesus and his glory. These are the important moments of transformation and conversion; of a profound meeting with Jesus. It is important to leave spaces in our lives, so that the Holy Spirit can intervene in them. The retreats, and pilgrimages (the

the Holy Spirit and by ourselves not to impose on you any burden beyond these essentials" (Acts 15, 28).

For certain decisions, it is really necessary to seek the will of God. That is what is called "discernment".

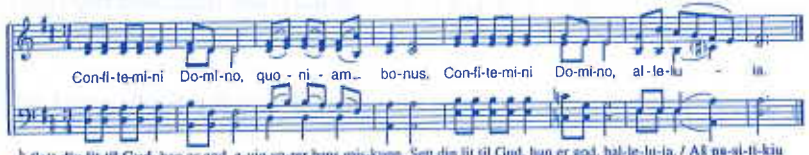
Our prayer, in the poverty of our soul, helps us to free ourselves from our own will and to place everything in the hands of God with the trust of a little child (Psalm 131).

This is how to ask for this poverty for the last time this year. We sit in a circle. In the center is a beautiful big Bible. It is the Word of God. It is beside a large candle and surrounded with flowers. Perhaps we can borrow this Bible from the parish, or from the contemplative community with which we are twinned?

The prayer leader knows how to help us with the silent prayer and the singing of "*Veni, Sancte Spiritus*".

We shall finish with the song "*Confitemini Domino*". The chaplain will take the big Bible; next to him, one of us will hold the big candle. He raises the Book very high and shows it to the whole community. He then makes the sign of the cross with the Book and blesses us all.

Confitemini Domino



♪ Sett din lit til Gud, han er god, e-vig va-rer hans mis-kunn. Sett din lit til Gud, han er god, hal-le-lu-ja. / Aš pa-si-ti-kiu Viešpa-ties, nes Jis mums ge-ras. Aš pa-si-ti-kiu Viešpa-ties, a-le-lia-ja. / Да-куй-мо у-сі Гос-по-ду, Він бо є до-брий Да-куй-мо у-сі Гос-по-ду, А-ли-лу-я.

(Dankt dem Herrn, denn er ist gut. / Dad gracias al Señor porque es bueno. / Give thanks to the Lord for he is good. / Lodate il Signore perché è buono. / Rendez grâce au Seigneur car il est bon. / Dziękujcie Panu, bo jest dobry. / Уповайте на Бога, ибо Он благ. Аллилуия.)

the community. We carry it all together."
If it has been arranged that the coordinating team should be partially renewed in the near future, the leader announces it and explains it to the community.

➤ In sharing groups

The following questions may be suggested:

- What does the community expect from the leader? (a member of each small group will make a note of the replies)
- What does the leader expect from me?
- Have I got a responsibility in the community? How do I fulfil it?
- What does "give one's life" mean? (This does not meant to wear oneself out to death, but to give one's life for the life of others).

The written replies are handed to the leader who reads them and tells her reactions to the community.

We end with a song of "thank you" for the leader of the community, and then we sing it again for the coordination committee.

❑ Prayer

In the introduction to the theme for this month, the first paragraph speaks with insistence on "*to discern*", "*to be inspired by the Holy Spirit*", "*to verify the spirits*". The prayer leader may speak on this subject to the community, or maybe read the first paragraph.

He can tell, in his own words, how the Christians of Antioch had a big issue to settle and how they came to a decision that was inspired by the Holy Spirit. He will read "*It has been decided by*

international, country or zone meetings) are among these special moments. They help us to find the strength and love to spread the Good News in our daily lives.

❑ Sharing

➤ Together

- Read and mime (suggestions in appendix 1) at the same time the event of the Apostles receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit, their fear, then their radical transformation (cf. Acts 2, 1-14). A 'tongue of fire' will have been handed in advance to all the members of the community. On each tongue there will be written a "word of fire", for example "I will be with you always to the end of the world " (Mt. 28,20) or "Yes, Lord Jesus, I love you". After the reading of verse 3, all together, they will raise their "tongues of fire". This movement will be accompanied by a great stroke on a gong. Just after that we shall sing a very joyful song, for example "Jubilate Deo". After the Apostles have met the multitude of pilgrims from every nation, gathered together in Jerusalem, and amazed to hear the marvels of God proclaimed in their own language (verse 11), we shall sing another hymn of praise, for example "Laudate Dominum".

- Two or three persons will testify to a precise moment when they passed from fear or laziness before making a commitment to a new power.

- Each person will go to place his "tongue of fire" in a basket. The community will then be able to divide up into two groups. In each group we shall look for a quality or gift (within a very wide range) for each person in the other group. Then we get together. We put everything in common, by stating the gift or quality recognized in each person.

A member of the coordinating team will make a note of the gift expressed for each person, so that nothing is lost. We could attach the list to the next letter of invitation.This list will be able to help the members of the coordinating team to entrust each person with a task where he could use his or her gift. Thus, the community receives new power.

➤ In sharing groups

Each group draws out one of the gifts or fruits of the Spirit (cf. Gal.5, 22-24) for example: love, joy, peace... and takes a short time to prepare a mime which symbolises or which looks for the way in which the community could live it out more fully.

- We then get together to present to the whole community the mime which we have just prepared or our suggestions.

❑ Prayer

In the centre, on a small table there is a basket with the "tongues of fire".
Someone reads slowly and clearly, in a prayerful voice: "*There appeared to them tongues as of fire; these separated and came to rest on the head of each of them. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak different languages as the Spirit gave them power to express themselves.*" (Acts2, 3-4)

Then, the prayer leader says a few words about psalm 131 (see page 6 in English) :

"*We are all like little children*"
"*Sometimes we feel down and lonely*"
"*We wait for the Lord to come*"
"*God will take us in his arms*"
"*God will cradle us gently as if he were singing a tune for us*"
He sings with us. We sing "*Veni, Sancte Spiritus*" (as in previous meetings)

servant, to help each person in the community, or each of the communities to be as alive as possible.

It is not easy to exercise authority according to the spirit of the Gospel. You are either a little dictatorial and want to control everything, or else you let things go, for fear of being criticized ; we do not assume the responsibility with which we have been entrusted. Human qualities are needed for the exercising of authority; you should love Faith and Light and understand its aims and its life. You must, above all, let yourself be guided by Jesus and his Holy Spirit. It is they who will help us to be responsible, to listen really attentively, to work with others, not to be controlling or dominating but wise and humble servants of the body.

❑ Sharing

➤ Together

Someone reads the Gospel on the Good Shepherd (Jn. 10, 1-6 and 11-15). Then she can ask which are the words which seem to us the most important, which have touched us the most.

The person in charge says: "the leader is our good shepherd, but he does not carry this responsibility all alone. He shares it with the coordinating team".

The leader calls on each member of this coordinating team to introduce himself. Then the leader continues, "*it is not only this team, but each member of our community who is responsible for*

❑ Welcome

❑ The Word

When the Church began to expand, new questions were posed. People needed to know who decides what, what is possible and what is not. It had to be discerned: who was inspired by the Holy Spirit ? Christians form parts of a body and a body includes a head as much as all the other parts. Obviously, all the body is inspired by the Holy Spirit; each member can say "*The Holy Spirit tells me this or that*", but spirits must be tested. There must be discernment. Then who discerns? It is here that we see problems arising, and it is the apostles and the elders who decide what is to be done and who write a letter giving instructions.

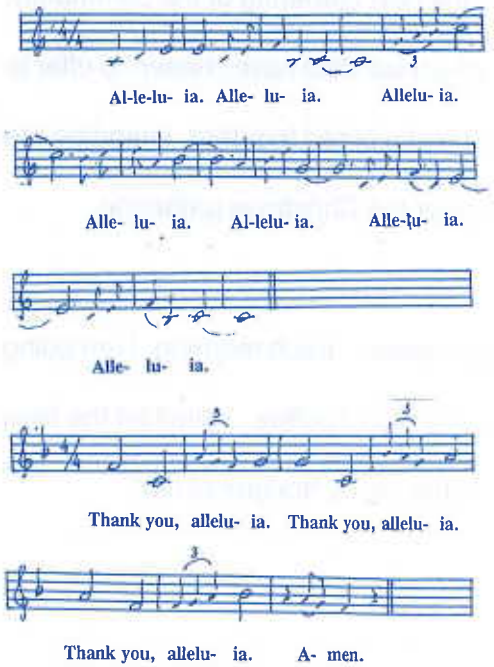
The role of these apostles and elders was to discern the will of the Lord for this newborn church. The Church was not theirs; it is the Church of Jesus. Peter and the apostles are the shepherds, but the flock belongs to Jesus.

Every human grouping is a body which needs a head. Certainly, the head is part of the body. It is a question of listening to the body and to lead the body according to the aims of this human organization. It is thus that in Faith and Light, there are needed persons who assume responsibilities at the levels of the community, the country and internationally. The shepherds are there to support the communities, to nourish them and to help them when there are difficulties. But a shepherd is never alone. He cooperates with others, he asks the advice of others. He is not there for his own glory, nor to control the group. He is there as a

When the singing has ceased, it is as if we had fallen asleep in the arms of the Lord in a simple "being with".

The prayer leader will "wake us up" when she starts singing softly, and then louder:
"*Alleluia, Alleluia...*"
She says:
"*We have rested in the arms of God*".
"*Now we are strong*".
One after another, each person goes to draw out a "tongue of fire". The saying written on it will help each one during this month. It can be read out aloud.

We conclude this prayer time with the song: "Thank you, alleluia!"



Merci, alleluia.- Danke, alleluia - Grazie, alleluia - Gracias, alleluia - - Dziękuję, alleluia, - Dank u, alleluia..

❑ Fiesta

❑ Between now and the next gathering: some suggestions

➤ The time of fidelity

In the small groups of friendship

Together, we are going to make a little crib for each person. We shall put it in a
corner of our room. (After the next gathering of the community, we could place in front
of this crib the gift of love which we shall have chosen to offer to Jesus for
Christmas). We could also make bread together: kneading the dough and baking the
little rolls needed as symbol for the Christmas gathering.

In my personal life

Heat is a source of energy, a power. Each morning, I am going to hold something warm
in my hands, for example, my cup of coffee. I shall let the heat gently warm my heart.
I shall repeat the saying written on my "tongue of fire".

A community which needs an authority

Acts 15,1-35

August 2002

next year, in order to call on one or two new persons to take on more responsibilities ?

➤ In the coordinating team

The gathering will be centred on a celebration anticipating Christmas, feast of the poor. In certain communities, this celebration can be associated with the Eucharist where Jesus makes
himself little and weak. The team will prepare carefully the Christmas mime. Some of the members of the coordinating team will figure among the shepherds, some of the others among the angels in order to control the different movements and songs.

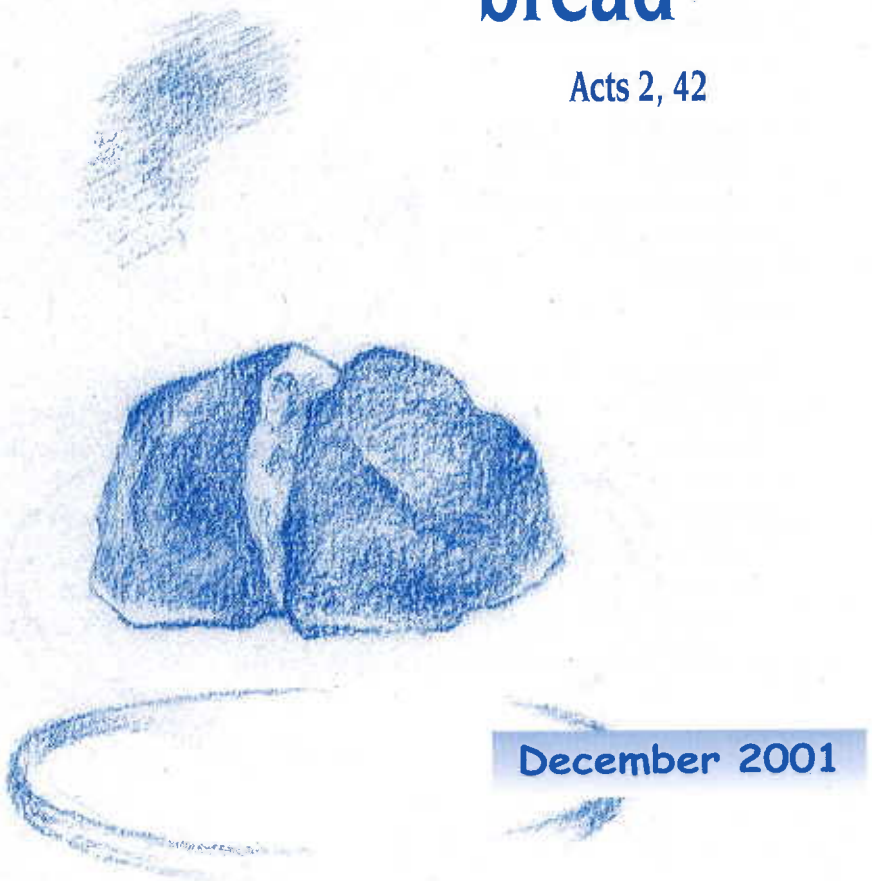
It is, perhaps, the occasion for the team to bring their mind to bear on the question of the sacraments. Would certain persons desire to receive Baptism, or the Eucharist or Confirmation? If so, the team will arrange to organize the preparation, in the community or with a specialized catechism if this exists in the parish or the diocese.

(This preparation for sacraments should be done in very close collaboration with the parish. If the parish does not know how to do this, then the members of Faith and Light should work with the parish catechists so that two fruits can be gathered:

- *the person(s) with mental handicap will be welcomed into the full life of the Church through the sacraments*
- *the parish catechists, pastor, etc. will come to know the person(s) with handicaps as well as their families and friends, through Faith and Light.)*

A community which lives by the breaking of bread

Acts 2, 42



December 2001

❑ Between now and the next gathering: some suggestions

➤ The time of fidelity

In the small groups of friendship

If many of us are going on holiday (vacation) next month, we can ask each person for her program, the joys she is looking forward to, the difficulties she can fear, her hopes. How, do we, during this time of absence, remain linked to each other ? By a round letter? by personal correspondence, by prayer ? From today onwards, we entrust the holidays (vacation) of each one of us to the Lord, and we look to see how we can keep a time withHim every day. (We shall make sure that everyone has a list of up-to-date addresses).

In my personal life

Each day I shall copy (or cut out) from a newspaper or magazine, a new hope for the world. I shall collect them together in a folder or I shall stick them in a little notebook.

➤ In the coordinating team

We can read again chapter 10 of Saint John on the Good Shepherd. During our prayer time, let ask Jesus for the grace to be a good shepherd in his image, to exercise authority as a servant.

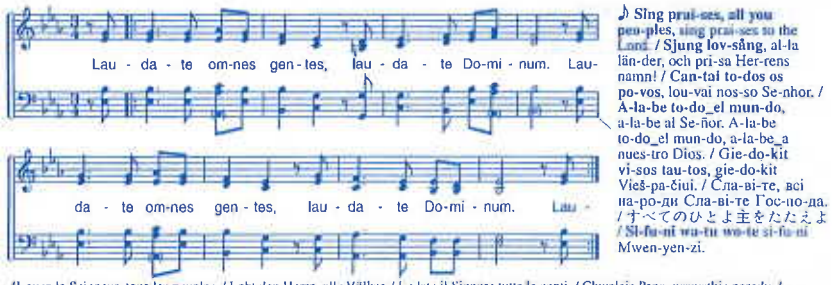
What partial renewal of the coordinating team can we think of for

what happened at Antioch and what were the events which followed (Acts 13, 1-15). He may point out on the map the different places mentioned in the story.

He calls for silence and reads, *"One day while they were offering worship to the Lord and keeping a fast, the Holy Spirit said 'I want Barnabas and Saul set apart for the work to which I have called them"* (Acts 13, 2).
We follow him easily, as he sings the "*Veni, Sancte Spiritus*" and leads us into the silent Prayer which is a prayer of openness to an infinite horizon.

To mark the end of the prayer, he sings "*Laudate omnes gentes*". The big map is lifted up by its four corners, shown to everyone, and finally fixed on a wall of our meeting place. A great applause follows!

Laudate omnes gentes



(Louez le Seigneur, tous les peuples. / Lobt den Herrn, alle Völker. / Lodate il Signore tutte le genti. / Chwalcie Pana, wszystkie narody. / Прославяйте все народи Господа.)

❑ Fiesta

❑ Welcome

❑ The Word

Jesus was born in "Bethlehem", which means "the house of bread". Jesus tells us that he is the living bread, come down from Heaven to give life to the world. And the disciples were constant in prayer, faithful in the teaching of the apostles, in brotherly communion and in the breaking of bread. Jesus came to reveal the love of the father, to reveal who God is. God is not simply the creator of heaven and earth or the supreme judge. He is someone who loves. He is Love. To be sure, Love protects, watches over another, educates him. Is not this what makes a father or a mother? But, above all, Love is communion, vulnerability, mutual belonging. "You are mine, and I am yours." This belonging is a relationship of mutual trust. It is a covenant. Love does not impose itself; it calls, it invites, it attracts towards communion. Love only exists where there is freedom. It is a mutual gift.

Jesus was born in Bethlehem, "the house of bread", he was born of a woman, he was born little and poor. He reveals to us the vulnerability of God. Jesus needed not only food and warmth, he needed the love of his mother, of her tenderness and delicacy. This is why our God is a hidden God. When God showed himself to Moses on Mount Sinaï through the thunder and lightning, the people were afraid. They could adore him then, but in fear. They could not love him. God wants us to enter into an intimate relationship with him. He wants us to become his friends! To live in communion with someone, one must be small and be able to show oneself as weak. It is for this reason that the Word became flesh.

Communion is a reciprocal vulnerability. At one moment Jesus says to his disciples:
"*He who eats of my body and drinks of my blood remains in me and I in him.* Is this not living a reciprocal vulnerability ?

❑ Sharing

➤ Together

Today, we are celebrating the birth of Jesus. In a moment we are going to come, like the shepherds and like the wise men, and give him a present. Each one of us will offer to Jesus a bread roll. (The leader explains the symbol of the bread roll in relation to the Word for the month). But the most precious thing for Jesus is the gift of our hearts, which we are going to prepare together. What loving gift can we offer to Jesus, which would please him most, in the way of littleness, humility, poverty? (For example: give him a few minutes of our time, even when we don't know at all what to say to him; our smile at the person we don't like very much; our patience with the person who irritates us; our immediate availability when some one asks us to help...).

➤ In sharing groups

We think about the gift of our heart, which we would like to offer to Jesus, when we go to the crib in a moment. On a card stapled to a ribbon, we write our name and that gift of the heart. Then we tie that card around our bread roll.

Each person can say how he is thinking of celebrating Christmas. When we receive Jesus into our heart, at the celebration of

to another community, what other form of development could we find ?

➤ In sharing groups

- Everyone will say how he could announce the good news of Faith and Light in her surroundings, work, parish, family, friends... To be able to say to those who would be touched by our witness, : "*Come and see*". Let us take note of the replies from each person for the Coordinating team.

- Each small sharing group will prepare a presentation of Faith and Light. In five minutes the first one will present it in a school, the second, in a church, the third will address a group of young people. We shall take care that this presentation has a witnessing angle, that its international aspect should be really present, and that it is not just a technical explanation.

Then each group, in turn, will make its presentation to the community, which can then ask questions.

❑ Prayer

In Lourdes, we saw the international dimension of Faith and Light with our own eyes,and we have made friends with people from different countries and cultures. It was again a breaking down of barriers and defenses. When we reflect on this, we are drawn to our prayer of poverty with "open hands".

We sit down in a big circle. In the centre lies a big map of the world on the floor. The prayer leader will tell, in his own words,

communities in the region. But we can only be missionaries in God's time. It was God who sent Barnabas and Paul. Our community should be sufficiently rooted in the love of Jesus, alive and attractive, in order to speak of it to others. It is life which communicates life.

❑ Sharing

➤ Together

We are going to mime Jesus announcing his mission in the synagogue of Nazareth (Luke 4,16-22).

Jesus arrives at the synagogue with his disciples. He reads solemnly the passage on the Isaiah's mission. He sits down. Everyone is astonished.

Jesus' mission is to announce the good news to the poor. But it is also our mission and the mission of every community. In our turn, we can now proceed solemnly and put on the wall the great fresco, drawn month by month, of the Acts of the Apostles. We can read again there, the path followed this year, in the steps of the first Christian communities. After this, we can share:

- Has our community already tried to form another community?
- Why is it important to form another community?
- How do we react to this idea? Joy? Fear? Resistance?
- How do we foster the desire to give life?
- What is the first step towards this path of mission and development?
- If our community is too old or too fragile to think of giving life

Christmas, we shall offer him our gift of love, and He will give us all his love. If we receive Jesus into our heart during the Eucharist, it is in order to become little and poor like Him, bread of love, one for another.

❑ Celebration

We are going to designate Mary, Joseph, the angels and the different characters of the Nativity Scene. Be sure that everyone in the community has a place in this mime. As for the Infant Jesus, if there is no baby in the community, we shall have brought a nice doll, if possible the size of a new-born baby. Each person receives the bread roll with his or her name on it.

We are going to re-live Christmas night. In a corner of the room, the living crib, Joseph and Mary are worshipping the Child Jesus, watched over by the ox and the ass. (Arrange for a small basket in which each person can put his bread roll). In another corner, the shepherds and sheep, lying on the ground, are sleeping deeply. The angels are in another corner. Other characters, an old grandmother with her grandson, the Mayor, a beggar is in a fourth corner. They will arrive at the crib after the shepherds and their flocks.

The reader will take the text of Luke, chapter 2, paraphrasing the beginning thus: "*Joseph left the town of Nazareth to go to Bethlehem. He left with Mary who was expecting a baby. Both of them had come for the census decreed by the emperor.*" Then, there will be read verses
6-21 inclusive. The reading will accompany the mime. When they arrive at the crib, everyone will leave his or her bread roll in the basket in front of the child Jesus.

❑ Prayer

After the mime, we again gather in a circle in the silence of Christmas Night. When peace reigns amongst us, we all become as little children.

The person chosen to prepare the prayer will have brought a small crib. It will be placed on a low table in the centre of the circle. It invites us to relax, to feel like the Infant Jesus who is resting in the crib.

We are already used to praying to ask for the coming of the Holy Spirit. The person in charge of the prayer helps us once again to enter into this prayer, with in our hearts, this desire for peace on earth for all men of goodwill.

We sing the "*Veni, Sancte Spiritus*". We then remain in deep silence, for a long time, until the angels are heard singing: "*Gloria, gloria*" in which we all join.

Slowly, one after the other, each person passes in front of the crib, takes the child Jesus and kisses him.

❑ Welcome

❑ The Word

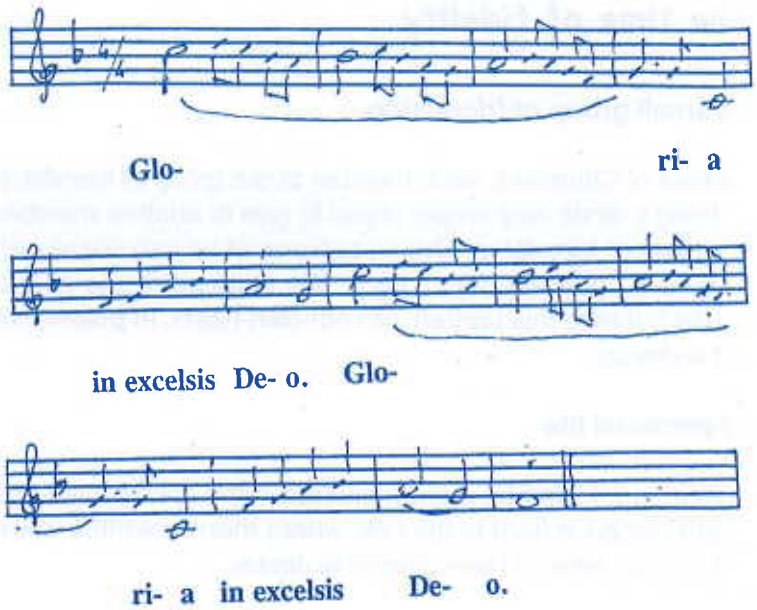
Jesus sends Paul and Barnabas on a mission; they depart to announce the good news of Jesus. The Acts of the Apostles is the story of the deepening of the first Christian community. At the same time, it is the story of the expansion of the message of Jesus throughout the world. Jesus came to liberate every human being from the blocks of sin and of fear. He loves every person, whatever his race, his religion, his culture, his limits and his capabilities may be. He wants to help every person to live and grow in love. He wants to break down the walls which prevent human beings from communicating between themselves and from loving each other. He wants to make of humanity a body, a great family.

Faith and Light is also called to be missionary, because it is a Christian movement. We have good news to announce. We have treasures of grace and of life to communicate. First of all, the value of persons with a handicap: they are loved by God; then a community life where we are commit ourselves, one to another. Our communities are places where we live together through the values of the Gospel and where we celebrate life. So many families who have a person with a handicap feel lonely. They do not know the riches of love that we have received from Faith and Life.

We are missionaries in two ways: we can speak about Faith and Light to friends, at work or in the parish, make it known to parents, thus welcoming new members who have need of the community. We can also help in the formation of new

A missionary community

Acts 13,1-15



❑ Fiesta

At the time of the fiesta, the basket (with the bread rolls) will be placed on a table. The leader will return to each person his or her bread roll. Each one will keep the ribbon, with his love gift and will share his bread roll with someone else.

❑ Between now and the next gathering: some suggestions

➤ The time of fidelity

In the small group of friendship

At this time of Christmas, each member of our group of friendship could bring a small very simple object to give to another member of our group of friendship Then, each one of us can share with the others a suffering, an anxiety. We shall not try to give a response but take this burden into our own heart. In prayer, we offer it to Jesus.

In my personal life

Each morning, I keep for a few moments in my open hands, the little card placed in front of the crib, where there is written down the gift of love, which I have offered to Jesus.

Each day I make the sign of the cross on the bread that I eat.

➤ In the coordinating team

Sharing our hearts means to care for the welfare of each person and for the unity of the community. This is the first mission of the coordinating team. This month is an occasion for the team to redefine its role. How does one call each person to watch over the others?

The month of January is the one where Christians, throughout the world pray especially for God to grant them the grace of unity.

We associate ourselves, with all our heart, with the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. We can repeat each day the prayer for this intention (appendix 7).

very great number of Faith and Light communities, the long holidays (vacations) stretch over the months of July and August. As far as is possible, we shall maintain at least one of the two gatherings, even if not everyone can take part. The coordinating team will choose the theme which seems to them the most important for the community. Those present can send a little note to those who are absent, by sending them the text of The Word, the theme of the sharing together and in small groups.

In the countries of the Southern Hemisphere, the holidays (vacations) are different depending on the zones or countries. In any case, the coordinating team will do the same to know which theme they might possibly have to sacrifice.

❑ Between now and the next gathering: some suggestions

➤ The time of fidelity

In the small groups of friendship

Could we give a helping hand to one of the members of the community, one of their relatives, close friends or neighbours, or someone in the parish… ? Depending on the country, we could be asked to do a thorough housecleaning, washing windows, cleaning up the garden, washing the car, gathering vegetables or fruit or making jam…, or even a good tidy up of the hall which is lent to us for our gatherings…

In my personal life

I shall give a smile each time I say " Hello, how are you ?"

➤In the coordinating team

During the next gathering we could arrange for a celebration of thanksgiving for all the members of Faith and Life who have gone on mission and who have contributed to the birth of new communities in 75 countries, by words, retreats, the setting up of new communities… Thanksgiving also for all the contemplative communities who have contributed to the expansion of Faith and Light throughout the world, by their prayer. Are we ready to set up a new community ? How do we help each member for this task ?

In the countries of the Northern Hemisphere where there are a

A community of sharing

Acts 2, 42-46 ; 4, 32-36

January 2002

❑ Welcome

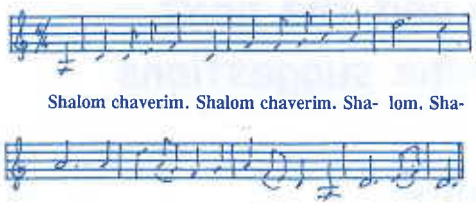
❑ The Word

The Holy Spirit works in the heart of each person, but also in the entire community. The disciples were of one heart, they were faithful to the brotherly communion. In his letter to the Philippians, Paul encourages them: "*Have the same love, being of full accord and one mind. Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to his own interests, but to the interests of others* (Ph 2, 2-4)

A community is composed of several members. In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul describes the assembly of believers, the Church, like a body. (Cor. 1, 12) In the human body there are several parts, and each part is unique and important. Each has its place, its function. Paul ends by saying that the weaker and less presentable parts are necessary to the body and should be honoured.

Each member of a Faith and Light community is important and has a unique place. The communities are united by the same life which circulates in each heart. This life is the life of Jesus and the Holy Spirit which is given to us. But each member must be helped to discover that he is important, that he has a gift which is proper to him, and that he can share this gift with others.

The Church was founded on and with this first community, to respond to the new commandment of Jesus: "*Love one another as I have loved you*". The first Christian community is the model for every Christian community, for each Faith



Peace, my dear friends. - La paix, chers amis. - Friede, meine liebe Freunde. - Vrede, mijn goede vrienden. - La paz para vos, amigos. - Pace, amici miei. - Zostańcie w pokoju, przyjaciele.

❑ Fiesta

❑ Evaluation of the year
(together or in sharing group)

We have a time of evaluation, each person answering these questions:

- What have I liked most this year in the community ?
- What have I found least good?
- What do I hope for, for next year?

If we are in small groups, the leaders will take note of what each person said.

- For Bartholomew and Thomas, He emphasizes their incredulity.
- To James and Thaddeus, He says nothing. He just looks at them with love.
- To Simon the Zealot, He reminds him of his tendency towards 'guerilla' violence.
- To Judas Iscariot, He says that he knows of his avarice, but He is giving him the common purse, so that he can learn to be honest. Later on, Jesus will give him a kiss and look at him with great love, even though he knows that Judas is going to betray Him.

Then the reader will underline how Jesus has welcomed each one with all his faults, his jealousy, even though He knew that all of them would run away at the time of His arrest.
At the last meal He took with them, He called them his friends and revealed his secrets to them. He finally humiliated himself before them with an immense love, by washing their feet, saying, "Blessed are you if you do the same".

➤ The celebration of the washing of the feet

Now we are going to have the joy of obeying his commandment and to wash each others' feet. The room will have been prepared. According to the number of persons, we shall form a large circle, or several, (groups of 8 to 10 persons). Each group will have a bowl, a jug (pitcher) full of water and a towel.

For the procedure of the washing of the feet and the sharing suggested by groups , see appendix 3.

and Light community. The Holy Spirit wants to give us the power and the wisdom to live like this first community, but according to our own methods. It is not a question, first of all, for us to share all our goods, but to share our hearts. This is the essential thing:
To care for the well being of each person and for the unity of the whole: not to think ourselves superior to others, but to serve them and to seek their good. If each one of us is there for the others, the community will be united. If we seek to impose ourselves or to prove that we are right and the others wrong, there will be no more community.

There has been a tradition for several years to pray during this month in a special way for the unity of Christians. Jesus has such a thirst for unity, "*That they should be ONE, as the Father and I are ONE*". This unity is a sign and fruit of love. This love is called to extend beyond our own community, to all the disciples of Jesus.

❑ Sharing

➤ Together

- To share means sharing the word, our friendship, our hearts. It is not so much the sharing of our doings which creates communion between us, but much more the sharing of our weaknesses, our poverty, our vulnerability in relation one to another.
- The leader presents the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, which is taking place from 18 to 25 January. A passage of Saint John, chapter 17 is read. We say together the prayer for Christian unity (appendix 7).

- Dividing ourselves up into groups of three, one person with a handicap, a parent and a friend (as during the pilgrimage at Lourdes), we shall live out this meeting, having as our primary preoccupation, the care of our two companions.

- Often we have the habit of taking out our personal or family picnic. Today, we shall put everything in common. We shall put out an attractive table with all the dishes well presented. Sharing is joyful and encourages festiveness...

- We can re-live the Gospel of the Good Samaritan, insisting on his last words, when he asks the innkeeper "*Take care of him*". Each one of us is like the Good Samaritan who takes care of others. But we are also like this wounded man taken into a Faith and Light community where others take care of us.

➤ In sharing groups

- Do I come into the community with the desire to take care of others? How can I do this? Each person can give examples when he or she has refused to share. When have I refused to share ? When have I had the opportunity to share something? The essential thing is not to share our goods but our hearts. How can this be done? How do I share with others the particular gift which was recognized in me during the November gathering ? (Look again at the list of each person's gifts, to help us).

- Do I get the impression, in the community, that people look after me? How? Do I want something more ?

sensibility, social environment.... It seems to us even more difficult if they are persons with faults which annoy and even exasperate us.

We shall see how Jesus got together, to fulfil his mission, men more different from each other than one could imagine, each one with many weaknesses and all of them being jealous of each other. We shall represent Jesus calling each apostle, just as he is.

Each apostle will wear, if possible a garment or an accessory which will characterize him. They are mixed up with members of the community. A reader will read a passage of Saint Mark's gospel (Mark 3, 13-19). Then he will read it again, emphasizing the name of each apostle. Jesus calls this apostle who comes towards Him. Jesus says some words about his character or his failings with great goodness and gentleness. He makes no reproaches (even, if later, He will speak to them to help them grow and progress).

- To Peter, He speaks about his impulsiveness and his presumption. Peter believes himself to be very strong, invulnerable, (but his weakness and his fear lead him to betray Jesus)

- As for Andrew, He thanks him for giving Peter good advice.

- James and John, the two brothers, are called by Jesus "Sons of thunder". He remarks on their violence. He again says to them "You have a lot of personal ambition, but later on, you will find something else".

- To Philip, He says not to doubt that He, Jesus, is the Messiah.

- To Matthew, He draws attention to the fact he is used to stealing from people , by asking too much in taxes.

❑ Prayer

This time the prayer comes before the sharing. The theme for this month is particularly suited to the prayer of poverty. We have a tendency to turn in on ourselves, to be on the defensive, when we meet anything new or unknown. However, if we are poor, we have nothing to defend.

Let us again sit in a big circle and feel ready or open for anything new.

The prayer leader will invite us to open our hearts to the text she is going to read in a clear and solemn voice :"*Then Peter addressed them: 'I now really understand' he said 'that God has no favorites, but that anybody of any nationality who fears him and does what is right, is acceptable to him.*" (Acts 10,35)

By now we are accustomed to the prayer of poverty. It is a prayer of peace and will undo the inner tension of our defensiveness. After the singing of "*Veni, Sancte Spiritus*" and the time of silence, the prayer leader sings "*Shalom alerem*". We joyfully give each other a sign of peace.

To reanimate and find again the spirit of our prayer of poverty, it would be good to read again, from time to time "Some words on prayer" (see page 8)

❑ Sharing

➤ Together

Sometimes we begin to think it is very difficult, if not impossible, to become the friend of persons too different from us in character,

❑ Prayer

We are again seated in a big circle. In the centre on a low table, there is an empty basket.

Someone reads: "*None of their members was ever in want, as all those who owned land or houses would sell them and bring the money from the sale of them, to present it to the apostles. It was then distributed to any who might be in need*" (Acts 4, 34-35)

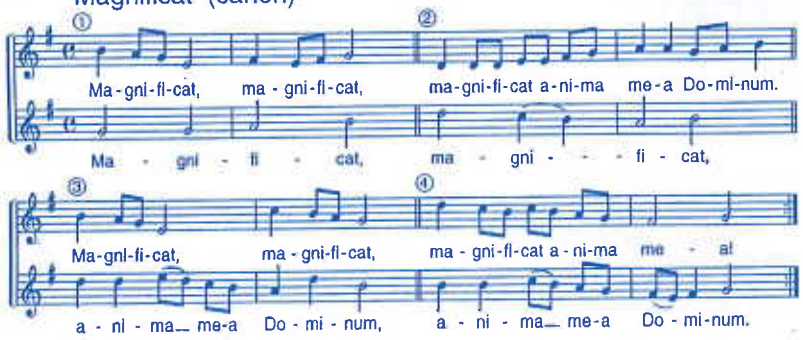
The prayer leader explains:
"*To share is to give up something of yourself. This is difficult*"
"*To share is to make somebody else happy. This is easy*"
"*It means giving up our egoism and opening ourselves to the other*"
"*Our prayer of poverty is both at the same time: opening up and giving up*"
"*Let us do the same. It will make us free and able to share.*"

The prayer leader will do what he has so often done already in the preceding months: help us to enter progressively into silence. He sings the "Veni, Sancte Spiritus" which we shall sing until we once again return to silent prayer. When this time of silent prayer has ended, we sing the "Magnificat".

Finally, the prayer leader says : "Are we now ready to share our possessions with others ?"

We write down on a sheet of paper what we should like to share when we go home. We each come to put our paper in the basket. There will be joyful background music.

Magnificat (canon)



♪ **Sing out my soul.**
Sing out my soul. Sing out and glo-ri-fy the Lord who sets us free. Sing out my soul. Sing out my soul. Sing out and glo-ri-fy the Lord God!

(Mon âme magnifie le Seigneur. / Meine Seele preist die Größe des Herrn. / Mi alma engrandece al Señor. / A minha alma glorifica o Senhor. / Uwielbiaj, duszo moja, Pana. / Величит душа моя Господа.)

❑ Fiesta

❑ Between now and the next gathering: some suggestions

➤ The time of fidelity

In the small group of friendship

We could visit a person or a family from the community who has difficulty in joining
us regularly. We should bring them the Faith and Light album

❑ Welcome

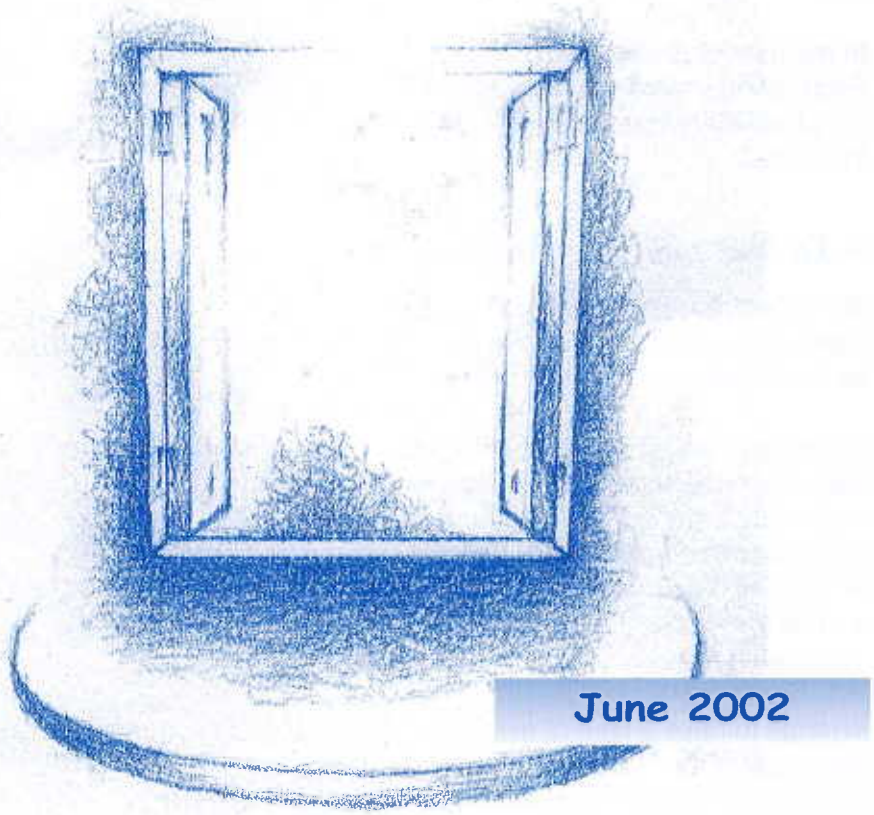
❑ The Word

This story about Peter is full of teaching for us. It concerns welcoming, in the name of Jesus, the "different" person and the stranger. Like all the pious Jews of his time, Peter was submitted to a number of rites of purification and laws concerning the Sabbath... There were prohibitions on what one could eat. And then, Peter had a vision of all sorts of animals, reptiles and birds, meat it was forbidden to eat! He hears a voice: "Rise, Peter, kill and eat"! Little by little, he understands what God is saying to him, and he understands, particularly when he is brought before Cornelius, a Roman centurion. This man was the first Roman to enter the Christian community. Peter discovers that the Romans and Greeks who give themselves to Jesus are not obliged to follow the law or the ritual regulations of the Jews. The stranger becomes a brother.

In our communities, it is important for us to dare to welcome different people, whatever their language, their race, their customs, their Church or their religion. If they want to become a brother or sister in the community, if they know and accept the Charter, it is important for us to open our hearts, to accept them as they are and to help them feel at ease. It is especially in the month of January that we seek a greater unity with our brothers and sisters of the different Churches, but it is every day, every month, that we are called to work towards unity, to welcome those who come from diverse traditions. Jesus wants so much this love between all Christians.

A community open to others

Acts 10, 31-35



(the special edition of "Ombres et Lumière" on the pilgrimage), or we could look with them at the video "They are opening up a way", then share with them our joy and our plans.

If possible, we can take part together in a prayer service which local churches have prepared for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

According to the custom of our country, we can prepare, for the festival of light, pancakes or a typical dish which we usually eat on this occasion.

In my personal life

Each morning, I shall slip several coins into a money-box. At the end of the month, I shall bring the amount collected to my community to share with Faith and Light in the world, and increase the collection for our "Announcing and Sharing Day"
(see appendix 4)

➤ In the coordinating team

We are half-way through the year. Let us evaluate the work of the Coordinating team, the priorities which we could fix in order to better fulfil our mission.

We may centre the next gathering on one of two themes.

- either the feast of light and the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple (Lc 2, 22-35) this is the option which is proposed for next month.
- or on the healing of a paralytic man by Peter (Acts 3, 1-16) with the mime of this text and sharing groups on the question :" *How can I be witness to the Good News? How have others had been witnesses for me ?*

A community which witnesses

Acts 3, 1-26

gathering: some suggestions

➤ The time of fidelity

In the small groups of friendship
We can talk about the fruits and the joy of our little group, about the friendship which has grown between us since the beginning of the year. We celebrate the joy of sharing and trust. We invent festive ways of meeting together. We imagine together how to continue on our way, so that everyone is happy in this small group of friendship.

In my personal life
Each day this month, I shall send a little note, or I shall give a call, or I shall visit someone in difficulty, or a member of my group of friendship.

➤ In the coordinating team

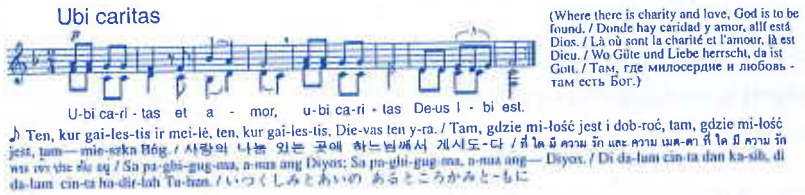
We reflect on the way to call, welcome and accompany new members in the community in the course of the next gathering, for the holiday camp, or the coming year.

At the next gathering, for the celebration of the washing of the feet, we divide ourselves up either into groups of friendship, or else in larger groups of ten persons. The leader will be a member of the coordinating team or a person prepared for this celebration. Arrange to have, for each group, a nice bowl, a pitcher (jug) and a white towel. We shall get there a little earlier in order to arrange the chairs in circles. (see appendix 3)

Arrange to have a time of evaluation with the whole community and prepare it in advance.
Prepare it for the most suitable time, either at the beginning or the end of the gathering.

In the big circle we make up little groups of three persons, forming little 'circles' – just to be with each other. We shut our eyes and lay our hands, open, on our knees. The prayer leader leads us into the "*Veni, Sancte Spiritus*" and silence.

At the end, he sings "*Ubi caritas et amor*". We stand up to sing with him. We make the sign of the cross on each others' foreheads, firstly in small groups, and then in the large group,



saying, for example: "*Loïc, or Matthew or Beatrice, Jesus loves you, I should like to love you as he does.*"

❑ Fiesta

❑ Between now and the next

❑ Welcome

❑ The Word

Since the community was united to Jesus and faithful to the brotherly communion and to the breaking of bread, Peter and John were free to witness, to speak in the name of Jesus and to announce the good news. The mission of Jesus is the mission of each of us and of each of our communities.

"The spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to preach good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives,
and recovering of sight to the blind,
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,
to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord"
(Luke 4, 18-19)

What is this good news? For the beggar suffering from a handicap since birth and who begged near the door of the Temple, the good news was the love of Peter and John, their way of looking at him and being interested in him. Inspired by Jesus, they healed him. This healing astonishes all who knew him and opens them to the words of Peter who speaks and bears witness to Jesus with power and at the same time, with such tenderness. Peter and John want to help them to find true life, life in Jesus.

Peter bears witness by doing an action, an action which heals. This actions gives authority to his words. We, disciples of Jesus in Faith and Light, ourselves are called not to physically heal persons with a handicap, but to bear witness with authority through our lives and our community,

with weak persons, whose hearts are healed by love. It is the quality of our community life which gives authority to our words and which calls others to know Jesus and the love which he pours into our hearts. "*It will be known that you are my disciples by the love you have for one another*" (Jn. 13, 35).

❑ The Feast of Light

- The feast of light is often the chance to witness while meeting the parish. We can suggest participating in the organization of the Mass, then invite the parishioners to join us. Two or three persons could tell about what the community is, how it has transformed their lives. Perhaps, certain parishioners who are interested could stay for all or part of the gathering.

- This could also be the occasion on which to invite among those close to us one or several young friends, one or several families "to come and see". In this case, let us take care to adapt our activities, our sharing groups and our prayer time, so that our newcomers can feel at ease.

- Not all those who come are destined to become members of Faith and Light. But perhaps, from time to time, some of them could receive a family, or invite a person with a handicap to lunch with them... It is good to make sure that this feast bears fruit, as much for the parish as for the community

- Does our community already feel itself to be in danger? Where have we sought help?
- What do I do when faced with a person I find disagreeable? Where can I find a support?

We can end this sharing by the game of the blind man, two by two, one of them has his eyes covered. Behind him his companion upholds him, guiding him in the way. Then, the roles are reversed, in order to mutually each give the other confidence.

❑ Prayer

Today, we want more than ever to pray the prayer of poverty, which is so powerful when we are in great distress and no remedy exists.

We sit down again in a circle in the silence and peace, which are now so familiar to us. The prayer leader reads: "*Some time passed, and the Jews worked out a plot to kill him, but news of it reached Saul. They were keeping watch at the gates day and night in order to kill him, but the disciples took him by night and let him down from the wall, lowering him in a basket.*" (Acts 9, 23-25)

The prayer leader says, "*The disciples were able to save Paul. We often realize that we cannot help our brother or sister. Then, what can we do? Should we give up and run away? Or 'be with'? The prayer of poverty is a way of 'being with': being with Jesus, being with Mary, but also being with a friend in need, being helpless with him in his helplessness. So let us enter into this prayer of poverty, by letting come into our hearts this person, for whom we feel especially without resources and powerless, just to remain simply in his presence.*"

by ourselves, God can do, little by little in us.

❑ Sharing

➤ Together

- We listen to three witnesses prepared in advance: that of a person with a handicap (possibly with the help of a close friend), of a parent and of a friend. They can tell about the particular situation in which they received support from one or several members of the community, but also about the times they waited, hoped for a support which they did not find.

- We can mime the Gospel telling of Jesus with the mothers and little children (Mk 10, 13-16).The apostles did not want to welcome them and even sent them away. What was their problem ? Jesus opened his arms to the little children and blessed them. It was no problem for him ! What is the difference between Jesus and the apostles?

➤ In sharing groups

We shall have chosen two or three questions:

- During the past month, what have I done to remain close to my friends? What have I done to give support to someone who needed it ?
- Have I felt in myself certain fears or mental blockages relating to someone?
- When have I been disappointed by the community? When have I felt particularly supported?

❑ Sharing

➤ Together

We can re-live the passage of the Gospel about the presentationof Jesus in the Temple (Luke 2, 22-35). Jesus is recognized by Simeon who was waiting for him with his heart full of hope. He proclaims that Jesus is the "Light of the nations".

Immediately after, he announces to Mary that Jesus will be a sign that will be exposed to hostility, and that her heart will be pierced by a sword. Mary lived through this associated suffering in her life, a life completely given, a life which bore witness to hope.

➤ In sharing groups

- When have I been a light for others?
- Who has been a light for me?
- What has Faith and Light brought as new light in my life and what has that changed in me?
- If the parents meet together, they can reflect on the question: how can one live fully a life marked by suffering ? What is it that can help us?

❑ Prayer

We are once again sitting in a big circle. This is a sign of our unity. We can look at one another with trust and love.

At the centre of our circle is a boat (which can be made during the meeting). This boat is Faith and Light. It is surrounded by

little candles, one for each member, because today we are celebrating the feast of light, the feast of Faith and Light, our feast. The prayer leader tells us that we can be witnesses to the world, by ourselves being a light. Our light is the love we have for each other. By our love for each other, we shall be recognized as disciples of Jesus. (Jn 13, 35). The pagans already said about the early Christians "*See how they love each other*". Some people tell us that we are like little lights.
The prayer leader tells, in her own words, the story of the Acts of the Apostles 3,1-26. Then she reads:
"*When Peter saw the people, he addressed them: 'Men of Israel, why are you so surprised at this ? Why are you staring at us as though we had made this man walk by our own power or holiness ?... it is the name of Jesus which has brought back the strength of this man... it is faith in him that has restored this man to health*" (Acts 3,12-16).
Our prayer of poverty is a prayer of trust. We let Jesus do the work in us. The prayer leader helps us, as always. She may propose to those members of the community and guests, who so wish, to express spontaneously, a thank you, a pardon, a praise, a request...

To finish this time of prayer, someone sings aloud "*Lumen Christi*" as in the Easter Vigil celebration. We reply "*Deo gratias*". Then she sings it one tone higher. We answer him again. Then again, still higher. And we all answer him once again.

Then we each go and pick up one of the candles which are at the centre and go in procession outside. Finally, we return to our meeting place, and put back all the lights around the boat which has been put on the table where our food has been prepared.

logistics: place (reservation must be made very early), programme, cost....

❑ Welcome

❑ The Word

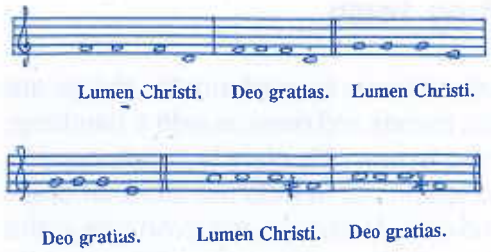
Paul's life was in danger. In Damascus as in Jerusalem, they wanted to make him die. Fortunately, the Christian community came to his rescue; the disciples helped him to escape from Damascus. Barnabas took him into his home, the brothers took him to Caesurae, and from there he left for Tarsus. This is an example of a community where the members love one another. Each person is important and loved by God. If someone is in difficulty, the others are called to support him and come to his help. This love for each person is not easy. We have so many mental blocks and fears. We are attracted to likeable people but we avoid those we find unpleasant. But Jesus calls us to love every person. That means that we must get closer to those with whom we have difficulty, be interested in them, do little acts of kindness for them, and above all, carry them in our prayer. If we act like this, we shall discover how many mental blocks and fears we have inside ourselves. If we start by doing little actions full of affection and delicate attention, with them, we shall be on the way to interior liberation. Our difficulties in relation to certain persons show us how fragile and imprisoned in ourselves we are.

Jesus asks us to be compassionate as his Father is compassionate, not to judge, not to condemn, but to forgive. (cf. Luke 6). Because it is difficult to love and not to judge these persons, we are obliged to call on the Holy Spirit to help! God is Master of the impossible. What we cannot do

A community of support

Acts 9, 22-30

May 2002



Light of Christ. Thanks be to God. -Luce di Cristo. Grazie a Dio. - Luz de cristo. Damos gracias a Dios. Lumière du Christ. Rendons grâce à Dieu - Licht Christi. Danke dem Herrn.- Światło Chrystusa. Chwała Tobie Boże.

❑ Fiesta

❑ Between now and the next gathering: some suggestions

➤ The time of fidelity

In the small groups of friendship

We could obtain a map of the world and put coloured stickers on all the countries where Faith and Light is to be found. We would end with a prayer of thanks for all these lights are growing around those who are the weakest.

In my personal life

Every day of this month, I could announce Faith and Light for example, by wearing my Faith and Light badge/pin.

➤ In the coordinating team

On the subject of persecution- theme for next month-, things are very different for the parents, friends and persons with a handicap; it is not at all the same thing to say: "*My child is handicapped*", as to bear the handicap oneself, nor to hide the fact that one's friends have a mental handicap. Moreover, not everyone in the community is at all at the same stage in his or her life, when he or she has the capacity to say in front of others what "persecutes" him or her and what attitude to have when faced with persecution. Before preparing the procedure of the gathering, the team will consider this diversity of situations for members of the community.

Please, don't forget to return your evaluation sheet of these guidelines to the international secretariat, before march 30th . (see last page) This is a great help for us ! Thanks!

gathering: some suggestions

➤ The time of fidelity

In the small groups of friendship

Let us be creative. Each person makes or brings a real surprise to the group of friendship. We do something unusual together: go to see a good film, go for a hike, go to the swimming pool.

In my personal life

Every morning, after having got up, I shall spend a short time with my hands open on my knees : my hands empty, ready to accept anything that happens to me today.

➤ In the coordinating team

What sort of experience have the small groups of friendship, set up at the beginning of the year, gone through? Are these well balanced? Are they a support to each person? What do they offer? What could be improved? If we have not been able to start these off, do there exist other forms of support between each gathering?

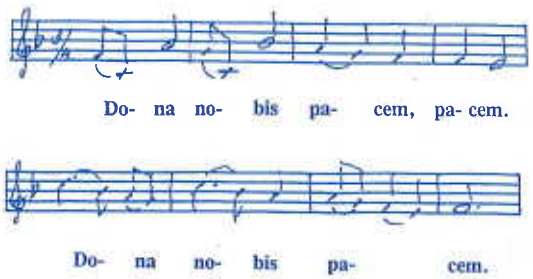
Arrange for a weekend of deepening for the Coordinating team (see page 10 and appendix 8):

objective ?
content ?
rhythm ?
help from outside, facilitation ?

immediately he was able to see again" (Acts 9, 17-18).
The prayer leader invites us to welcome the surprises of the Holy Spirit by opening our hearts.

After that, she sings the "*Veni, Sancte Spiritus*". All of us are together are drawn with him into the prayer of poverty where we calm down from our muddled emotions. The silence will last for a sufficiently long enough time to let the Holy Spirit work in our hearts.

Finally, she sings "*Dona nobis pacem*". We all join in. We go on quietly to the rest of the gathering.



Give us peace. - Donne-nous la paix. - Gebe uns den Frieden. - Donaci la pace. - Danos la paz. - Obdarz nas pokojem. - Geef ons de vrede.

❑ Fiesta

❑ Between now and the next

A persecuted community

Acts 6, 8-4

March 2002

❑ Welcome

❑ The Word

"Remember the word that I said to you: a servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will persecute you.' **(Jn. 15, 20).**

Stephen annoyed people. He was so full of life, of light and faith. His words about Jesus were demanding. People did not want to hear him, just as they no longer wanted to hear the words of Jesus. They tried to rid themselves of Stephen, just as they tried to rid themselves of Jesus. At this time of Lent which is in preparation for Easter, we recall all the sufferings of Jesus, but also all the sufferings of those who suffer in the name of Jesus.

Many people with a handicap have suffered from persecution. Fortunately, many of them are wonderfully welcomed by their families, with tenderness and understanding. But unfortunately, there are still many who are thrust aside, who are neither respected nor heard. People rather try to get rid of them, because they are a nuisance. Sometimes parents also experience a certain rejection because they have welcomed their child. They are not always understood or supported. They are criticized by those round them and feel isolated.

Sometimes, young friends feel persecuted by other young people at school, who do not accept their moral or spiritual values. These young friends refuse to let themselves be led astray by drugs or precocious sexual relationships: they

- invite, if possible, a community close to ours, for a special activity…,
- visit the monastery or convent with which we are twinned.

➤ In sharing groups

- How have I lived through a surprise, a disruption in my life?
- What has helped me?
- Can we tell about a small unexpected "miracle" in our life?

❑ Prayer

We are seated in a big circle. At the centre, on the floor there is a white tablecloth

The prayer leader reads the last paragraph of the introduction to this month: "The unexpected "*is a bit like a crisis. It disturbs us, it makes us leave behind our habits and our security. It obliges us to go further, to look further ahead and to find new meaning in life. it obliges us to change something in our lives, to discover Jesus in a new way.* Then she asks us if we agree with what has been said.

Then, she tells us in her own words the story of the conversion of Saint Paul (Acts 9, 1-18). Saint Paul is surprised by God. He can no longer see what is His will.

Then she reads :"*Ananias laid his hands on Saul and said 'Brother Saul, I have been sent by the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on your way here, so that you recover your sight and be filled by the Holy Spirit'. It was as though scales fell from his eyes and*

For many parents, the birth of a child with a handicap is an overwhelming experience which plunges them into deep disarray. A surprise can be a source of joy as it can be a source of fear, suffering and revolt.

A surprise is a bit like a crisis. It disturbs us, it makes us leave behind our habits and our security. It obliges us to go further, to look further ahead and to find a new meaning in life. It obliges us to change something in our lives, to discover Jesus in a new way.

❑ Sharing

➤ Together

In order to avoid the snare of routine, if the coordinating team has envisaged a great project for the next year, now is the moment to express the desire for it for the first time and to listen to everyone's suggestions.

The leader explains that this is the time to slightly disrupt people's habits, not for the sake of disruption in itself, but to give new life, to avoid routine suppressing life:

- spend a day of the gathering in a public park, in a family,... instead of our usual hall,
- end a gathering by going to have dinner in a "fast food" restaurant,
- ask four or five persons who do not usually participate much in the preparation of the gathering to animate a special time,

want to bear witness to Jesus and Christian life. Sometimes people laugh at them.

There are many forms of persecutions, more or less open, more or less subtle. Family, moral and religious values are often scorned by the media. Television often shows violent and indecent films. It is not easy to remain gentle, firm and upright in the world. It is never easy to feel put aside.

Jesus has promised to send the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, to support those who want to follow him. After having spoken of the persecutions the disciples will undergo, Jesus says :
"*When the Paraclete comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father,*
even the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father,
he will bear witness to me;
and you also are witnesses,
***because you have been with me from the beginning*"**
(Jn. 15, 26-27)

Jesus has a special love for those who suffer because of him and his message. That is why he says, "*Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*" (Mat. 5, 10). Jesus will give his strength to all those who suffer for him, with him. He will give them his presence. It is for this reason that they are blessed and joyful. Our communities are there to help each person live through sufferings and persecutions.

❑ Sharing

➤ Together

- Numerous friends of Jesus have been persecuted, even martyrised. There have not only been Stephen, Agnes or Blandine. There are also Paul, Peter, Father Maximilien Kolbe... All those who are named after a friend of Jesus, who has been persecuted can talk about him or her in a few words, evoke this friend with a drawing or by making a poster in common.

- We can also remember the persecutions existing still today in many countries and pray for all these persons, of whom there are so many, who throughout the whole world, are suffering for Jesus and offering their sufferings to him.

➤ In sharing groups

- The parents can get together in the same sharing group. Everyone else will form small sharing groups. Each group will include handicapped persons and friends. In each group, we can reflect on "The moments of our life when we felt rejected". We shall be careful not to brood on the accounts of our painful experiences, but to search together and say in what way the community has helped us. We shall take care not to forget that, often, rejection is simply the silence of those around us, indifference.

- It is suggested that each group should mime a circumstance where a parent, a friend, a person with a handicap is evidently rejected, and the response they can make.

❑ Welcome

❑ The Word

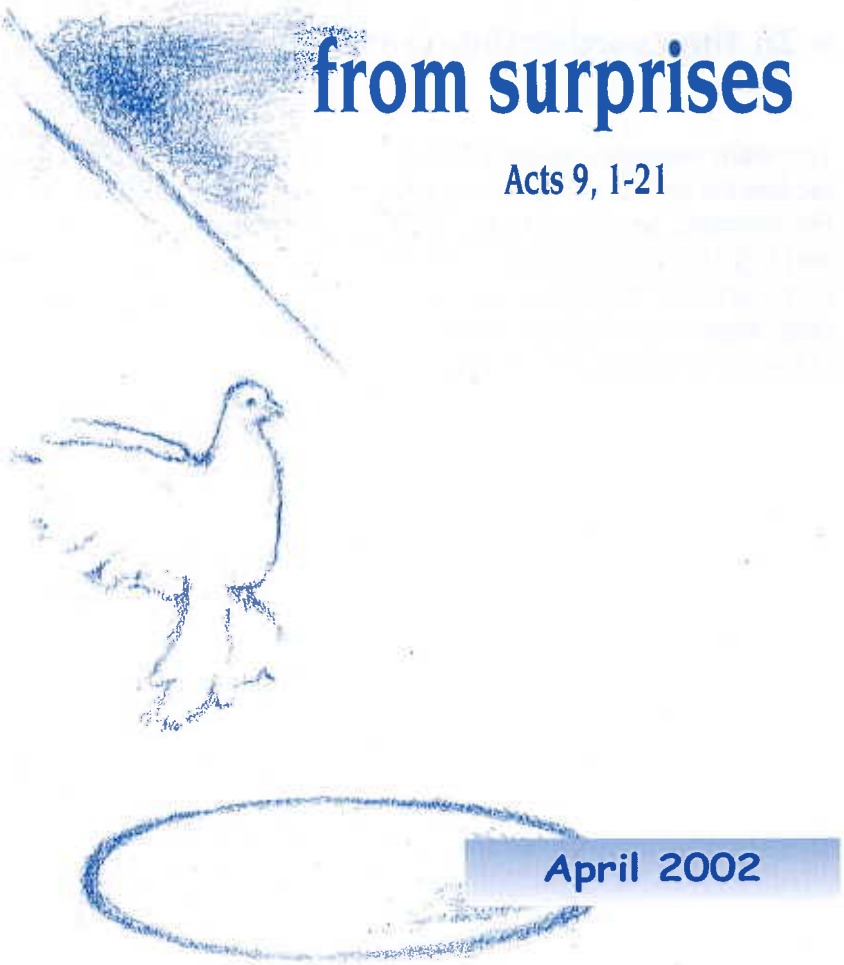
That is how Paul, of whom everyone was afraid, the great persecutor of the disciples of Jesus, became converted. He became as though resurrected. Through the grace of the Holy Spirit he left the world of darkness for the Kingdom of Jesus and of Love. What a surprise! Certain members of the community wondered if it were not a trick to get to know the Christian community better, in order to persecute it more thoroughly. It is not surprising that these first Christians were suspicious of him.

Our God is a disconcerting God. He does unexpected things. Jesus himself was always quite surprising in his attitudes, his actions and his words. He scandalized the crowd and profoundly amazed his friends when he spoke of his body to be eaten, his blood to drink. And how surprised were the disciples when Jesus went down on his knees and washed their feet, he, the Master and the Lord! And what joy on the Sunday of the Resurrection! He is alive! He is truly alive!

The founding of Faith and Life was a surprise. When the pilgrimage to Lourdes in 1971 was being prepared, nobody thought we were at the origins of the creation of 1400 Faith and Light communities in the year 2001 ! With Marie-Hélène, we had only wanted to respond to the needs of Loïc and Thaddée and the appeal from their parents who felt unwelcome in the Church and in society... We wanted the doors of the hotels of Lourdes to be opened to welcome persons with a mental handicap. Up to then, they had not been received except in the hospitals of the Sanctuary.

A community made from surprises

Acts 9, 1-21



- What should we do when we feel rejected? Seek the help of friends, a group, the family?
- What are the moments or the persons which have given me new life?
- How was Jesus rejected? How did he react?

The person animating the group will make sure that these questions do not awaken past sufferings too brutally. If this were the case, we shall make sure that the person concerned is particularly well accompanied.

❑ Prayer

Sitting in a circle gives us immediately an atmosphere favourable to the prayer of poverty. The circle is a symbol of perfection and harmony. Our eyes are focused on the centre where there is a low table with a red cloth and a crown of thorns lying on it.

The prayer leader tells the story of Stephen, in his own words. He ends by reading: "*Having turned the people against him as well as the elders and scribes, they took Stephen by surprise and arrested him and brought him before the Sanhedrin*" (Acts 6, 12)

Then he continues "*When we are persecuted, we are frightened, feel powerless, we don't know what to do. Who then can help us?*" Jesus says, "*When you are taken to be handed over, do not worry beforehand about what to say; no, say whatever is given to you when the time comes, because it is not you who will be speaking; it is the Holy Spirit*" (Mk.13, 11). After these words, we are silent as usual. The prayer leader helps us very gently to open our hearts to the Holy Spirit.

In a moment, he will indicate the end of this time of prayer by tapping on a gong or by beating the time with a small stick. He will invite us to stand up. With a background of music or a tune being hummed, we shall approach the crown of thorns, we shall kiss the cloth and then return to our places.

We shall sing the "*Our Father*" (or we shall say "*as we forgive*" and "*deliver us from evil*"), and then we receive the blessing of the chaplain or we simply make the sign of the cross.

❑ Fiesta

❑ Between now and the next gathering: some suggestions

➤ The time of fidelity

In the small groups of friendship

Each one of us will have brought newspaper articles or photos of persecuted people,(wars, famines, misery of children in orphanages...). We shall stick them on a poster, where each person afterwards will write a few words of hope. We are going to take this poster to a church, to the foot of an altar in a chapel or a church, or even into the house of the religious community with which we are twinned. We shall pray for all the persons persecuted throughout the world.

In my personal life

Every morning when I get up, I keep in my hand, for several moments, a cross, thinking of those who are persecuted, and of those whom I sometimes persecute.

➤ In the coordinating team

The team evaluates whether the community is mature enough to receive the announcement of a great project for the following year. For example, to prepare a particular mission to announce Faith and Light to young people; to send a small group to found a new community or to support a community in difficulty; to go on a pilgrimage; spend a retreat of two or three days with the whole of the community, or a real holiday camp together...