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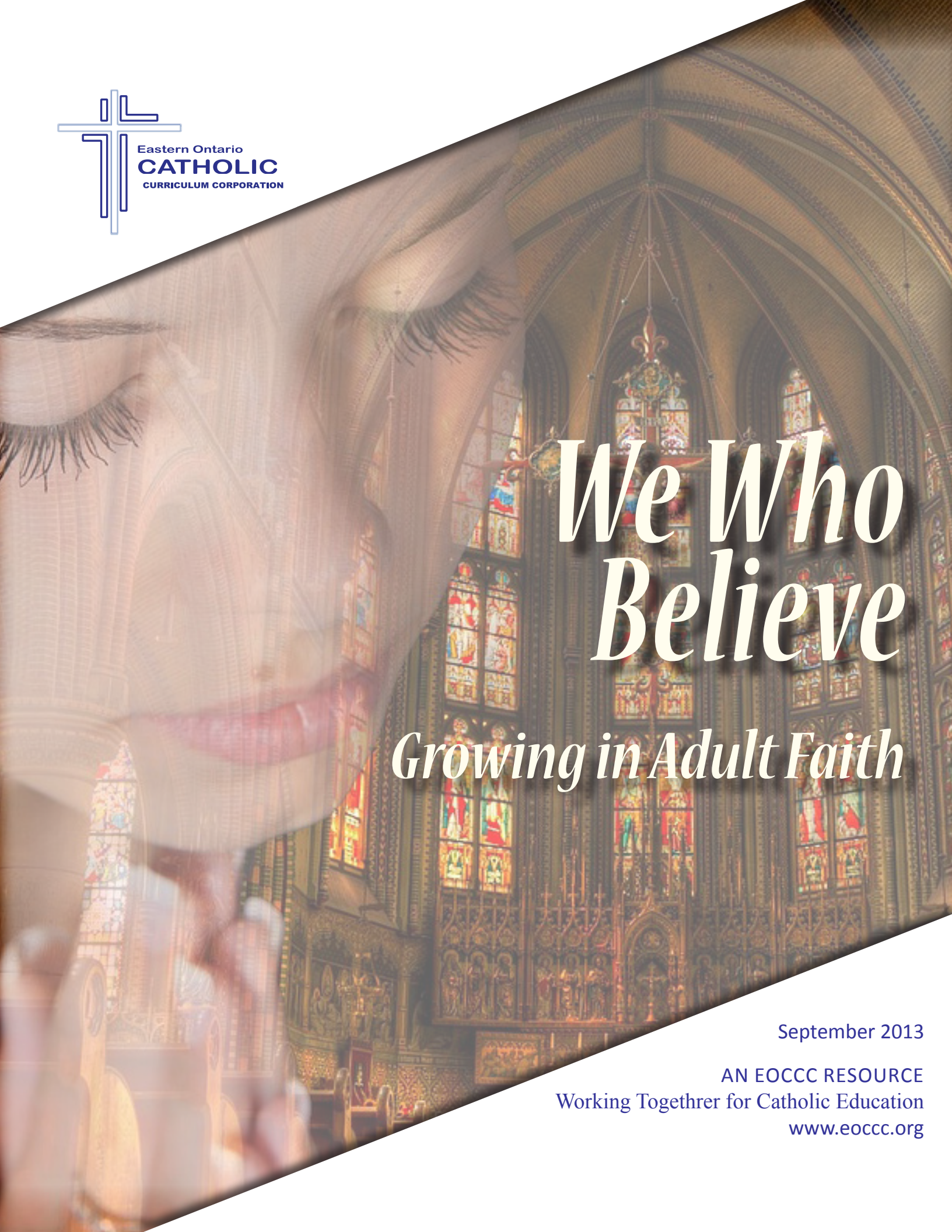

We Who Believe

Growing in Adult Faith

September 2013

AN EOCCC RESOURCE
Working Togethrer for Catholic Education
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

EOCCC Set to Release Adult Faith Development Modules for Catholic Educators

Sept. 3, 2013 - Attending a Catholic school translates to more than accessing a high-quality, distinctive educational experience. Students also receive access to a faith-based community that provides spiritual growth and leadership.

The Eastern Ontario Catholic Curriculum Corporation recognizes this important component that Catholic educators provide to their students, with the understanding that delivering this level of guidance comes from within. As such, the Corporation is set to release an adult faith development resource that empowers and encourages educators to reflect on their own faith and how it plays a role in their everyday life.

Tony Cosentino, Religious Education and Family Life Resource teacher for the Renfrew County Catholic School Board is part of the committee that compiled these modules. He says the EOCCC is addressing a need within the school community. "People are recognizing a need to go back to the basics, which is a sign that there is re-awakening going on," he explains. "The reason we did this was because it was something Catholic educators are asking for more and more in our schools. There is a movement to bring adult faith more into staff and leadership meetings."

He adds this resource is an important component to a Catholic educator's overall development. "In our Catholic schools, we provide growth in every other area," he says. "There are plenty of professional development activities going on throughout the year. It's only fitting and right that we do the same thing with adult faith."

"Intended for all Catholic educators, each adult faith module provides an experience of approximately 10 minutes, and can be led by principals, supervisory officers, administrative leaders or faith ambassadors," explains Ann Boniferro of the Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic District School Board, who helped develop the modules.

The 23 modules range from covering religious celebrations throughout the year, including Advent and Lent, to reflecting on baptism as well as Catholic social teachings. Each module includes an introduction, prayer, reading, reflection and questions, as well as either a musical or video component.

"We haven't exhausted the list, but we feel this first stage of modules will allow schools to go through them within the first year," says Cosentino. He adds that these modules help address that desire for more faith development opportunities.

"The viability of Catholic education really rests on staff faith development. We have to be able to be witnesses to the community of faith as it is key to our long-term survival," he says. "This will be one step in helping along the way."

The EOCCC plans to release these adult faith development modules in time for the 2013-2014 academic year.

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~ Adult Faith Reflection Exercise ~

1. Hope in Advent (Week One)

Environment Suggestions: *display table, purple cloth for the season, Advent wreath/purple candle, CD player for O Come, O Come Emmanuel or musicians/vocalists.*

Introduction:

"As we wait in joyful hope for the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ." These words from the Eucharistic liturgy remind us that this is indeed what we believe as Christians. We wait in joyful hope for God's Kingdom to come into fullness. We have to allow ourselves time, in this Advent season, to reflect on this hope and on what a wonderful gift it is. We are cradled and loved by a promise of eternal love. Teilhard de Chardin described this as humanity coming to the ultimate unity of love through the cosmic Jesus Christ. Can we allow ourselves to think as broadly as this? Hope is the ultimate gift of our loving God to God's people. As we pray, let us reflect on this gift of hope to humanity and the many ways it is manifest in scripture and the world.

Opening Prayer:

† *In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen*

God of goodness and mercy, be with us here today as we gather in prayer and hopeful reflection. God of the ages, Your love has been ever present to us in the gifts of creation, in our relationships, in community and in the sacraments. Bless our gathering and our community as we light this Advent candle and unite in prayer at the joy of Your coming. We make this prayer through Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Scripture:

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah: (Isaiah 60: 1-30)

Arise, shine; for Your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the LORD will arise upon you, and His glory will be seen upon you. And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.

The Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

Silence:

Reflection:

All over the world, there are prophets of hope. God does not leave God's people as orphans. In his book, Hope, Human and Wild, environmentalist Bill McKibbon tells the story of the resilient re-creative power in communities around the world and in the environment. Activist Nyla Rodgers created a charity entitled 'Mama Hope' when her mother died of cancer to carry on her work in Africa. She was so moved by the beauty of the communities in which she worked. Here is a video that reflects the hope of people around the world.

Go to Youtube.....Watch the video: Call Me Hope-mamahope.org
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OzQfFcy3KJg
This charity (Mama Hope) seeks to overcome stereotypes and celebrate our common humanity, the hope and potential that lie within all of us, as does Bill McKibbon's book. God continues to create humanity in God's own image. Blessings continue as the circle of life continues.

Silence:

Faith Sharing with Guiding Questions:

1. Where do you see hope in our world today? (time for reflection.....)
   Share these ideas with those in your group....or record them in notes.

2. How is the Lord's promise of Hope and the HOPE of the Advent season realized in our own community?

3. How do Jesus Christ and his death and resurrection bring hope to your life?

Closing Prayer:
God of mercy and hope, we are grateful for the blessings that You shower upon us every day. Keep us ever mindful of the hope that lies within us and the hope that we have in Your son, our Lord Jesus Christ. May we continue to reflect on the Christ that is always with us and the Christ that is yet to come. We make this prayer in the name of our Emmanuel.

All: **Come Lord Jesus. Come and be born in our hearts.**

Amen

† *In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

O Come, O Come Emmanuel

Ref: Rejoice, rejoice O Israel

To thee shall come Emmanuel (2x)

~ Adult Faith Reflection Activity ~

2. Peace in Advent (Week Two)

Environment Suggestions: display table, crucifix, Advent wreath/purple candle, purple tablecloth, dove (symbolizing peace), CD player or musician to play songs listed in Music/Video/CD/Live section.

Welcome to this adult faith reflection session on Advent and Peace. You are invited to enter this brief time away from the regular demands of life and work, to feed the deepest part of who you are. Take what this session has to offer with complete freedom – enter and share at your own comfort level.

Introduction:

Advent prepares us for celebrating Christ's coming in *history*; it calls us to consider his presence with us now in *mystery*, and his coming at the end of time in *majesty.* But what does this mean for us in our daily lives? What springs to mind for *you* when you hear the word, "Advent"? Maybe it's wreaths, candles, little sacrifices or special prayers. It might also mean Christmas cards, shopping for gifts, pre-Christmas festivities, joyous and stressful family dynamics.

The daily Mass readings during these four weeks help us enter the Advent spirit. The words of the prophets recall the Israelites' hopes and struggles as they await Christ's coming. They draw us in to that time of expectant longing for restoration and peace that the Messiah will bring.

It's good to remember that Advent is really about getting ready to receive God, who comes to us as a newborn baby, in the vulnerability of our human flesh. He is the long-awaited One whose presence brings the *tranquility* and *order* of peace. Which relationships and parts of my life long for peace? Perhaps this can be the heart of my Advent prayer this week.

Opening Prayer:

Let us begin our prayer: *† In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

Lord Jesus, Your tender and compassionate heart overflows with love. And in this love, You beckon us forward to drink deeply of the peace that only You can give. Open our hearts to receive Your word and to welcome Your gift of peace in this Advent season. We make this prayer to You in the power of Your holy name: Emmanuel, Wonderful Counsellor, Prince of Peace. *Amen.*

Scripture:

Micah 5: 2, 4-5a
(From 4th Sunday of Advent NAB)
Thus says the LORD:
You, Bethlehem-Ephrathah
too small to be among the clans of Judah,
from you shall come forth for me
one who is to be ruler in Israel;
whose origin is from of old,
from ancient times.

He shall stand firm and shepherd his flock
by the strength of the LORD,
in the majestic name of the LORD, his God;
and they shall remain, for now his greatness
shall reach to the ends of the earth;
he shall be peace.

The Word of the Lord
Thanks be to God.

Silence:

Reflection:
The biblical prophets generally did three things:
- they *denounced* the worship of idols and unjust practices
- they called hearers to a change of heart
- they *announced* God's comfort to those who were suffering.

The prophet Micah is no exception. Most of the book of Micah's seven chapters condemn the corruption and evil practices that have overtaken Israel. But chapters 4 and 5 stand out like an oasis of hope for peace, at a time when Judah is living under brutal military occupation. The people who have clung to their faith will be rewarded with a shepherd of peace.

We are not that much different from the people of Micah's time. There are parts of our lives that subtly drift from the Gospel. We too need to get our houses in order.

- What are the areas of my life where Christ's peace no longer reigns?
- Are time for family and prayer overshadowed by self-justified busy-ness and distraction?
- Have resentment or anger gotten in the way of my heart's response to others?
- Do I need to set myself and others free with forgiveness?
- Have gossip and self-importance blinded me to honouring the goodness in others?

Jesus, the Prince of Peace is the deepest longing of every human heart. He desires to accompany us through every activity, every conflict, every cross, with his peace. In his love, he leaves us with complete freedom. Are there parts of my life where I need to invite him in?

Advent is like a prophetic voice, reminding us to get our house in order before going out to welcome the Prince of Peace. Lest we get discouraged, there looms throughout this prophetic call the comforting hope this gentle Saviour's birth. He comes to us in the most non-threatening, vulnerable way imaginable, and invites us to let his love more fully into our lives. His simple gift to us is his peace.

Silence:

Faith Sharing with Guiding Questions:

1. Describe a time in your life when you felt at peace…Do you think perhaps this peace might have been God's gift to you?

2. Who in your life benefits from your peace?

3. What's one stressful part of my life that I can invite Christ and his peace into this Advent?

Music / Video, CD/Live:

Listen, My People (309 CBW III)
O Come, Divine Messiah (310 CBW III)
O Come, O Come Emmanuel (312 CBW III)
Awake, Awake, Fling off the Night (304 CBW III)
Lord, Make us Servants of Your Peace (630 CBW III)
Open My Eyes (196 Spirit & Song)
Make Me a Channel of Your Peace (199 Spirit & Song)

Closing Prayer:

Lord Jesus, You alone can fill the longing of the human heart. Come and be our companion as we journey through this Advent season. Help us to invite You into our lives each day, for in You alone there is comfort and peace. We make this prayer in Jesus' name. *Amen.*

† And may Almighty God bless us: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen

(Options for Extending the Conversation...See Appendix 2: Peace in Advent)

Appendix 2: Peace in Advent

Guided Meditation & Reflection Exercise: The Heart as a Manger

Consider your heart as a manger in a dusty stable. Jesus wasn't born in a perfect, spotless environment. He chose to come into this world amid the chills of the night, the smells of animals and poverty of his family. Try to imagine the manger in which Jesus lay. How would you describe the way it is made? (pause) What does the wood look like? (pause) How does the straw look and smell? (pause) Is it built strongly, or does it perhaps seem fragile?

30 seconds silence

Picture your heart as a manger. How would you describe its wood, its straw, its strength?

30 seconds silence

Knowing that the infant Jesus looks more for welcome than perfection, what can you offer Him in your own poverty? Can you offer Him a simple place to rest? Allow Him to transform your heart into His place of rest.

30 seconds silence

You are invited to consider your heart as a waiting manger each day during Advent – to turn your imperfections over to the coming Christ child, knowing that He will transform what you have and make it a resting place fit for a King.

Glory be to the Father,
And to the Son,
And to the Holy Spirit.
As it was in the beginning,
Is now, and ever shall be,
World without end.
Amen.

~ Adult Faith Reflection Exercise ~

3. Joy in Advent (Week Three)

Environment Suggestions: display table, crucifix, Advent wreath, two purple candles, one pink candle, purple tablecloth, symbols of joy.

Introduction:

In this third week of Advent, we light the pink candle on our Advent Wreath. There are four candles in total, three purple and one pink. These correspond to the four weeks of Advent before Christmas. The purple candles symbolize a penitential tone as one prepares for the coming of Christmas, while the pink candle symbolizes a joyful tone.

The pink candle is lit on the third Sunday, Gaudete (*Latin for rejoice*) Sunday, when the priest also wears rose vestments at Mass; Gaudete Sunday is the Sunday of rejoicing, because the faithful have arrived at the midpoint of Advent, when their preparation is now half over and they are close to Christmas.

Lighting of the Advent Candles:

Sing verses 1 to 3 of the Advent Candle Song by Mary Lu Walker.
(lyrics available at http://maryluwalker.com/)

Opening Prayer:

† In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.
Loving God, may each of us experience great joy this Advent season. As we prepare for Christmas, may we never lose sight of what this season is all about; the birth of Our Saviour who calls each of us to the joy of eternal life. May our faith enable us to embrace this joy on earth and live out all that Jesus has called us to. We make this prayer in Jesus' name. *Amen.*

Scripture:

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah: (Isaiah 9: 2- 7)
The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined. You have multiplied the nation, You have increased its joy; they rejoice before You as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder. For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, You have broken as on the day of Midian. For all the boots of the tramping warriors and all the garments rolled in blood shall be burned as fuel for the fire. For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon His shoulders; and He is named Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onwards and for evermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

The Word of the Lord.
All: Thanks be to God.

Silence:

Reflection:

1. Reflect upon a time in your life when you may have "walked in darkness". What were you feeling? How was the situation resolved? Who brought "great light" to you?

2. Which of the four names for Jesus in today's reading is most meaningful to you? What imagery does the name evoke for you?

Silence:

Faith Sharing and Guiding Questions:

1. Which name, Jesus (God saves), Immanuel (God with us) means the most to you? Why? Which of the two above names has the greater impact on how you live your daily life, view your circumstance, affects your interactions with others, how you view yourself? Why?

2. What are the implicit and explicit promises, truths, challenges and invitations conveyed by each of the names of Jesus?

Music:

Listen to this version of *O Come Divine Messiah* performed by Nova Scotia's Barra MacNeils:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HfhgjssvXBE

Closing Prayer:

God of the ages, Christmas is often an exciting time. Help us to experience the true joy of the season. We buy gifts for family and friends who occupy a special place in our heart. May we appreciate them more and more. May we remember those who do not have such blessings and spend time making this season one of joy for them. We make this prayer in the name of Jesus, our Lord and Saviour. *Amen.*

† *In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

Extension Activity:

Listen to this Week Three Advent reflection from the Archdiocese of Toronto.
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GNETkNnX2t0&playnext=1&list=PL088A2FFC2CAE38D2&feature=results_video

~ Adult Faith Reflection Exercise ~

4. Love in Advent (Week Four)

Environment Suggestions: display table, crucifix, Advent wreath, three purple candles, one pink candle, purple tablecloth, symbols of love.

Introduction:
In this final week of Advent, we draw close the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ. In our prayer today, we ask that God helps each of us to grow in faith and in love. We open our hearts to his light and let this light shine in the lives of others. The real meaning of Christmas comes from us finding ways of helping one another.

Lighting of the Advent Candles:
Sing verses 1 to 4 of the Advent Candle Song by Mary Lu Walker.
(Lyrics available at http://maryluwalker.com/)

Opening Prayer:
† In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.
As we approach Christmas, Loving God, help each of us recognize what Jesus has done for us and the new direction he has given us. May each of us this Christmas make a special effort to live out Jesus' example of love and make this Christmas a beautiful one. We ask this through Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

Scripture:
A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke: (Luke 1: 39 – 45)
In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leapt in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, 'Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leapt for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her by the Lord.'

The Gospel of the Lord.
All: Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ.

Silence:
Meditate silently on the Word which has just been proclaimed.

Reflection:
View and reflect upon the following YouTube video featuring scenes from the 2010 movie "*The Nativity*" and music from Todd Agnew. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o_b-woAaK1s

Silence:
Pray silently a prayer of thanksgiving about the coming of Our Saviour into the world.

Faith Sharing with Guiding Questions:

1. How will you and your family celebrate the coming of Our Saviour into the world over this Christmas season?

2. What traditions do you and your family have to honour this central story of our Catholic Christian faith?

Music:

Listen to the song "*O Come, O Come Emmanuel*" at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RP4iyJqrPvY

Closing Prayer:

Let us rejoice and be glad for Christ has come to show us the path home. Come, Lord Jesus! Bring Your light into the dark recesses of the world through us, Your Body on earth today. Shed the light of Your justice where systems oppress the imprisoned, impoverish the destitute, violate the young and helpless. Radiate the light of Your love where people feel abandoned, live in violence, encounter hatred. Show us our true home as we address these needs in this time and place. We make this prayer in the name of Jesus, our Lord and Saviour. *Amen.*

† *In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

Extension Activities:

1. Read and reflect upon the full account of The Visitation (Luke 1: 39 -56).

2. Research on the Internet different artistic works that depict the Visitation.

~ Adult Faith Reflection Exercise ~
5. Baptism

Environment Suggestions: display table, crucifix, candle, and Bible for display, white table cloth, basin, pitcher of water, towel, small baptismal candle if possible, child's baptismal gown.

Welcome to this adult faith reflection session on Baptism. You are invited to enter this brief time away from the regular demands of life and work, to feed the deepest part of who you are. Take what this session has to offer with complete freedom – enter and share at your own comfort level.

Introduction:
Baptism is at the heart of what we are about as members of the Catholic educational community. Each of us has a role to play in supporting the *new life* that comes from this sacrament – for the good of our students, families, colleagues and the believing community. Let us take some time to explore what it means to live our Baptism.

Opening Prayer:
Let us begin our prayer: † *In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*
Lord, in the mystery of Your infinite love, You gave us a new life in Christ through Baptism. As we begin this time of reflection, we ask You to deepen our love for this sacrament, that we might help others treasure what it means to be Your beloved child in Christ. We make this prayer to You in His name.
Amen.

Scripture:
And now, let us be attentive to God's word.
A reading from the letter of Paul to the Ephesians: (Ephesians 1:3-8)
Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. He destined us in love to be his sons and daughters through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace which he lavished upon us.

The Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

Silence:

Reflection:
At Baptism, each of us received the gift of faith and the call to live as Christ's disciple. Our response to this call is the work of a lifelong journey made in faith. In this blessed journey, there is much more at stake than our individual salvation, and we will only come to know the impact of our prayer and example when we reach the journey's end.

We know that our lived witness of faith is far more convincing than words alone. It is the Holy Spirit – poured into our hearts at Baptism, and received in fullness at Confirmation – who enables us to live as Christ's witnesses. This same Spirit strengthens us to move beyond our limitations, and to reach out to Christ's witnesses. This same Spirit strengthens us to move beyond our limitations, and to reach out to Christ in others – especially the poor and suffering. Our Gospel witness can put *flesh* on the religious language we use in our homes, churches and classrooms. Our witness of love gives credibility to what we profess, and demonstrates that it is a *living* faith. It helps form the hearts and minds of students and younger colleagues as they navigate past the spiritual perils of this post-Christian secular age.

Through God's mysterious design, each of us was gifted in a special way at Baptism so that we could make a unique contribution to building up the body of Christ. Our faith journey that starts at Baptism is therefore both personal and shared with an entire body of believers – past, present and future. As we nurture and exercise our Baptismal gifts, others are doing the same, to help us along the way. Our lives thus affect not only those we are called to serve, but many in the body of Christ and throughout the world, whom we will only come to know in the eternal life that awaits us.

As we joyfully embrace our commitments to teach and witness our baptismal faith, let us give thanks for its fruits, which continue to overflow into our young people's lives, strengthening the body of believers to the glory of God in Christ.

Adapted from RCCDSB Prayer Service, Our Journey in Faith
http://religiouseducation.rccdsb.edu.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/sites/26/2012/09/Our-Journey-in-Faith-Web.pdf

Silence:

Faith Sharing with Guiding Questions:

1. Is there someone you know who is a model of what it means to live their Baptism? How would you describe this person's influence on you/on others?
2. How do we help our young people nurture the gifts they received at Baptism?
3. How can we make the link for students between our schools' outreach to the poor and the call of Baptism?

Music/Video, CD/Live:

Children of the Light (Eugene O'Reilly)
Open my Eyes, Lord (Jesse Manibusan)
Being Born Again: A Commentary by Fr. Robert Barron (Video):
http://www.catholic-tube.com/being-born-again-a-commentary-by-fr-barron

Closing Prayer:

O God, we thank You for this time to reflect on the riches of our Baptism. We ask You to lead and guide us in the power of Your Holy Spirit. May we grow to become everything You desire for us to be on this earthly pilgrimage to everlasting life. We make this prayer to You in the name of Jesus, the Lord. *Amen.*

† *And may Almighty God bless us: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen*

Options for Extending the Conversation... See Appendix 5: Baptism

Appendix 5: Baptism

Extending the Conversation

Scripture:

A reading from the letter of Paul to the Romans: (Rom 12: 4-12)

For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so now we, who are many are one body in Christ, and individually we are members of one another. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering, the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.

Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honour. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit; serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.

The Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God

The Effects of Baptism:

Baptism washes away Original Sin and makes us a *New Creation*

Baptism washes away the effects of Original Sin. Adam and Eve sinned. Sin's effect rippled out through creation and estranged the human family from one another and from God. Jesus, the New Adam paid the price for Original Sin with his life on the cross, destroying sin's dominion. He was raised from the dead by the Holy Spirit, sent by the Father. All the baptized, by being united to the crucified and risen Jesus are *re-created* to a new life in him – to live in the power of the Holy Spirit and share in the promise of the resurrection.

(Note: The Church teaches that "Every [person] who is ignorant of the Gospel of Christ and of his Church, but seeks the truth and does the will of God in accordance with his understanding of it, can be saved. It may be supposed that such persons would have desired Baptism explicitly if they had known its necessity." CCC 1259)

Baptism makes us members of Christ's Body, the Church

United to Jesus through Baptism, we become members of his Body – that is, the Church. We are the body, and he is the Head. This becomes our deepest identity – by Baptism, *we belong* to Christ and to one another as members of his body, the Church.

Baptism makes us sharers in Christ's holiness

Baptism is the sacrament of holiness. By our union with Christ at Baptism, we share in his holiness. Our holiness in Christ grows as we respond to God's gracious initiative (*grace*), that reaches out and invites us to mature in self-giving love.

Baptism makes us sharers in the life of the Blessed Trinity

Baptism draws us into the Father, Son and Holy Spirit's communion of love. It unites us to Jesus, and gives us a new life in the Holy Spirit, in whom we cry out, "Abba!" to God the Father. By Baptism, the

Trinity's inexhaustible life of grace and love becomes our own. (Note: The *source and summit* of the life of the Baptized is Eucharist: our Trinitarian prayer par excellence. We receive the Body and Blood of Christ from the Father, through Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit; and offer Him back, accompanied by the community's prayers and entire lives, in the power of the Holy Spirit, through Christ to the Father.)

Baptism gives us the gifts of Faith, Hope and Love

The theological virtues of Faith, Hope and Love are God's gifts to us at Baptism. Faith enables us to see with new eyes and believe, together with the body of believers. Hope allows us to trust God's promises, to pray with the assurance that God hears and answers our prayers, and to work for the Gospel's justice. Love enables us to love God above all things and to love others unselfishly as God loves them.

Doorway to a Life of Sacramental Grace

Baptism is the doorway to Christians' life in Christ. As members of Christ's body, the Church, we share in a life of grace that strengthens and heals us to live as His disciples on our earthly pilgrimage to our heavenly home. All the sacraments have their special grace to help us on this journey that begins at Baptism.

Marks Us With the Seal of Christ

Baptism changes us forever. This change is described as a permanent spiritual *seal* that shows we belong to Christ. Even in heaven, people will know we belong to Him, because we have been configured to His likeness, and bearing His seal.

Equal Dignity in the Body of Christ (Church)

As members of Christ's body through Baptism, each of us are equal in dignity:

And if by the will of Christ some are made teachers, pastors and dispensers of mysteries on behalf of others, yet ***all share a true equality with regard to the dignity and to the activity common to all the faithful for the building up of the Body of Christ****.*

(Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church [Lumen Gentium], No. 32)

Complementary Roles **in Building up the Body of Christ**

While there is a hierarchy of roles and responsibilities (apostles, prophets, teachers, etc. *[1 Cor 12: 28]*), all have a complementary part to play in building up the body. Take note of what St. Paul says:

> As it is, there are many members, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and those members of the body that we think less honorable we clothe with greater honour, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member, that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. (*1 Cor 12: 20-27*)

Love is the "New Law" of the Baptized

The baptized belong to Christ. The law that governs their life is the Gospel, summarized in the call to "Love one another as I have loved you." (CCC 1970)

Sharing in Christ's Divine Sonship

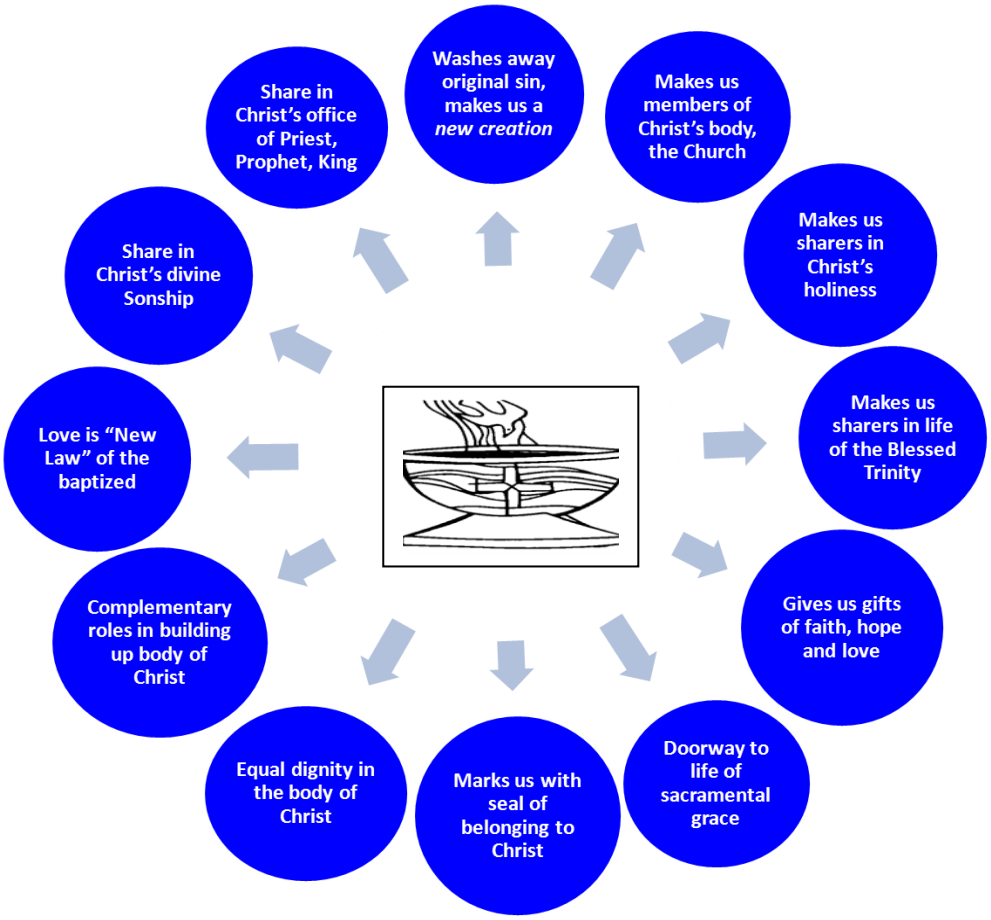
Our union with Christ at Baptism makes us intimate sharers in his own divine Sonship. Through him, with him and in the power of the Holy Spirit, we share his intimacy with the Father (sometimes described as the "Abba relationship." See *Romans 8:15*).

Participation in Christ's office of Priest, Prophet King

At Baptism, we are sealed with the oil of chrism and anointed priest, prophet and king. By this anointing, all share in the priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ.

- **As sharers in Christ's priesthood**, each of us exercises our vocation and with Christ, offers our lives and activities to the Father.
- **As sharers in Christ's prophetic office**, we are called to evangelize (to announce the Gospel) in words and in the witness of our lives, to teach and lead others in faith.
- **As sharers in Christ's kingly office**, we are called to bring the world into conformity with the Gospel in our daily work and lives, and to cooperate with the Church's hierarchy if we have the expertise or invitation to do so. (See CCC 901-913)

Summary:



~ Adult Faith Reflection Exercise ~
6. Catholic Social Teaching

Environment Suggestions: display table, crucifix, candle, Bible for display, Compendium of Social Doctrine of the Church (or other Catholic Social Teaching document) for display, symbols of board/school involvement in social justice initiatives.

Welcome to this adult faith reflection session on Catholic Social Teaching. You are invited to enter this brief time away from the regular demands of life and work, to feed the deepest part of who you are. Take what this session has to offer with complete freedom – enter and share at your own comfort level.

Introduction:

Catholic Social Teaching (CST) embodies the truly human attitudes, social practices and values that flow from our nature as persons made in God's image and likeness. These attitudes, practices and values are summed up in Christ's *new commandment* to "love one another" as he has loved us (*Jn 13: 34; 15: 12*). In a sense, CST helps us put *flesh* on the word, *love.* It provides principles to guide us as we strive to live the Gospel's demands in the social conditions of a changing world. If we believe that our greatest freedom and happiness lie in loving as Christ loved us, then CST can help us become freer and happier together. Let us begin today's reflection on the Social Teaching of the Catholic Church in prayer…

Opening Prayer:

† In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

O God, You created us in your image and likeness to live now and forever in Your love. Open our minds and hearts by the power of Your Holy Spirit, that we might more fully embrace Catholic Social Teaching's invitation to live as one in You. We make this prayer in the name of Jesus, Your Son. *Amen.*

Scripture:

A reading from the Gospel of John: (Jn 15: 9-15)

"As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.
This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father."

The Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

Silence:

Reflection:

The roots of Catholic Social Teaching can be found in the Hebrew Scriptures, especially the book of Deuteronomy (chapters 24 and 25), which instructs the Hebrews on how to live justly as God's people.

The heart of this message is *right relationship* with God and neighbour – giving God true worship and treating one's neighbour with mercy and fairness. The prophets echoed this same message, calling for two essential things: putting an end to idolatry with true worship, and caring for society's most vulnerable – the poor, widows, orphans and strangers.

Jesus brought to perfection the Hebrew Scriptures' teaching on justice. Mercy toward one's neighbour was one of the hallmarks of his preaching. We see this over and over in his reaching out to society's outcasts, sinners, and sick, and in his anger toward those who used religious piety to mask their greed and disdain for others. Matthew's story of the Last Judgement reveals the heart of Catholic Social Teaching: *"Whatsoever you do to the least of my brothers and sisters, you do to me." (Mt 25: 40)*

Catholic Social Teaching (CST) reminds us that we are called to uphold the supreme dignity of all persons as image and likeness of God, especially the most vulnerable, from conception until natural death. This is known as the ***Dignity of the Human Person***. CST reminds us that everyone has a right to what is necessary for a truly human life: education, food, shelter, freedom of worship, a good reputation, gainful employment… This is known as the ***Common Good***. All of Catholic Social Teaching's themes uphold these two fundamental principles.

Silence:

Faith Sharing with Guiding Questions:

1. Can you name someone whose actions or words upheld your dignity as a child of God? What has this experience meant to you?

2. Can you name a part of the common good (education, food, shelter, freedom of worship, a good reputation, gainful employment…) that some members of your community don't enjoy? How do our Catholic schools help students address these injustices as followers of Jesus?

Music /Video, CD/Live:

Open My Eyes, Lord (Jesse Manibusan)
You are the Voice (David Haas)
Lord, Make us Servants of Your Peace (630 CBW III)
A Distressing Disguise (DVD, San Damiano Films, 2009. 103 min.)
Entertaining Angels (DVD, Paulist Pictures, 1996. 112 min.)
The Faces of Poverty (DVD, San Damiano Films, 2007. 44:17 min.)
Fool for Christ. The Story of Dorothy Day (DVD, Out of the Blue Films, Inc. 2007. 52 min.)
Life is Sacred (VHS, Focus on the Family, 2002. 6 min.)
Lives in the Balance (DVD, ACBO/Salt & Light. 30 min.)
Romero (DVD, Paulist Pictures, 1989. 105 min.)

Closing Prayer:

Lord Jesus, You reveal to us our true dignity as beloved sons and daughters of God. Help us to deepen our roots in the Church's social teaching, that we might better serve You in everyone and teach others to do the same. Help us to love You in the poor and neglected people of our world, so that at the end of our lives, You may welcome us into the house of your Father. We make this prayer in Jesus' name. *Amen.*

† *And may Almighty God bless us: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen*

Options for Extending the Conversation... See Appendix 6: Catholic Social Teaching

Appendix 6: Catholic Social Teaching

Extending the Conversation

People have an innate sense of what's fair and just. We are icons of God, whose essence is goodness, righteousness and justice. What a peaceful world it would be if we actually lived this way! But the consequences of original sin are active in the human family. They cloud our understanding and incline out hearts to be hardened with one another. But Christ has defeated the power of sin and evil by his death and resurrection. Re-created with him at Baptism, and sustained by the Holy Spirit, we have the grace, knowledge and sure hope to work for a world formed by truly human values.

Scripture:

A reading from the Gospel of Luke (Lk 4: 14-20)

Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone. When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, as was his custom.

He stood up to read, and the scroll of the Prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour."

And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all the synagogue were fixed on him.

Then he began to say to them, "Today this has been fulfilled in your hearing."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ.

Reflection:

Jesus and the Good News he preached fully revealed God's love to humanity. His Apostles and their successors, the bishops, have continued to preach this same Gospel to address the needs of peoples in every age. Catholic Social Teaching is part of this living body of continuous apostolic preaching that is guided by the Holy Spirit and known as *Sacred Tradition. Scripture* and *Sacred Tradition* make up the one *deposit* of Catholic faith that comes down to us from Christ and the Apostles.

CST's Key Principles:

Catholic Social Teaching continues to develop as new social situations arise. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, it continues to be announced by Popes and bishops, to help believers see and make good social choices according to Christ's Gospel. Its key principles can be broken down as follows:

Justice:

(Living in right relationship with God and neighbour)

Dignity of the Human Person:

(The supreme and sacred dignity of all human persons – from conception until natural death – as image and likeness of God)

The Common Good:

(Everyone's shared right to what is necessary for a truly human life)

Solidarity:
(Commitment to the good of my neighbour)

Subsidiarity:
(Freedom and duty to make responsible decisions at the lowest appropriate level)

Preferential Option for the Poor:
(Putting the needs of the poor first)

Dignity of the Worker:
(Sharers in God's creative plan for the world)

Peace:
(The tranquility of order, the work of justice, the effect of charity)

The Right to Private Property:
(Freedom to invest wages in land and possessions [to support work and family])

Universal Destination of Goods (Distribution):
(The goods of the earth were made by God for all to share)

Environmental Stewardship:
(Responsible care for God's creation to sustain present and future generations everywhere)

Puebla: Seeing the Face of Christ in the Poor:
Below, you will find a brief excerpt from the Third General Assembly of the Latin American Bishops at Puebla. You are invited to use the discussion questions that follow as a starter for your own further conversations. The Puebla document records the reflections of Latin America's bishops assembled with Pope John Paul II in 1979 at Puebla, Mexico. As a Polish Catholic and Archbishop of Krakow, the Holy Father had seen the horrors of Nazi occupation and life under Communist rule. He knew that the remedy to humankind's inhumanity lay in society recovering the sense of the human person's dignity that is fully revealed in Jesus Christ. Contemplating the face of Christ in the human person became a constant theme his writings. Please read what the bishops at Puebla have to say about the face of Christ in the poor and marginalized:

> *The widespread situation of extreme poverty takes on very real faces in which we should recognize the features of the suffering Christ, the Lord... (Puebla, 31):*
> *-**faces of children**, beaten by poverty from before birth, by the blockage of possibilities for self realization due to irreparable mental and bodily deficiencies; homeless and often exploited children of our cities: the fruit of poverty and family moral disintegration. (Puebla, 32)*
> *-**the faces of youth**, disoriented because they can't find their place in society; frustrated, above all in rural and marginal urban zones, by a lack of opportunities for training and work. (Puebla, 33)*
> *-**faces of indigenous peoples and frequently African Americans**, who living marginalized and in inhuman situations can be considered the poorest of the poor. (Puebla, 34)*

*-**faces of farmers**, who as a social group throughout our continent live at times deprived of land, in situations of domestic and foreign dependency, subjected to systems of commercialization which exploit them. (Puebla, 35)*
*-**the faces of workers**, frequently poorly compensated and faced with difficulties in organizing themselves and defending their rights. (Puebla, 36)*
*-**faces of the underemployed and unemployed**, fired from work due to harsh demands of economic crises and often [harsh demands] of models of development which subject workers and their families to cold economic calculations. (Puebla, 37)*
***-faces of the marginalized and urban slum-dwellers**, with the double impact of shortage of material goods while faced with the show of riches in other social sectors; (Puebla, 38)*
***-faces of the elderly**, growing more numerous every day, frequently marginalized by the society of progress which bypasses those persons who do not produce. (Puebla, 39)*

We share with our people other anguishes which rise up out of the lack of respect for their dignity as human beings, image and likeness of the Creator, and for their inalienable rights as children of God. (Puebla, 40)

Countries like ours in which fundamental human rights are frequently not respected –life, health, education, housing, work… -are in a situation of permanent violation to the dignity of their personhood. (Puebla, 41)

To this are added the anguishes rising due to abuses of power, typical of regimes of force. Anguishes due to the systematic or selective repression accompanied by violations of privacy, disproportionate pressures, torture, exile. Anguish in many families due to disappearances of loved ones who are never heard from again. A total lack of safety due to detentions without judicial order. Anguishes in the face of the subjugated or fettered exercise of justice. Just as the Popes have indicated, the Church, "with an authentic Gospel commitment," must make heard her voice denouncing and condemning these situations, and even more so when governments or those responsible profess themselves Christians. (Puebla, 41) †

† Translated from the Spanish A. Cosentino

Silence:

Faith Sharing with Guiding Questions:

1. Who represents the face of the poor and suffering Jesus for you…
   - among the students/families in your school community?
   - In our country and world?

2. Can you identify principles of Catholic Social Teaching (above) that we could draw on to answer their needs?

3. What do you feel are the major social justice issues in Canada/the world today?
   - how do you think we need to address them as a faith community?
   - how can we help students address them as part of the faith community?

Further Resources:

Michael T. Ryan, *The Social Attitude of a Catholic*. Solidarity Books, 2005.

Catholic Social Teaching – Key Principles Pamphlet (Renfrew County Catholic School Board)
http://religiouseducation.rccdsb.edu.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/sites/26/2010/04/CSTKeyelementsLedgerFinalJan10-13.pdf

Catholic Social Teaching – Key Principles Booklet (Renfrew County Catholic School Board)
http://religiouseducation.rccdsb.edu.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/sites/26/2010/04/CSTBkltFinalJan10-12A.pdf

Links to CST Resources
http://religiouseducation.rccdsb.edu.on.ca/about/social-justice/

Related CST Themes, Definitions, Scripture Passages, Quotes, Links:
http://www.eoccc.org/content/csfcs/themes/themes.html

CCCB Documents
Building a New Culture – Central Themes in Recent Church Teaching on the Environment. Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2013.
http://www.cccb.ca/site/images/stories/pdf/Church_Teaching_on_the_Environment.pdf

Message to Young Catholics on Social Justice. Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, Commission for Justice and Peace, 2011.
http://www.cccb.ca/site/images/stories/pdf/Message_Social_Justice_ENG.pdf

The Struggle Against Poverty. A Sign of Hope in our World. Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, Social Affairs Commission, 1996.
http://www.cccb.ca/site/eng/media-room/official-texts/pastoral-letters/769-the-struggle-against-poverty-a-sign-of-hope-in-our-world

ACBO Documents
Celebrating an Education for Justice and Peace. A letter to the Catholic Secondary School Students of Ontario. Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ontario, 1996.
http://www.acbo.on.ca/englishweb/publications/celebrating.htm

Choosing a Government. Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ontario, 1998.
http://www.acbo.on.ca/englishweb/publications/choosing.htm

Working and Living in Ontario. Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ontario, 2001.
http://www.acbo.on.ca/englishweb/publications/working.htm

One Hundred Years of Catholic Social Teaching. Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ontario, 1991.
http://www.acbo.on.ca/englishweb/publications/100years.htm

~ Adult Faith Reflection Exercise ~
7. The Communion of Saints

Environment Suggestions: a cross, candle, Bible, fall leaves, icons or photos of canonized saints and holy men and women.

Introduction:
Autumn is an important time of year for celebration. All at once it seems that leaves change colour and fall gardens become frosted and birds depart. Something holy, wonderful, mystical, and at times also very sad, seems present. It is at this time of year that Christians celebrate All Saints Day, remembering the holy people who have gone before us.

Let us take a moment to remember our ancestors and friends who now enjoy everlasting peace.
(Brief pause.)

We begin with the sign of our faith … *† In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

Opening Prayer:
Let us pray …
God of mystery, we turn our hearts to You.
Thank you for the presence of those holy people who have made a difference in our lives.
Send Your Spirit to deepen our faith and to soften our sadness,
until we can celebrate together again, when we will be in Your presence forever.
We make this prayer in the name of Jesus, Your Son and our brother,
who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever.
Amen.

Scripture:
A reading from the First Letter of John (1 John 3:1-3)
See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know Him. Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when He is revealed, we will be like Him, for we will see Him as he is. And all who have this hope in Him purify themselves, just as He is pure.

Silence:
(Brief silence to consider God's word.)

Reflection:
(Excerpted from Catholic Update, May 2005 by William H. Shannon)
One of the most beautiful articles in the Apostles' Creed is that which speaks of the "communion of saints."

First of all, we can understand "communion of saints" as referring to ourselves as the community of believers. We rightly deserve to be called saints, as people baptized into Christ. For Baptism unites us to Jesus, the Holy One of God. And united to Jesus we are united and related to one another. We constitute a communion.

There is a second way in which we use the term "communion of saints," namely, to designate those who have entered through death into the fullness of God. Thus, the communion of saints in this context refers to the blessed in heaven: Saints Peter, Paul, Francis, Clare, Catherine, Anne, Joachim, etc., as well as our Aunt Minnie, Uncle Mike, cousin Amanda and all the others who have lived as holy children of God. They are now perfectly one with God.

There is a third way in which we use the term "communion of saints." It is really a combination of the first two. This combined communion of saints includes all of us who are more or less saints (some more, some less) plus all those who have entered into full communion with God. We are all related because Baptism is so strong a link that not even death can break it.

There's one more way of thinking about the saints, one that is informed by our common experience of the Eucharist. There is more than one translation for the phrase *communio sanctorum*, the phrase in the Apostles' Creed from which we get "communion of saints." *Communio sanctorum*, besides meaning a "communion of —holy persons," can also mean a "sharing or a participation in —holy things." Our understanding of the term is enriched when we take it to mean the commonly shared sacraments, especially the Eucharist. We call our partaking of the Eucharistic bread "Holy Communion." When we participate in the Eucharist, we join all the saints in that holy and wondrous communion.

A longer version of this reading is available in this resource. For the complete article, Communion of Saints: Key to the Eucharist, go to http://www.americancatholic.org/Newsletters/CU/ac0505.asp

Faith Sharing and Guiding Questions in Small Groups:

1. Who are the people, living or deceased, who have been models of virtue for you?

2. Which canonized saints have influenced your faith?

3. How have you experienced the Eucharist as "a communal participation in the gracious holiness of God?"

Music - Litany of the Saints:

The litany of saints is one of the oldest prayers of the Church. Forms of it were used in the East as early as the third century, and the traditional form most commonly used today was largely in place at the time of Pope Gregory the Great (540-604). Although it can be prayed alone, it is designed for communal prayer.

Litany – Matt Maher (in Never Too Young and Spirit and Song 2 collections)
A video which may be found on YouTube uses images from Monastery Icons.
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZWt5y301BSY

A traditional version of the litany is found in CBWIII #86. Alternate versions are available.

Closing Prayer:

Leader: Let us pray …
We give thanks for all the saints,

All: Signs of hope for us in a time when hope is often difficult to discern.

Leader: We give thanks for the communion of saints,
our living body—hope in the flesh, our communities of faith.

Left: These support us when we lag behind,

Right: When we struggle to be present to those who suffer,

Leader: When we let go of our neighbour's hand.

We give thanks for the saints that surround us, for our own call to sainthood,

Left: That challenge of baptism,

Right: That creative, disruptive grace,

Left: That instinctive turning toward the human family.

Right: We are images of each other,

Left: We are a ruckus chorus announcing the kingdom of God:

All: Hear it and know
it calls us home.

(*by Jane Deren, Education for Justice*)

Leader: May God bless us,

All: *+ in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen*

(Bless The People / O When the Saints or another suitable song may be sung.)

Options for Extending the Conversation: See Appendix 7: Communion of Saints

Appendix 7: Communion of Saints

Extending the Conversation

One of the most beautiful articles in the Apostles' Creed is that which speaks of the "communion of saints." Understanding these three words can sow the seeds of deep spiritual growth. As we shall see, there is a strong link between our understanding of saints and our understanding of the Eucharist. I'd like to name four ways in which we can understand the significance of the communion of saints, including a reflection on the communion of saints in light of the Eucharist.

Mortal saints

First of all, we can understand "communion of saints" as referring to ourselves as the community of believers. On the feast of all saints, we might hail one another with the words "happy feast day," indicating by such a greeting that we think that despite our sinfulness, we are saints in the sense that we belong to the community of people called to be saints.

We rightly deserve to be called saints, as people baptized into Christ. For Baptism unites us to Jesus, the Holy One of God. And united to Jesus we are united and related to one another. We constitute a communion. The communion of saints is another way of designating the Church.

Immortal saints

There is a second way in which we use the term "communion of saints," namely, to designate those who have entered through death into the fullness of God. Thus, the communion of saints in this context refers to the blessed in heaven: Saints Peter, Paul, Francis, Clare, Catherine, Anne, Joachim, etc., as well as our Aunt Minnie, Uncle Mike, cousin Amanda and all the others who have lived as holy children of God.

In heaven the ecumenical goal is fully realized. No longer are there Catholics, Protestants, Jews, Muslims or Buddhists. Those are earthly ways to think of humanity. Of course there are persons, unique in their own individuality. Yet unique though they are, they are now perfectly one with God.

Communion of saints—all of us!

There is a third way in which we use the term "communion of saints." It is really a combination of the first two. This combined communion of saints includes all of us who are more or less saints (some more, some less) plus all those who have entered into full communion with God. We are all related because Baptism is so strong a link that not even death can break it.

It is especially this more expansive understanding of the communion of saints that we celebrate each November on the feast of All Saints. To use James Joyce's words, it's a "here comes everybody" feast. Everybody belongs, no matter how high or low they may be on the sanctity scale.

How are we—saints in process—related to the saints who have entered into the fullness of divine life? It is the model of saints as friends that predominates in the liturgy. In the Eucharist we remember the saints, and we honor them. But we see them as disciples of Jesus who join us as we worship, just as our worship is joined with their unceasing praise of God. Notice how in the liturgy we don't pray to the saints as objects of worship, but rather to ask them to pray to God with us. All of us, in heaven and on earth, are worshiping God together.

Eucharist: Communion of holy things

Thus far I have described three ways in which we may reflect on the communion of saints. What these three have in common is that they see the saints as persons—and holy persons.

But there's one more way of thinking about the saints, one that is informed by our common experience of the Eucharist. The key to this understanding is in the Apostles' Creed. I certainly won't expect you to follow me through a Latin lesson, but suffice it to say that there is more than one translation for the phrase *communio sanctorum*, the phrase in the Apostles' Creed from which we get "communion of saints."

Communio sanctorum, besides meaning a "communion of —holy persons,'" can also mean a "sharing or a participation in —holy things.'" In fact, this may well be its most basic meaning.
Our understanding of the term is enriched when we take it to mean the commonly shared sacraments, especially the Eucharist. We call our partaking of the Eucharistic bread "Holy Communion." In the Byzantine liturgy the distribution of Holy Communion begins with the priest saying, "Holy things for holy people." It is a phrase that in a sense brings together all the various meanings we have been discussing.

The term *communio sanctorum*, then, is a window not only into the communion of saints, but also into the mystery of the Eucharist. In exploring four different ways of understanding the term, as we have, we see how rich a term it is, one that can cross boundaries. For it means at once a communion of "holy people" as well as a communion of "holy things." Indeed, by extension it could embrace the sacred communion of life that is God's good creation.

In its widest sense the communion of saints is about what Elizabeth Johnson calls "a communal participation in the gracious holiness of God." When we participate in the Eucharist, we join all the saints in that holy and wondrous communion.

For complete article, Communion of Saints: Key to the Eucharist, go to
http://www.americancatholic.org/Newsletters/CU/ac0505.asp

~ Adult Faith Reflection Exercise ~

8. Creation: God's Ever-Present Cathedral

Environment Suggestions: a table with green cloth, plant, container of water, stones, images, any reminder of creation.

Opening Hymn:
'*Morning Has Broken*' (CBW II, #725) or '*For the Fruits of All Creation*' (CBW II, #678)
Or the youtube version https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e0TInLOJuUM

Introduction:
Contemplating the awesome gift of God's creation has been a common form of prayer through the ages. We can appreciate the presence of the Holy Spirit in the constant act of re-creation. It is like God is gifting us all continually with the dawning of each new day. As we come together in prayer today, let us reflect on the peace and comfort that is always there for us in the boundless gifts of creation.

Opening Prayer:
† *In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*
God of goodness, You gift us with each new day. We see the sun, the growth of plants and trees, the smile of children, the wind, the dew and the chirping of birds and are reminded that You surround us with the beautiful gift of the world around us. You have made all of creation good and holy. Help us to understand that the nature that surrounds us is a cathedral of Your presence. We make this prayer through Jesus Your Son. *Amen*

Scripture:
God was pleased with all that was created. Our Creator does not make mistakes. All people are created in God's image and we know that God, our Creator, loves creation.

A reading from the Book of Genesis: (Genesis 1: 26-31)
Then God said, "And now we will make human beings; they will be like us and resemble us. They will have power over the fish, the birds, and all animals, domestic and wild, large and small." So God created human beings, making them to be like Himself. He created them male and female, blessed them, and said, "Have many children, so that your descendants will live all over the earth and bring it under their control. I am putting you in charge of the fish, the birds, and all the wild animals. I have provided all kinds of grain and all kinds of fruit for you to eat; but for all the wild animals and for all the birds I have provided grass and leafy plants for food"----- and it was done. God looked at everything he had made, and He was very pleased.

Silence:

Reflection:

Renowned Jesuit theologian, Teilhard de Chardin, dedicated his life to the study of nature, the cosmos, and the origins of the human race. This priest, theologian and palaeontologist challenges our sometimes confining notions of God to appreciate the grandeur and wonder of Christ's power in the universe.

"*We may, perhaps, imagine that Creation was finished long ago. But that would be quite wrong. It continues in still more magnificent form in the highest zones of the world….Our role is to help complete it, if only by the humble work of our hands. This is the real meaning and the price of our acts. Owing to the interrelation between matter, soul, and Christ, we lead part of the being which he desires back to God* in whatever we do*. With each of our* works*, we labor automatically but really to build the Pleroma, which is to say we help towards the fulfillment of Christ."*

("The Divinization of Our Activities" in Modern Catholic Thinkers *[Vol. 1], New York: Harper 1960)*

Faith Sharing with Guiding Questions:

1. How have you experienced the sacred within creation in your life? What can you do to make more room in your life for this form of prayer and meditation?

"Nature not only reveals that God is present in the world in which we live, but it also teaches us the different kinds of spirituality that make up a devout life. Nature then is not a commodity but a source of self-reflection and contemplation. It becomes part of the community in which we live, giving us its wisdom through its own ways of expression. We need to protect it not out of sheer duty but because our spiritual existence depends on it."

(*Thomas Moore, The Soul's Religion)*

Closing Prayer:

Father, Son and Spirit, we are grateful for all the gifts of creation. Help us to live in harmony with the world that You have created. Continue to reveal Your presence to us in the bountiful gifts of creation that You renew for us through time. We make this prayer through Christ our Lord. *Amen*

† In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

~ Adult Faith Reflection Exercise ~
9. Dignity of the Worker and Stewardship

Environment Suggestions: display table with Bible, crucifix, and candle. Invite participants ahead of time to bring a photo of themselves at work. As part of introduction to session, ask participants to introduce group to their photo and why they chose to bring it.

Welcome to this adult faith reflection session on *the dignity of the worker and stewardship*. You are invited to enter this brief time away from the regular demands of life and work, to feed the deepest part of who you are. Take what this session has to offer with complete freedom – enter and share at your own comfort level.

Introduction:
Each of us is called to work in some way, and to care for the gifts God has entrusted to our care. What matters most is not the status our work confers, but rather, the kind of person we become through our work and stewardship of the gifts entrusted to us.

Opening Prayer:
Let us begin our prayer: *† In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*
O God, we thank You for the gift of work that calls forth the talents and gifts You have planted within us. We ask You to send us the light of your Spirit, that we might grow in our call to labour in Your vineyard as stewards of Your many gifts. We make this prayer to You in the name of Jesus, Your Son. *Amen.*

Scripture:
A reading from the first letter of Paul to the Thessalonians: (1 Thessalonians 5: 12-15)
But we appeal to you, brothers and sisters, to respect those who labour among you, and have charge of you in the Lord and admonish you; esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves. And we urge you, beloved to admonish the idlers, encourage the faint hearted, help the weak, be patient with all of them. See that none of you repays evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to all.

The Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

Silence:

Reflection:
Our value as workers rests not in what we do, but rather, in our infinite worth as persons. No one can take this away from us, although some may try. Employers who pay poverty wages amounting to slave labour, for example, wrongly place profit generation above the value of persons who produce their goods and services. In this way, they undermine the dignity of the worker as God's image and likeness. This is why the Church upholds the right of workers to form unions. Safe working conditions and liveable salaries are basic to our human dignity as workers, and are legitimate requirements of a just society.

The Book of Genesis begins with a story of God working to bring creation into existence, then resting; this is our model, as persons made in the image and likeness of God. Our work, whether paid or unpaid, in the home or as volunteer activity, responds to the deep call to find fulfillment by living as icons of the Trinity.

Whatever the Trinity does tends toward unity and order, building up and preserving what is good, for the well-being of all. This is the essence of stewardship. Our call to live as workers is therefore also a call to live as good stewards: to build up and preserve what is good in our workplaces, communities and world for the good of everyone (the *common good*).

Stewardship, then, is about justice, peace, the common good, as well as intergenerational and globalized solidarity. What does this all mean in practical terms? It means that our work must help ensure that all persons, especially the most vulnerable and seemingly insignificant, are protected and cared for; it also means that we must work so that the goods of the earth are available to provide for the needs of all the world's peoples in present and future generations. It means looking after ourselves in every dimension of our personhood, so that we can continue to serve God and neighbour as called.

Some of us are called to lead; others, to follow (while those who cannot work still retain their inestimable value as persons). All have a place in God's plan, and share a supreme dignity among earth's creatures, made in the image and likeness of the Creator: workers and stewards of God's gifts.

Silence:

Faith Sharing with Guiding Questions:

1. Someone who stands out for me as a model of work and stewardship for God's gifts in my working community…
2. What kinds of talents have emerged in my life due to the demands of my work? How have I used these talents as their steward?
3. How have I been able to influence others to be good stewards of their gifts as students and colleagues?
4. Who looks to me as steward of their well-being and safety?

Music /Video, CD/Live:

Open My Eyes, Lord (Jesse Manibusan)
Lord, Make us Servants of Your Peace (630 CBW III)
Lives in the Balance (DVD, ACBO/Salt & Light. 30 min.)

Closing Prayer:

O God, we thank You for the gift of our work, and for all You provide to sustain us in our labours. Fill us with the wisdom and courage of Your Holy Spirit to serve You in our care for one another as workers and stewards of Your gifts. Fill us with Your hope that we might confidently build a future together in You. We make this prayer in the name of Jesus, the Lord. *Amen*.

† *In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

Options for Extending the Conversation... See Appendix 9: Dignity of Work and Stewardship

Appendix 9: Dignity of Work and Stewardship

Extending the Conversation

From RCCDSB Resource, *Catholic Social Teaching: Key Principles* (booklet)
http://religiouseducation.rccdsb.edu.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/sites/26/2010/04/CSTBkltFinalJan10-12A.pdf

Workers are:
Sharers in God's creative plan for the world.

"Six days you shall do your work, but on the seventh day you shall rest,... " (*Exodus 23: 12a*)

"Christians should rather rejoice that they can follow the example of Christ, who worked as an artisan. In the exercise of all their earthly activities, they can thereby gather their humane, domestic, professional, social, and technical enterprises into one vital synthesis with religious values, under whose supreme direction all things are harmonized unto God's glory."
(Second Vatican Council, *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* [*Gaudium et Spes*], No. 34)

Work has **two closely connected purposes**:

- to serve the good of the working person—made in God's image and likeness
- to serve the common good.

Work is a vocation to holiness, a share in God's creative plan for the world. In the Bible, God is portrayed working six days to bring creation into existence. Work is holy. Some important points about work:

- meaningful work is **a God-given human right**
- the person who works has a **right to a just wage**
- the **value of a person who works is always greater than the goods they make** (this is called the *priority of labour over capital*)
- **workers must have a say** in their working conditions
- workers are **free to form unions**

Can you name someone whose work makes your life better?

How should all workers (paid and unpaid at home) be treated? Why?

Environmental Stewardship is:
Responsible care for God's creation to sustain present and future generations everywhere.

"The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to till it and keep it." (*Gen 2: 15*)

"The environment is God's gift to everyone, and in our use of it we have a responsibility towards the poor, towards future generations and towards humanity as a whole. In nature, the believer recognizes the wonderful result of God's creative activity, which we may use responsibly to satisfy our legitimate needs, material or otherwise, while respecting the intrinsic balance of creation. If this vision is lost, we end up either considering nature an untouchable taboo or, on the contrary, abusing it.
Neither attitude is consonant with the Christian vision of nature as the fruit of God's creation."
(Pope Benedict XVI, Encyclical Charity in Truth [Caritas in Veritate], 2009. No. 48)

Man and woman were given "dominion" over creation (*see Gen 1, 28*) as an act of entrustment that it might provide for everyone. We are to use wisely the gifts of God's creation for the good of all the earth's present and future generations of peoples.

How can we make sure God's creation will provide food, air and shelter for people now and in the future?

What's one small way you can help make this happen?

Further Resources:
Michael T. Ryan, *The Social Attitude of a Catholic*. Solidarity Books, 2005.

Catholic Social Teaching – Key Principles Pamphlet (Renfrew County Catholic School Board)
http://religiouseducation.rccdsb.edu.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/sites/26/2010/04/CSTKeyelementsLedgerFinalJan10-13.pdf

Catholic Social Teaching – Key Principles Booklet (Renfrew County Catholic School Board)
http://religiouseducation.rccdsb.edu.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/sites/26/2010/04/CSTBkltFinalJan10-12A.pdf

Links to CST Resources
http://religiouseducation.rccdsb.edu.on.ca/about/social-justice/

Letters from Bishops' Conferences
Celebrating an Education for Justice and Peace. A letter to the Catholic Secondary School Students of Ontario. (Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ontario, 1996).
http://www.acbo.on.ca/englishweb/publications/celebrating.htm

Working and Living in Ontario. (Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ontario, 2001).
http://www.acbo.on.ca/englishweb/publications/working.htm

Building a New Culture: Central Themes of Church Teaching on the Environment (CCCB Episcopal Commission for Justice and Peace, 2013)
http://www.saskatoonrcdiocese.com/news_articles/documents/Church_Teaching_on_the_Environment.pdf

EOCCC Curriculum Support Resources:
Related CST Themes, Definitions, Scripture Passages, Quotes, Links:
http://www.eoccc.org/content/csfcs/themes/themes.html

Catholic Theme: Dignity of Work and Service, *Curriculum Support for Catholic Schools* (EOCCC, 2005)
(Contains definition, Scripture quotes, Church Teaching, Links…):
http://www.eoccc.org/content/csfcs/themes/work.html

Catholic Character Theme: Stewardship, *Our Language, Our Story* (EOCCC, 2009)
http://www.ourlanguageourstory.org/virtues_themes/CCTstewardship.html

Catholic Theme: Stewardship for Creation, *Curriculum Support for Catholic Schools* (EOCCC, 2005)
http://www.eoccc.org/content/csfcs/themes/creation.html

Anchor Concept: Stewardship, *Curriculum Support for Catholic Schools* (EOCCC, 2005)
(Contains definition, related concepts, links to OCSGEs)
http://www.eoccc.org/content/csfcs/concepts/astewardship.html

Anchor Concept: Vocation, *Curriculum Support for Catholic Schools* (EOCCC, 2005)
http://www.eoccc.org/content/csfcs/concepts/avocation.html

~ Adult Faith Reflection Exercise ~

10. Humour for Spiritual Growth: Whatever Happened to Joy?

Environment Suggestions: a prayer/display table with colourful cloth, Bible, masks of tragedy/comedy would be great, comic strips and joyful photographs.

Introduction:

Sometimes our faith becomes sanitized, serious and lacking joy. If we truly believe the 'Alleluia' any time we say it, we should be bursting with joy. A good homilist eases into a message with a joke or witty comment. What a wonderful tool for building community and healing! God has provided us with the instruments of joy and laughter. We must play, be childlike in our love for God and play some more! For our reflection today, we will explore the connection of our spiritual health and growth to our sharing of humour and laughter.

Opening Hymn:

Canticle of the Sun ♪ Gather #197 or *Lift Up Your Hearts*, Gather #231

A quip from Robert Frost: "Forgive, O Lord, my little jokes on Thee, and I'll forgive Thy great big joke on me."

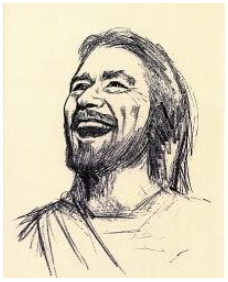
Opening Prayer:

† In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Creator of the universe and all that is unique and fun, be with us today as we explore our memories and experiences to recapture the gift of joy that You bring to us through your grace. We make this prayer in Jesus' name. *Amen.*

Scripture: *(Psalm 126)*

When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion,
we were like those who dream.
Then our mouth was filled with laughter,
and our tongue with shouts of joy;
then it was said among the nations,
"The LORD has done great things for them."
The LORD has done great things for us, and we rejoiced.
The Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.



Silence:

Reflection:

Share a joke with your group (appropriate!)

How does this change the dynamics in your group communication?

Leader:

THE YOGI AND THE PIZZA

The Yogi walked into the Zen Pizza Parlour and said: "Make me one with everything." When the Yogi got the pizza, he gave the proprietor a $20 bill. The proprietor pocketed the bill. The Yogi said "Don't I get any change?" The proprietor said, "Change must come from within."

For Further Reflection:

The following excerpt from *'God is No Laughing Matter'* by Julia Cameron reminds us that there are messengers of joy in our lives. Our lives are richer and more joyous due to the gift of presence of many we love.

"When I was a schoolgirl at Carmel High School in Mendelein, Illinois, a great faculty favourite was Sister Mary Elizabeth, B.V.M. A short, stout woman with a genius in mathematics, she acted as an adviser in the NASA space program. This gave her a certain cachet with star struck students. But our real fondness for her was grounded in the fact that she routinely carried a pigskin football through the halls and snapped spiralling passes at unsuspecting students, hooting with laughter when they botched the catch. It was Sister Benedicta who taught us theology, but it was Sister Elizabeth, with her high, good humour, who taught us to love God."

Faith Sharing and Discussion:

1. Who are the messengers of joy for us here at work?
2. Describe a humorous memory from your formation in faith (e.g. a funny Church story, a faux pas at Church, a holy mishap).
3. For your own reflection.....How can you make a more conscious effort to infuse your own spiritual practice with humour and joy?

Another book for good reference is *Reclaiming the Spiritual Power of Humor: Laugh your way to Grace* by Rev. Susan Spark. The author gives many quotes and thoughts about the connection of laughter and spirituality.

"Like a good roll of duct tape, humour bonds us to each other. It strengthens us as a community, and it allows us to transcend our differences and our barriers. When we laugh with someone----whether it is a stranger, a friend, a lover, or an enemy---our worlds overlap for a tiny, but significant moment. It is then that defences are lowered, ideas and feelings are shared, and the best in each other gleams forth."
"Laughter's the nearest we ever get, or should get, to sainthood. It's the state of grace that saves most of us from contempt." John Osborne, English playwright

"God is a comedian who is playing to an audience who is afraid to laugh." Voltaire, French philosopher

Closing Prayer:

God of goodness and light, thank You for the joy that comes in to our lives through the gifts of laughter, friendship and love. Help us to live our lives to the fullest to glorify You and to further the kingdom in this world. We make this prayer through Christ our Lord. *Amen*

† In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

"The man or woman who passes into the holy of holies and ceases to laugh is bringing into God's presence a mangled creature, one who is less than the full being that God intended him (or her) to be."
Conrad Hyers, Theologian

Closing Hymn:

'*Smile*' on Youtube https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YXuB6md9zPk Or '*Make em Laugh'* on Youtube https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SND3v0i9uhE

~ Adult Faith Reflection Exercise ~

11. Image of God

Environment Suggestions: display table, crucifix, candle, Bible for display

Welcome to this adult faith reflection session on *Image of God*. You are invited to enter this brief time away from the regular demands of life and work, to feed the deepest part of who you are. Take what this session has to offer with complete freedom – enter and share at your own comfort level.

Introduction:

Most people who believe in God have various images of what God is like, depending on the day, their mood, age, health and history. These images of God change as we grow older – sometimes for the better, and sometimes for worse. A healthy image of God can free us to trust the movement of grace, bringing tremendous human and spiritual growth. A poor image of God can keep us imprisoned in mistrust and fear, rather than growing in love. None of us carries around the perfect image of God. And so, our images of God constantly need to heal and mature. God also desires this for us that we might truly live in the freedom of being all we were created to be. Let us begin in prayer…

Opening Prayer:

† *In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

O God, Your goodness, mercy, glory and power are beyond anything we can imagine. As we enter this time of reflection on Your image in our lives, open our hearts and minds to the grace of Your Spirit and free us from anything that keeps us from living in the freedom and joy of Your loving presence. We make this prayer to You in Jesus' name. *Amen.*

Scripture:

A reading from the Letter of Paul to the Colossians:

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation, for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers – all things have been created through him and for him. …For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

The Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

Silence:

Reflection:

The late psychologist Erik Erikson once wrote that children with positive experiences of parental love often embraced faith in God more readily than those without such experiences. Nurturing experiences in the home, classroom or parish can go a long way in helping us develop a trusting relationship with God. Conversely, harsh or unkind experiences of parental or religious authority can sometimes remain with us and get in the way of our completely trusting God. They can become a kind of default bias that pops up whenever God is mentioned.

Christianity's great spiritual teachers knew this. St. John of the Cross condemned the harshness of spiritual directors who discouraged souls from trusting God. Catherine Doherty, foundress of

Madonna House, had no tolerance for unkind words between members of her community. On the other hand, we see the power that kindness can have on a person's image of God in Brother André Bessette, Mother Teresa and Dorothy Day. Their unconditional love for the poor imaged a merciful and compassionate God, and won over many hearts hardened against the God they misunderstood.

What can we do to have our own image of God healed and restored? God's living word is a great place to start. Do you have a favourite Bible quote or story? Perhaps you can begin there. (If you can't remember where the story is, type a key phrase from it into a search engine, and you'll find its location. Or, see the Appendix of this section and choose from one of the Bible quotes there). Ask the Holy Spirit to enlighten you, then read it slowly a few times, letting its deep meaning sink into your spirit and take you where it will.

Silent Reading of Bible Story: (5 min.)

Silence:

Faith Sharing with Guiding Questions:

1. Can you give a word or phrase from the Bible quote you read that has stayed with you?
2. What does this word or phrase say to you about God?
3. What is one thing I can say/do with my students or family to live out (image) this aspect of God?

Music /Video, CD/Live:

The Lord is Kind and Merciful (Rick Modlin, *Spirit & Song 1* No. 77)
Fly Like a Bird (Ken Canedo, *Spirit & Song 1* No. 177)
Be Not Afraid (Bob Dufford, SJ *Spirit & Song 1* No. 170)
I am the Bread of Life (John Michael Talbott, *Spirit & Song 1* No. 153)
We are Called to Serve (Julie & Tim Smith, *Spirit & Song 1* No. 139)
By the Waking of our Hearts (Ricky Manalo, *Spirit & Song 1* No. 102)
On Eagle's Wings (Michael Joncas, *Spirit & Song 1* No. 195)
I Could Sing of Your Love Forever (Martin Smith. *Spirit & Song 1 No. 184)*
How Close to God? Image of God (Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m2JR5vwJ3x8 3:34)

Closing Prayer:

Jesus, healer and restorer of hearts. Walk with us today as this session comes to a close. May Your overflowing grace and mercy wash over our lives, and free us each day to live as visible images of the saving love that comes to us through You from the Father, in the power of the Holy Spirit. *Amen.*

† *And may Almighty God bless us: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen*

Options for Extending the Conversation... See Appendix 11: Image of God

Appendix 11: Image of God

Extending the Conversation

In a very real sense, we image for one another what God is like. Our words and actions have the power to heal and inspire faith or to encourage distrust. To more fully image God's healing love and inspire trust, our own relationship with God must be also be healed. But who do we turn to if we're surrounded by persons who are human and flawed, like ourselves? The answer is Jesus.

Imagine the jaded believers who found their hearts liberated when they met Jesus, the "visible" image of the invisible God." (*Col 3:15*) Recall Philip's request, "Lord, show us the Father and we shall be satisfied" and Jesus' response, "Philip, to have seen me is to have seen the Father." (*Jn 14:9*)

The Gospels tell us that great multitudes followed Jesus wherever he went, that people laid out their sick along roadways for him to heal, that crushing crowds pressed on him to touch the fringe of his cloak or to let his passing shadow cure their ills. Imagine the throngs hemming him in on all sides and forcing him to teach from a boat. Jesus, the visible image of the invisible God whose healing love pours out like an unending fountain, surrounded by the thirsty, the weary, the wounded, the angry, the betrayed, those of flagging hope and restless spirit. Can you picture yourself in that crowd?

How do we meet this Jesus, this "visible image of the invisible God"? One way is through God's word, "living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword." (*Hebrews 4:12*) God's living word has the power to cut through false images of God that prevent the eyes of our hearts from better seeing and understanding the God we long for.

God's word can help set us free from the blind spots that keep us from seeing and moving forward in the freedom of faith. Jesus, the invisible God made visible, is truly present in the words of the Gospel. As we encounter him there, he reaches out to heal, refine and mature the images of God we carry. Jesus, spoken of by St. Thérèse as the *flame of love burning at the heart of the Church*, binds our wounds in the healing Sacrament of Reconciliation, and nurtures us with his body in the Eucharist, giving us the spiritual food to move forward to greater faith and inner freedom.

While bad childhood experiences may influence our adult future, they don't control the outcome of our lives. We are not helpless victims of our past. We have the freedom and means to "put an end to childish ways" (*1 Cor 13:11*), and to choose "life to the full" (*Jn 10:10*) in Christ. In him we not only *find* healing; we become *instruments* of his healing – like Brother André, Mother Teresa and Dorothy Day, imaging the love that flows from the Father, through Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

You are invited to find a Biblical passage(s) in the following pages of this appendix that presents an image of God that speaks to your needs right now. Stay with the passage – reading, re-reading, reflecting and praying on it – as long as you need to. You may choose to read through all the passages, letting them speak to you in their own collective way. Try finding some time each day – no matter how brief – for God's word. It will take root in you, to heal the images of God in your life.

Images of God in the Bible: Selected Passages

Come to Me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and my burden is light.
(Matt 11: 28-30)

Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness. When He saw the crowds, He had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.
(Matt 9: 35-36)

But when they saw Him walking on the sea, they thought it was a ghost and cried out; for they all saw Him and were terrified. But immediately He spoke to them and said, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid." Then He got into the boat with them and the wind ceased.
(Mk 6: 49-51A)

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name.
Bless the Lord, O my soul, and do not forget all His benefits-
Who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases,
Who redeems your life from the Pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy,
Who satisfies you with good as long as you live so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.
* * * * * *
The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
He will not always accuse, nor will He keep His anger forever.
He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities.
For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His steadfast love toward those who fear Him;
as far as the east is from the west, so far He removes our transgressions from us.
As a father has compassion for his children, so the Lord has compassion for those who fear Him.
For He knows how we were made; He remembers that we are dust.
(Ps 103: 1-5, 8-14)

You show me the path of life. In Your presence there is fullness of joy;
In Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.
(Ps 16: 11)

O God, You are my God, I seek You, my soul thirsts for You;
my flesh faints for You, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.
So I have looked upon You in the sanctuary, beholding Your power and glory.
Because Your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise You.
So I will bless You as long as I live; I will lift up my hands and call on Your name.
… for You have been my help, and in the shadow of Your wings I sing for joy.
My soul clings to You; Your right hand upholds me.
(Ps 63: 1-4, 7-8)

Gladden the soul of Your servant, for to You, O Lord, I lift up my soul.
for You, O lord, are good and forgiving, abounding in steadfast love to all who call on You.

Give ear, O Lord, to my prayer; listen to my cry of supplication.
In the day of my trouble I call on You, for You will answer me.
There is none like You among the gods, O Lord, nor are there any works like Yours.
All the nations You have made shall come and bow down before You, O Lord, and shall glorify Your name.
For You are great and do wondrous things; You alone are God.
Teach me Your way, O Lord, that I may walk in Your truth; give me an undivided heart to revere Your name.
I give thanks to You, O lord my God, with my whole heart, and I will glorify Your name forever.
For great is Your steadfast love toward me; You have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol.
(Ps 86: 4-13)

I will sing of Your steadfast love, O Lord, forever; with my mouth I will proclaim Your faithfulness to all generations.
I declare that Your steadfast love is established forever; Your faithfulness is as firm as the heavens.
(Ps 89: 1-2)

You who live in the shelter of the Most High, who abide in the shadow of the Almighty,
will say to the Lord, "My refuge and my fortress; my God, in whom I trust."
For He will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence;
He will cover you with His pinions, and under His wings you will find refuge; His faithfulness is a shield and buckler.
You will not fear the terror of the night, or the arrow that flies by day,
or the pestilence that stalks in darkness, or the destruction that wastes at noonday.
(Ps 91: 1-6)

O come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord, our maker!
For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand.
(Ps 95: 6-7)

I lift up my eyes to the hills – from where will my help come?
My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.
(Ps 121: 1-2)

If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand?
But there is forgiveness with You, so that you may be revered.
I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in His word I hope;
My soul waits for the Lord more than those who watch for the morning.
O Israel, hope in the Lord!
For with the Lord there is steadfast love, and with Him is great power to redeem.
It is He who will redeem Israel from all its iniquities.
(Ps 130: 3-8)

O Lord, You have searched me and known me.
You know when I sit down and when I rise up; You discern my thoughts from far away.
You search out my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways.

Even before a word is on my tongue, O Lord, You know it completely.
You hem me in, behind and before, and lay Your hand upon me.
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is so high that I cannot attain it.
Where do I go from Your spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence?
If I ascend to heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, You are there.
If I take the wings of the morning and settle at the farthest limits of the sea, even there Your hand shall lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me fast.
… for it was You who formed my inward parts; You knit me together in my mother's womb.
I praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
(Ps 139 1-10, 13-14)

Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.
When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers,
they shall not overwhelm you;
when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.
For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour.
I give Egypt as your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba in exchange for you.
Because you are precious in my sight, and honoured, and I love you,
I give people in return for you, nations in exchange for your life.
Do not fear, for I am with you;
(Isaiah 43: 1b-5A)

See, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands;
(Isaiah 49: 16a)

For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but My steadfast love shall not depart from you, and my covenant of peace shall not be removed, says the Lord, who has compassion on you.
(Isaiah 54: 10)

Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters;
and you that have no money, come buy and eat!
Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.
Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread,
and your labour for that which does not satisfy?
Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food.
Incline your ear, and come to Me; listen so that you may live.
I will make with you an everlasting covenant, My steadfast, sure love for David.
(Isaiah 55: 1-3)

The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt – a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after

those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, "Know the Lord," for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity and remember their sin no more. (*Jeremiah 31: 31-34)*

I will take you from the nations, and gather you from all the countries, and bring you into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you, and make you follow my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances. Then you shall live in the land that I gave to your ancestors; and you shall be my people, and I will be your God.
(Ezekiel 36: 24-28)

When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son.
The more I called them, the farther they went from Me,
Sacrificing to the Baals, and burning incense to idols.
Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk, who took them in My arms;
I drew them with human cords, with bands of love;
I fostered them like one who raises an infant to his cheeks;
Yet though I stooped to feed My child, they did not know that I was their healer.
(Hosea 11: 1-4) NAB Translation

How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, O Israel?
How can I make you like Admah? How can I treat you like Zeboim?
My heart recoils within me; My compassion grows warm and tender.
I will not execute my fierce anger; I will not again destroy Ephraim
For I am God and no mortal, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come in wrath.
(Hosea 11: 8-10)

Then his [newly born John the Baptist's] father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke this prophecy:

"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He has looked favourably on His people and redeemed them.
He has raised up a mighty saviour for us in the house of His servant David,
as He spoke through the mouth of His holy prophets from of old, that we would be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us.
Thus He has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors, and has remembered His holy covenant,
The oath that He swore to our ancestor Abraham, to grant us that we, being rescued from the hands of our enemies,
Might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all our days.
And, child will be called the prophet of the Most High;
for you will go before the Lord to prepare His ways,
to give knowledge of salvation to His people by the forgiveness of their sins.
By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."
(Luke 1: 68-79)

~ Adult Faith Reflection Exercise ~
12. Lent: Desert Spirituality

Environment Suggestions: prayer table, cactus, sand, rocks, etc. A candle, Bible, strips of sackcloth and purple cloth will indicate the Lenten season.

Introduction:
Scripture gives us the account of the experience of Jesus in the desert for 40 days. This image of the desert as a place to go to in solitude, to fast, and to face challenges is a wonderful analogy for our own spiritual discernment during the Lenten season.

Opening Hymn: Come Back to Me (Hosea) CBW II and III

Opening Prayer:
† In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.
Loving God, as we journey these 40 days of Lent, give us the courage to truly enter the desert. Let Your spirit enable us to face our own demons—our self doubt, our fear of refection or failure, our hesitation to love fully and our insecurity in our faith. We know that You are with us throughout our lives, for every Lenten journey and every renewal of our hearts. For this, we give our thanks. *Amen*

Scripture:
(Mk 1:12–13; Lk 4:1–13)

The Temptation of Jesus

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. [2] He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards He was famished. [3] The tempter came and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." But He answered, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.' " Then the devil took Him to the holy city and placed Him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down; for it is written, 'He will command His angels concerning You,' and 'On their hands they will bear You up, so that You will not dash Your foot against a stone.' " Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour; and he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'Worship the Lord your God and serve only Him.' " Then the devil left Him, and suddenly angels came and waited on Him.

The Gospel of the Lord
All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Silence:

Faith Sharing with Guiding Questions:

1. In the crazy pace of our existence, can '*desert spirituality*' be helpful in bringing you closer to Jesus?

2. What can your 'fast' look like for this Lenten season? What would be most spiritually empowering? What is the clutter in your living, where can fasting and cleansing make a difference in your faith? The desert is quiet and challenging.

3. Take a moment to reflect on the role of silence in your life. Are you taking the time to allow silence to speak in your heart?

Further reference for 'desert spirituality' from the website below:
http://duluthbenedictines.org/2011/03/16/desert-spirituality-silence-solitude-simplicity/

Read the article below by Richard Rohr. In your small group, discuss what points in the article speak to your own need for silence. How do some of these ideas speak to your own need for spiritual renewal?

Silence:
"How do you approach the thirst of Jesus? Only one secret—the closer you come to Jesus, the better you will know His thirst. Jesus thirsts even now, in your heart and in the poor—He knows your weakness, He wants only your love, wants only the chance to love you."

Mother Teresa

Closing Prayer:
God of beginning and end, give us the wisdom of the desert to shed our false selves, to renew our hearts and to move into a promised land of a deeper relationship with you. We make this prayer through Jesus, our Saviour and Lord. *Amen*
† In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Closing Hymn:
Hosea (Come Back to Me)

For Further Reflection and Discussion:
Finding God in the Depths of Silence *by Richard Rohr | March 2013 from 'Sojourners'*

Real interior silence, not just the absence of noise, is a foundational spiritual discipline. So why are we so resistant to enter into it?

Probably more than ever, because of iPads, cell phones, billboards, TVs, and iPods, we are a toxically over-stimulated people. Only time will tell the deep effects of this on emotional maturity, relationship, communication, conversation, and religion itself. Silence now seems like a luxury, but it is not so much a luxury as it is a choice and decision at the heart of every spiritual discipline and growth. Without it, most liturgies, Bible studies, devotions, "holy" practices, sermons, and religious conversations might be good and fine, but they will never be truly great or life-changing—for ourselves or for others. They can only represent the surface; God is always found at the depths, even the depths of our sin and brokenness. And in the depths, it is silent.

It comes down to this: God is, and will always be, Mystery. Only a non-arguing presence, only a non-assertive self, can possibly have the humility and honesty to receive such mysterious silence.
When you can remain at peace inside of your own mysterious silence, you are only beginning to receive the immense "Love that moves the sun and the other stars," as Dante so beautifully says—

along with the immeasurable silent space between those trillions of stars, through which this Mystery is also choosing to communicate. Silence is space, and space beyond time. Those who learn to live there are spacious and timeless people. They make and leave room for all the rest of us.

Richard Rohr, OFM, a Sojourners *contributing editor, is founder of the Center for Action and Contemplation (www.cacradicalgrace.org) in Albuquerque, N.M.*

~ Adult Faith Reflection Exercise ~
13. Lent - The Three Trees

Environment Suggestions: a purple cloth, candle, as well as a wooden box, boat, and cross.

Introduction:

Leader: We come together as a community to reflect on this holy season of Lent. We begin by reading The Tale of the Three Trees.

(If a copy of the picture book is not available, see http://www.word4life.com/threetrees.html .
The story can be read aloud or may include the use of video presentations available online.)

Opening Prayer:

Leader: *† In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

Merciful God,look on us, Your children as we journey through this holy season of Lent.
Help us to understand more deeply the meaning
of Your Son's death and resurrection for our lives.
Teach us to grow in our desire for You and
strengthen our efforts to build a more compassionate world.
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord.

All: *Amen.*

Scripture Readings and Response:

Reader 1: Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

(Matthew 6:19-21)

Leader: Lord our God, in our fasting, help us to avoid the temptations of earthly treasures so that we can see more clearly the treasures of Your Kingdom. We pray …

Response: **Teach me Your ways, O Lord, teach me Your ways.** *(may be sung, see CBW III #119)*

Leader: Lord our God, like the first tree, mold our lives into the kind of treasure boxes into which You daily pour Your many blessings. Help us to say thank you through our service to others. We pray … **R.**

Reader 2: 'And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.' *(Matthew 6:5-6)*

Leader: Lord our God, create in us a desire to pray, helping us to overcome any false sense that we do not need You in our lives. We pray … **R.**

Leader: Lord our God, like the second tree, help us to see how our smallest efforts can be used by You to overcome life's storms in ways we can hardly imagine. We pray … **R.**

Reader 3: He sat down opposite the treasury, and watched the crowd putting money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which are worth a penny. Then he called his disciples and said to them, 'Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. For all of them have contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on.'

(Mark 12:41-44)

Leader: Lord our God, help us to see that You can transform even our smallest contributions into something greater. We pray … **R.**

Leader: Lord our God, like the third tree, wherever we may find ourselves in life, may our faith and willingness to give of ourselves be signs of your love for everyone. We pray … **R.**

Faith Sharing and Guiding Questions in Small Groups:

1. During Lent we often plan to give up something, such as candy, dessert, etc. How do our actions or sacrifices help others? How does the metaphor of a treasure box inform your understanding of fasting?

2. How might you attempt to intensify your prayer life during lent? What styles of prayer have been most meaningful for you?

3. As disciples of Jesus, we must be concerned with what is happening to our neighbours. Who are your neighbours? How can you support all your neighbours through almsgiving? How are acts of charity connected to justice - the other foot of Catholic Social Teaching?

Music:

Suggested songs for reflection include Purify My Heart, Father I Give Myself, and Open My Eyes, all from the Never Too Young / Spirit and Song collections.

Closing Prayer:

Leader: Let us pray …
God our Father,
You have taught us to overcome our sins by prayer, fasting and almsgiving.
When we are discouraged by our sinfulness, fill us with Your love.
Throughout the season of Lent, make us strong
to resist temptation, and follow You more closely
according to the plans You have for us.
We make this prayer in the name of Jesus, Your Son. *Amen*

All: *† In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

~ Adult Faith Reflection Exercise ~

14. Mary, Model of Trust, Humility and Witness

Environment Suggestions: A cross, candle, Bible, statue or icon of Mary, rosary.

Introduction:
Mary is the most revered woman in the world. In the Catholic Church, she is acknowledged and honoured as the Mother of Christ, and Mother of the Church. We do not worship Mary, rather we ask her to pray with us and for us.

Opening Prayer:
† In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

God of compassion and love, Mary placed You at the centre of her life, abandoning herself in humble obedience to Your will. May she be an example to us, as we strive to follow in her path.
We ask this in the name of Jesus, whose mother is the Queen of Peace. *Amen.*

Scripture 1 – Trust: *(Luke 1:38)*
Then Mary said, 'Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to Your word.'

Silence:

Reflection:
Mary's story is one of trust and obedience, and like the stories of Noah building the Ark and Abraham sacrificing Isaac, God's will is accomplished with human cooperation. What people choose to do matters to God.

For Silent Consideration:
1. Why doesn't Mary ask for more time to consider the angel's request, or to consult with Joseph?

2. How do we discern and respond to God's call in our own lives?

Scripture 2 – Humility: *(Luke 1:46-49)*
And Mary said, 'My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,
for He has looked with favour on the lowliness of His servant.
Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is His name."

Silence:

Reflection:
These words are the first part of the Magnificat, Mary's song of praise. In biblical times, spontaneous songs of joy and thanksgiving seem to have been common responses when God granted a favour. Mary's canticle is a product of a humble heart overwhelmed by the greatness of what God would accomplish through her.

For Silent Consideration:

1. Why did Mary choose to share her joy first with Elizabeth?
2. How do we share our faith with others without appearing to be bragging?
3. In what circumstances have you been inspired and empowered to carry out the will of God?

Scripture 3 – Witness: *(Luke 1:50-55)*

His mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.
He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.
He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,
and lifted up the lowly;
He has filled the hungry with good things,
and sent the rich away empty.
He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,
according to the promise he made to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to his descendants forever.'

Silence:

Reflection:

In this second part of the Magnificat, Mary speaks of a God of justice and mercy, whose kingdom is vastly different from the social order. The power of God's word does not depend on human structures, but comes from God alone.

For Silent Consideration:

1. What historical and biblical events might Mary be referring to in the Magnificat?
2. How does God "lift up the lowly" in our world today?
3. What are the challenges of being joyful, as Mary was, as we work for justice?

Faith Sharing:

Based on any, or all of the three scripture passages, reflections and questions above.

Music:

There are many hymns to Mary and musical settings of the Magnificat. Possibilities include:
My Soul Rejoices (Jackie Francois) – Spirit & Song/Never Too Young
My Soul Gives Glory to the Lord (Michael Joncas) – CBW III

Closing Prayer:

Let us pray together to our Blessed Mother … Hail Mary, full of grace …
Loving God, grant us deeper insight into what it means to have faith,
and a renewed sense of joy despite the trials that life brings.
May our lives bear witness to Your kingdom on earth.
We ask this in Jesus' name. *Amen.*
† In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

~ Adult Faith Reflection Exercise ~

15. Pentecost

Environment Suggestions: a red cloth for the prayer table, a Bible, cross, candle and if possible-a white dove. Card stock with the word 'welcome' in many languages would reinforce the spirit of the feast.

Introduction:
We end the 50 days of Easter with the joyous celebration of Pentecost. Let's watch this creative video to remind us of the details of this most holy and joyous occasion in the liturgical calendar.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J5tr4pqWIo4ost

Opening Prayer:
† In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Holy and loving God, You sent Your spirit to renew the face of the earth and our hearts. Help us to fully embrace the magnitude of Pentecost and our calling to further the spread of the Good News throughout our lives. We make this prayer through Christ our Lord. *Amen*

Scripture:
(Acts 2: 1-13)

The Coming of the Holy Spirit

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power." All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" But others sneered and said, "They are filled with new wine."

The Word of the Lord
All: Thanks be to God.

Silence:

Faith Sharing and Guiding Questions:

1. In your own formation as a Catholic Christian, what does the Holy Spirit mean to you as a person of faith?

2. Reflecting on the feast of 'Pentecost', what does this say to your own vocation as a Catholic educator and as a Christian?

Group plenary sharing of thoughts about Pentecost and the Holy Spirit active in our lives and communities.

"Those in whom the Spirit comes to live are God's new Temple. They are, individually and corporately, places where heaven and earth meet."

— N.T. Wright, Simply Christian: Why Christianity Makes Sense

Closing Prayer:

Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of Your faithful and kindle in them the fire of Your love. Send forth Your Spirit and they shall be created. And You shall renew the face of the earth. *Amen*

† In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Closing Hymn:

You Have Anointed Me by Gary Daigle, Gather #676

~ Adult Faith Reflection Exercise ~
16. Prayer

Environment Suggestions: a cross, candle, Bible.

Introduction:
We pray together almost every time we come together because we know that prayer helps us to build our relationship with God. As a community, we pray together each Sunday at Mass. As individuals, we each have our favourite ways of praying. Some of us like to pray with music, some pray the rosary, some write in a prayer journal, some reflect on scripture, others pray outdoors surrounded by nature—there are many ways to pray. Prayer is a humble, faith-filled acknowledgement of God's existence. The one who prays affirms the love of God and recognizes God's love for her or him.

Opening Prayer:

Presider: We begin with the sign of our faith,

All: *† In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

Presider: Let us pray …

God of mercy and love, we come before You in prayer.
Open our eyes to perceive Your presence and action in our lives.
Remove from us those things which might keep us apart from You.
We make our prayer in the name of Your son, Jesus Christ.
Amen.

Scripture:
A reading from the Second Letter of Paul to the Thessalonians: (2 Thessalonians 5:16-18)
Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances;
for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

The Word of the Lord.
All: Thanks be to God.

Silence:

Suggestions for Reflection:

- Video selections
  - *The Power of Prayer* http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WWuH3GGrT8o
  - *Oremus: God Calls Man First* http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SBlbBKBCYnM&list=PLqhxRU_hZjzu1EuqKCWXPT4O7jEp_KNw9
- Excerpts from the Catechism of the Catholic Church
  - Prayer is the raising of one's mind and heart to God.

- According to Scripture, it is the *heart* that prays. If our heart is far from God, the words of prayer are in vain.

- Christian prayer is a covenant relationship between God and man in Christ. It is the action of God and of man, springing forth from both the Holy Spirit and ourselves, wholly directed to the Father, in union with the human will of the Son of God made man.

- There are three ways to pray – vocal prayer, meditation, and contemplation.

- There are five types of prayer – adoration, contrition, intercession, thanksgiving, and praise.

- From *100 Prayers for Making Faith Connections* *(John van Bemmel, Ave Maria Press, 1999)*

  The sign of an intimate relationship is that the two people involved are open with each other. They are not afraid to show their real self to the other; the public self is what strangers and acquaintances see. Intimacy is risky, because it makes them vulnerable, one to the other. This is the kind of relationship God invites us to have. Not that God would harm us in any way, but perhaps make claims on us that might cost us our comfortable spirituality.

  God already knows all about us, our deepest fears and most earnest longings, our sinful thoughts and heroic qualities, our petty, small-minded habits. It takes a lifetime to know ourselves and God already knows us better than we know ourselves. The One who has promised to be with us always desires us to reciprocate, to be with god to the best of our ability, especially in frequent prayer. The prayer that listens, that springs from heart to heart with courage and honesty, the prayer that stretches beyond self-interest, the prayer that praises and adores and thanks God, the prayer that does not consider any subject too meagre for God's attention, the prayer that trusts God to take care of us, the prayer that desires intimacy with God in return.

Silence:

Faith Sharing with Guiding Questions:

1. Complete the *Prayer Style Checklist* at Cool Tools for Catholics. Did this offer any new insights into prayer for you? http://cooltoolsforcatholics.blogspot.ca/2011/12/prayer-style-checklist.html

2. Recall a moment of prayer – personal or in community – that has had a lasting impact on you. Consider the place, time, sounds, smells, and others who may have been present. Has this influenced the way you pray today?

3. What methods of prayer best express your intimacy with God?

4. Which methods of prayer might you like to know more about?

Closing Prayer:

God of glory,
we praise and adore You.
May our earnest prayers reach You
as we appeal for guidance, strength, forgiveness, and understanding
fill us with Your loving grace, and
strengthen our souls to see what is good, true and beautiful.
This we pray, in Jesus' name. *Amen.*

† In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Suggested Songs:
O Lord, Hear My Prayer (Taize; CBW III)
Only This I Want (CBW III)
Jesus, Come To Us (Never Too Young / Spirit and Song)
Thy Word is a Lamp (Never Too Young / Spirit and Song)

~ Adult Faith Reflection Exercise ~
17. Relationships and Healing

Environment Suggestions: *display table with Bible, crucifix, and candle. Invite participants ahead of time to bring photos of significant relationships in their lives. As part of introduction to session, ask participants to introduce group to persons in photos they brought.*

Welcome to this adult faith reflection session on *relationships and healing*. You are invited to enter this brief time away from the regular demands of life and work, to feed the deepest part of who you are. Take what this session has to offer with complete freedom – enter and share at your own comfort level.

(**Optional:** introducing group to persons in photos from significant relationships)

Introduction:
Relationships and healing are at the heart of our faith – a faith born in relationship with Christ and his Church at Baptism. This relationship with the risen Christ heals the wounds of original and personal sin. It embarks us on a lifetime journey of grace that heals and strengthens us inwardly and flows out into our relationships. Perhaps the most important thing we can do along this journey is *yield* to the movement of grace: herein lies the key to healing in the relationships that make up our lives. Let us begin this session in prayer, asking the Holy Spirit's guidance as we consider the topic of *relationships and healing*.

Opening Prayer:
Let us begin our prayer: † *In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen*
O God, we praise You for the healing love that You have lavished on us in Christ. Open our minds and hearts to understand how we might welcome and share Your healing love in the relationships of our lives. We make this prayer to You through this same Jesus Christ, our Lord. *Amen.*

Scripture:
A reading from the letter to the Colossians (Col 3:12-15a)
Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, and patience, forbearing one another and , if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And over all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body.

The Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

Silence:

Reflection:
We are conceived in relationship. We are reborn at Baptism into relationship through Christ, with the Trinity and the Church. We grow up in relationship, work and live in relationship. Our relationships

operate at many levels of intimacy. Some involve little more than impersonal business transactions; some are professional acquaintances. We have different kinds of relationships with personal friends, siblings, parents, intimate soul mates and spouses. We have our relationship with ourselves and with God. How can we possibly understand what it means to yield to grace's healing power in relationships at so many different levels?

Grace takes us where we are. It endeavours to transform us into a more visible reflection of the God in whose loving image we are made. Grace is God's initiative, and invites a response. It seeks to bring order, unity, healing and peace to our lives. It stirs our hearts and moves us to reconcile, to commit our energies to the needs of a suffering neighbour, to defend our boundaries or to speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves. Grace is most often at work in the relationships around us. It can challenge us to let-go of self-importance and commit ourselves to serving others. It can give us the courage us to walk away from relationships that are dangerous for ourselves or those we love. It can move us to say "no" to excessive demands that leave us depleted and unable to serve. It can inspire us to be instruments of God's healing in our schools, families, communities and world. Grace tends toward healing in all relationships.

Silence:

Faith Sharing with Guiding Questions:

1. How is grace calling you to yield and heal in relationship with yourself? For example, perhaps by…
   - Defending my need for rest, self-care, healthy relationships…
   - Letting-go of unhealthy eating and drinking habits…
   - Accepting my limitations and asking for help when I need it…
   - Taking time for recreation and hobbies…
   - Facing compulsive behaviours that imprison me…
   - Accepting myself as a work-in-progress…

2. How is grace calling you to yield and heal in relationship with others? For example, perhaps by…
   - Seeking to let-go of resentments and to forgive…
   - Challenging or walking away from abusive behaviour…
   - Looking to validate the gifts in others…
   - Refusing to cling to status, and leading by serving…
   - Being present to family with quality time and listening…
   - Bringing loved ones and/or students together in reconciliation…
   - Apologizing when I have wronged someone, and making it right…
   - Accepting others as works-in-progress…

3. How is grace calling you to yield and heal in relationship with God? For example, perhaps by…
   - Putting conversion of heart at the centre of my religious observance…
   - Taking time to pray daily for the persons in my life, community and world…
   - Inviting Jesus to help me carry my crosses…
   - Inviting the Holy Spirit to give me the wisdom and courage to live and work well each day…
   - Forgiving God for allowing me to suffer, and asking for healing…
   - Accepting God's acceptance of myself as a work-in-progress…

Music /Video, CD/Live:

Open My Eyes, Lord (Jesse Manibusan)
Healer of My Soul (John-Michael Talbott)
Belonging. The Search for Acceptance (VHS/DVD, Windborne Productions, 2002)
Finding Peace (Book, House of Anansi Press, 2003)

Closing Prayer :

Blessed Trinity, by our Baptism, You have drawn us deeply into Your life of love, and called us to share that love with one another. Help us to yield to Your grace as it continually overflows into our lives. May Your light and love shine ever more brightly in our hearts; may they bring healing to all our relationships and lead all those with whom we live, work and journey to fullness of life in You. We make this prayer to You in the name of Jesus, the Lord. *Amen.*

† *And may Almighty God bless us: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.*

Options for Extending the Conversation... See Appendix 17: Relationships and Healing

Appendix 17: Relationships and Healing

Extending the Conversation

It has been said that if God were to forget about any one of us, even for a moment, we would disappear. The root of our very existence, then, is *relationship.* The unconditional love of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit overflows and sustains us from the moment we are conceived and remains with us forever. As image and likeness of this same God, we find our deepest fulfillment in this same kind of self-giving, unconditional love. We are fashioned *in* relationship and *for* relationship – so that we might help foster love and respect in the relationships that make up our lives.

There is often a rupture of love that needs to be healed in our relationships. Sometimes we ourselves are responsible; sometimes, others carelessly say or do things that open up old wounds or create new ones. We may feel betrayed or violated by another's actions. Often, the hurts escalate from both sides, as each seeks to protect themselves from being hurt again.

Sometimes, we misjudge certain relationships, and fail to understand that they cannot sustain us in a deep and meaningful way, and that they are not meant to. Resentments often enter such relationships because we place unrealistic expectations on them, failing to recognize the limitations of what the relationship can provide. Forgiveness and letting-go of expectations can go a long way in healing the destructive nature of resentments in a relationship.

The kind of love that sustains and heals relationships sometimes emerges in times of heroic trial. Consider the following story:

Jean Vanier, founder of the L'Arche communities, told the following story about persevering in our practice of unconditional love. "I know a man who lives in Paris. His wife has Alzheimer's. He was an important businessman—his life filled with busyness. But he said that when his wife fell sick, 'I just couldn't put her into an institution, so I kept her. I fed her. I bathed her.' I went to Paris to visit them, and this businessman, who had been very busy all his life, said, 'I have changed. I have become more human.' I got a letter from him recently. He said that in the middle of the night, his wife woke him up. She came out of the fog for a moment, and she said, 'Darling, I just want to say thank you for all you're doing for me.' Then she fell back into the fog. He told me, 'I wept and I wept.'"

Sometimes Christ calls us to love people who cannot love us in return. They live in the fog of mental illness, disabilities, poverty, or spiritual blindness. As we serve them, we may only receive fleeting glimpses of gratitude. But, just as Jesus has loved us in the midst of our spiritual confusion, so we continue to love others as they walk through a deep fog.

Source: Medford First Church of the Nazarene
(http://www.medfordfirstnaz.org/sermons/The%20Things%20that%20Really%20Matter%20-%20week%205.htm)

There are times when only the call to unconditional love can open us to the deep healing we need in our relationships. The duty of the moment, demanding what love requires of us as family members or friends can bring us face-to-face with personal brokenness and need for healing. Surrendering our inadequacies and failings to God opens the door to the power of grace that can enter our human frailty and transform us to become more the loving persons we were created to be:

"Love is patient, love is kind, love is not envious or boastful or rude. … It bears all things, believes all things, endures all things." (*1 Cor 13: 4-5a, 7*)

And so our experience of brokenness is also a potential doorway for grace, strength and healing in our relationships. Such experiences can become opportunities for us to more fully rely on God's strength to overcome our fears and inner barriers, to live in love as we are called. Please consider the scripture quotes below for your reflection:

Scripture:

(1 Jn 4: 16b, 18-19)

God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love. We love because he first loved us.

(2 Cor 12: 7b-11)

Therefore, to keep me from being too elated, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me, to keep me from being too elated. Three times I appealed to the Lord about this, that it would leave me, but he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness." So, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities for the sake of Christ; for whenever I am weak, then I am strong.

A Word About Sacraments:

The Eucharist is our great healing sacrament from which all the other sacraments flow. Here, the crucified and risen Jesus who reconciled humanity to God, is rendered present on the altar and offered to the Father with the gathered community's joys, sorrows, needs, praise and thanksgiving. Receiving Christ in Communion wipes away all venial sins, strengthening us against further ruptures in relationships with God and neighbour. (See CCC 1393-94)

The *Sacrament of Penance* (Reconciliation) forgives all sins, and heals the wounds we have caused within the body of Christ. This sacrament is like a healing balm that frees and strengthens us again and again that we might overcome what keeps us from living in loving relationship with God and neighbour.

The *Sacrament of the Sick*, like all the sacraments, is *Christ himself reaching out* – to heal and restore where it is most needed, in the person of the priest who also represents the community's outreach in love for its ailing member.

We who share in Christ's life through Baptism are called to draw deeply at the inexhaustible well of grace, so that His healing love might be present in all our relationships. This is the work of a lifetime. But He is there to continually sustain and strengthen us in many different ways, that we might be agents of His healing in relationships wherever we go.

Silence:

Faith Sharing with Guiding Questions:

1. Name someone who stands out for you as an example of heroic love.

2. Describe an experience where you were able to bring students or family members together and help heal their broken relationship.

3. Do you have a favourite Bible quotation or story that speaks to you about relationships and healing? If so, could you describe it?

Closing Prayer:

Thank you God for the people whose love has brought healing to my life. Help me as I journey to become the healing, loving person You desire for me to be. Keep the eyes of my heart open to Your grace that surrounds and upholds me, for in Your strength, I can do all things. In Jesus' name we pray. *Amen.*

† *And may Almighty God bless us: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.*

~ Adult Faith Reflection Exercise ~

18. Sabbath Rest

Environment Suggestions: a simple table with a single candle.

Introduction:
During the week, we live out our vocation. We pray for our daily bread; we carry our daily cross with Christ. We seek to know and do God's will. With the help of the Spirit, we live for the Lord. On Sunday we bring all this to God as our gift.
Let us take a moment of quiet *(brief pause)* and call upon our loving God.

† In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Opening Prayer:
Let us pray …
God of Creation, though You are in no need of rest yourself, in Your wisdom You blessed us with the seventh day of Creation.
Your gift of the Sabbath is an invitation to enter into a rest during which we are able to restore not only our being, but our being with each other.
Give to us the grace to embrace Sabbath days filled with the beauty of Your Creation and the love of friends and family, that we might be restored in body, mind and spirit.
We make this prayer in the name Jesus, Your Son and our brother, who himself honoured Sabbath rest during his ministry to us. *Amen.*

Scripture Reading:
A reading from the Letter to the Hebrews: (Hebrews 4:4, 9-10)
For in one place it speaks about the seventh day as follows: 'And God rested on the seventh day from all His works.' So then, a Sabbath rest still remains for the people of God; for those who enter God's rest also cease from their labours as God did from his.

The Word of the Lord.
All: Thanks be to God.

Silence:
(Brief silence to consider God's word.)

Reflection:
Excerpts from Pope John Paul II's letter ***Dies Domini***
52. Sharing in the Eucharist is the heart of Sunday, but the duty to keep Sunday holy cannot be reduced to this. In fact, the Lord's Day is lived will if it is marked from beginning to end by grateful and active remembrance of God's saving work. This commits each of Christ's disciples to shape the other moments of the day – those outside the liturgical context: family life, social relationships, moments of relaxation – in such a way that the peace and joy of the Risen Lord will emerge in the ordinary events of life.

67. Through Sunday rest, daily concerns and tasks can find their proper perspective: the material things about which we worry give way to spiritual values; in a moment of encounter and less pressed exchange, we see the true face of the people with whom we live.

Even the beauties of nature – too often marred by the desire to exploit, which turns against man himself – can be rediscovered and enjoyed to the full. As the day on which man is at peace with God, with himself and with others, Sunday becomes a moment when people can look anew upon the wonders of nature, allowing themselves to be caught up in that marvelous and mysterious harmony which, in the words of Saint Ambrose, weds the many elements of the cosmos in a 'bond of communion and peace' by 'an inviolable law of concord and love.'

Silence:

Faith Sharing and Guiding Questions in Small Groups:

1. How do you observe Sabbath rest on Sunday?
2. What might you need to rethink?
3. What challenges interfere with the duty to keep Sunday holy?

Music:

Sacred Silence – Tom Booth, Jenny Pixler, Anthony Kuhler (Never Too Young/ Spirit and Song 2)

Closing Prayer:

Be Still

I searched for God
in my avalanche of
emails and voice mails,
IMs, CDs, TVs and MP3s,
but the Lord was not in the electronics;
I searched for God
in the drone of endless conversations
that permeate the hurried pace of
my daily routine,
but the Lord was not in the clatter;
I could not find the Lord,
though I searched in vain
through all that surrounded me!
And then, I heard a gentle voice,
"Be still."
There, within the silence
of my own inner peace,
I found God;
Be still and know that I am God.
Be still and know that I am.
Be still and know. Be still.

† In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

~ Adult Faith Reflection Exercise ~

19. Sacramentality: Everything is Holy Now

Environment Suggestions: prayer table with Bible, flowers, candle, polished rocks, photographs, or anything that depicts the sacred gifts that surround us.

Introduction:

As Catholics, we marvel at the miracle of Eucharist. We come together in community to share the bread that becomes the body of Jesus Christ. Through this sacrament, we become Christ to the world. This awesome gift of sacrament requires that we see the world differently. We look at the ordinary as extraordinary and we can experience the presence of God all around us in the physical world and in relationship. The sacraments mark our lives, they mark the sacred moments. In our time together today, let us be open to the possibilities of God's presence wherever it is revealed.

Opening Prayer:

† In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

God of mystery, You bring us to a deeper understanding of Your love and creative power in our world in many small and miraculous ways. It is in the little moments, those we take for granted, that Your majesty is revealed. Help us be aware of the sacred gifts that surround us. We make this prayer through Jesus, our Lord. *Amen*

The following video by Peter Meyer brings home this idea that God is present for us everywhere. Our Catholic teachings remind us that to truly appreciate sacrament, we must appreciate God's presence in our world. As you listen to this song, think of your own life and where God is revealed to you.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KiypaURysz4

Scripture:

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John: (John 2:1-12)

The Wedding at Cana

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come." His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." Now standing there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to them, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. He said to them, "Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward." So they took it. When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now." Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him. After this he went down to Capernaum with his mother, his brothers, and his disciples; and they remained there a few days.

The Gospel of the Lord.
All: Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ.

Silence:

Reflection and Group Discussion:

1. Jesus takes a special and yet ordinary life moment, a wedding, and blesses it with his first miracle. What impression of Jesus does this account give you? What impacts you the most from the gospel event? Share these thoughts with those around you.

2. Read the following article by Thomas Groome on the sacraments.
   Reflecting on your own faith formation, what have the sacraments meant for your growth in faith?

The Sacraments—and More from 'Everyday Catholic' June 2006

By Thomas H. Groome

My mother-in-law had a lovely habit, upon seeing something of beauty, of saying to someone in her company: "I give you that." The first time it happened to me we were looking out over a harbour at sunset. When she said, "I give you that, Tom," I really felt it was all mine, and I experienced it as total gift. Maryanne, God rest her soul, had a "sacramental consciousness." She recognized "the more" in the everyday.

We Catholics tend to associate *sacrament* with the seven we celebrate as communities of faith. But we should also be conscious of the continuity between the great liturgical sacraments and the sacramentality of life.

The Catholic principle of sacramentality is that our God is ever present, and that we respond through the ordinary and every day. As we come "to see God in all things" (Ignatius of Loyola) and experience God's grace in the daily, we can more readily believe that the seven sacraments "confer the grace that they signify". (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #1127).

In the early centuries, Christians celebrated many different sacred rituals as having sacramental power. Guided by the Holy Spirit, the Church gradually established the seven—Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Reconciliation, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders and Matrimony—as our vital and valid sacraments. Because each one reflects a central value in Jesus' ministry, we can say that they were all instituted by Jesus.

God assures that each sacrament confers its general and particular grace through the saving work of Christ, now working through the Church by the power of the Holy Spirit. From God's side, the sacraments are effective *ex opere operato*, literally by the Church's very act of celebrating them. On the other hand, the sacraments are acts of faith, not of magic. They do not force their graces upon us; they prompt but also demand our cooperation and lived response.

http://www.americancatholic.org/Newsletters/EDC/ag0606.aspe.

Action and Reflection:

On a slip of paper, write 5 words that describe the influence of the gift of sacramentality in your life.

Where do you find the sacred presence of God?

In the box below, sketch your own symbol of sacrament for you.

Closing Prayer:

Loving and eternal God, thank you for Your presence in our lives. We are fed by the strength and grace that Your love provides. Keep us ever mindful of Your presence and the sacred moments through which we are graced. We make this prayer through Christ our Lord. *Amen*

† In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

~ Adult Faith Reflection Exercise ~

20. Shalom: Living in Right Relationship

Environment Suggestions: display table, crucifix, Bible, a white dove, other symbols of peace...

Introduction:

The Hebrew word "shalom" conveys what God planned for creation. Shalom means that people are in a good relationship with God, with themselves and their bodies, with their neighbours (all other people), and with the earth. For people to be in shalom means that their life is balanced and that they relate to the whole of what surrounds them with a peaceful spirit.

To ***have*** shalom means to have a life that is put together, full, rich, and abundant as God intended it. To ***bring*** shalom means to bring healing and wholeness to lives, to people, to the world. To bring shalom would mean deliberately looking for the shattered, the hungry, the lost, the down-trodden, and to act in such a way as to change the state...to feed, to liberate, to raise up.

Contemporary theologians identify four ways to experience Shalom: Shalom at the level of self, Shalom at the level of neighbor, Shalom at the level of the environment, and Shalom at the level of God.

Opening Prayer:

† In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.
Lord Jesus, following the mystery of Your resurrection, You said to your disciples, "Shalom - Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you." Thank you for the gift of peace. Help us to work for peace in our daily lives, and help us to find peace by giving ourselves completely to You. Show us how to be people of peace. We pray in the name of Jesus, the Lord. *Amen.*

Scripture:

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John:
Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words; and the word that you hear is not mine, but is from the Father who sent me. 'I have said these things to you while I am still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you.
Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid. You heard me say to you, "I am going away, and I am coming to you." If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I. And now I have told you this before it occurs, so that when it does occur, you may believe. I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no power over me; but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father. Rise, let us be on our way.

The Gospel of the Lord.
All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Silence:
Meditate silently on the Word which has just been proclaimed.

Reflection:
Pray and reflect upon the Peace Prayer of Saint Francis. Think about what Francis is asking us to do in our own lives, in our families, in our workplaces, in our communities, in our world...

Peace Prayer of Saint Francis
† In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.
Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace,
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
Where there is sadness, joy.
O Divine Master,
grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled, as to console;
to be understood, as to understand;
to be loved, as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive.
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to Eternal Life.
Amen.

Music:
Some great Peace-themed songs can be found on YouTube, including:
Prince of Peace: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uV-KSIuLJH4
Perfect Peace: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7UpfatdyFtY

Closing Prayer:
God of Shalom, may each of us be instruments of Your peace. Help us be aware of the many opportunities we have to build Shalom relationships by promoting peace and justice. May we recognize that the simplest of actions can make a difference in the lives of those around us. May we never underestimate the power of our actions. Help us know how best to have and bring Shalom. We ask this through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. *Amen.*

† In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

~Adult Faith Reflection Exercise ~

21. The Eucharist

Environment Suggestions: display table, pictures of the Last Supper, a loaf of bread.

Introduction:

The Catholic Church uses the term Eucharist in two ways: to describe the celebration of the Mass and to define the sacrament of the Eucharist, also called Holy Communion. Holy Communion is a ritual enactment of the Last Supper, during which Christ promised his ongoing presence to his disciples. During their last meal together, he blessed bread and wine, saying, "This is my body. This is my blood. Do this in memory of me." The priest repeats these same exact words as he consecrates the bread and wine. The Eucharist is the central ritual of the Church. Catholics believe that the priest changes the bread and wine into the actual body and blood of Christ.

Opening Prayer:

† In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.
Loving God, we thank You for the gift of the Eucharist in which Your Son, Jesus, shares with us the bread of life. Help us to have a deeper appreciation for the meaning of this sacrament and a deeper sensitivity to the presence of the risen Christ among us. We pray in the name of Jesus the Lord. *Amen.*

Scripture:

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew: (Matthew 26:17 – 30)

On the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying, 'Where do you want us to make the preparations for you to eat the Passover?' He said, 'Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him, "The Teacher says, My time is near; I will keep the Passover at your house with my disciples." '
So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them, and they prepared the Passover meal.
When it was evening, He took his place with the twelve; and while they were eating, He said, 'Truly I tell you, one of you will betray Me.' And they became greatly distressed and began to say to Him one after another, 'Surely not I, Lord?' He answered, 'The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with Me will betray Me. The Son of Man goes as it is written of Him, but woe to that one by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that one not to have been born.' Judas, who betrayed Him, said, 'Surely not I, Rabbi?' He replied, 'You have said so.'
While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body.' Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks He gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you; for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will never again drink of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.'
When they had sung the hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

The Gospel of the Lord.
All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Silence:

Meditate silently on the Word which has just been proclaimed.

Reflection:

Referring to the Eucharist, St. Augustine said: *"If then You are the body of Christ and His members, it is Your sacrament that reposes on the altar of the Lord… Be what you see and receive what you are. …There You are on the table, and there You are in the chalice."*

1. What does this mean to you? What implications does it have for your daily life?

2. When we celebrate the Eucharist attentively, we unite ourselves with Christ present in his act of total self-giving. What implications does this have for your daily life?

Faith Sharing and Guiding Questions:

1. Recall the story of a meal—Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter, a family celebration or event—that was significant for you. What did you celebrate? How did you celebrate? What happened? Why was it important?

Music:

Some great Eucharist-themed songs include:
One Bread, One Body (John Michael Talbot) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R6xIdDYiA9A
Table of Plenty (Dan Schutte) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kLcVC3CoOVA
I am the Bread of Life (John Michael Talbot) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W4CapSBM8UA
Remembrance (Matt Redman) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bdx9AeiPTGk
Communion (Third Day) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y8iwFiUaQ1M

Closing Prayer:

Prayer of St. Thomas Aquinas After Communion
I thank You, Lord, Almighty Father, Everlasting God, for having been pleased, through no merit of mine, but of Your great mercy alone, to feed me, a sinner, and Your unworthy servant, with the precious Body and Blood of Your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. I pray that this Holy Communion may not be for my judgment and condemnation, but for my pardon and salvation. Let this Holy Communion be to me an armour of faith and a shield of good will, a cleansing of all vices, and a rooting out of all evil desires. May it increase love and patience, humility and obedience, and all virtues. May it be a firm defence against the evil designs of all my visible and invisible enemies, a prefect quieting of all the desires of soul and body. May this Holy Communion bring about a perfect union with You, the one true God, and at last enable me to reach eternal bliss when You will call me. I pray that You bring me, a sinner, to the indescribable Feast where You, with Your Son and the Holy Spirit, are to Your saints true light, full blessedness, everlasting joy, and perfect happiness. Through the same Christ our Lord.
Amen.

† In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Extension Activities:

1. Research other prayers associated with the Eucharist at www.ourcatholicprayers.com in order to learn their origins and authors.

2. Examine how the Last Supper is depicted in visual art forms.

~ Adult Faith Reflection Exercise ~

22. The Holy Trinity

Environment Suggestions: display table, crucifix, shamrock/clover and/or other Trinity imagery.

Introduction:
The doctrine of the Trinity recognizes the God in one God, co-existing in three distinct Persons of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In our material existence the concept that God is One God, yet He exists as three distinct persons is foreign to us. However, the doctrine of the Godhead (Trinity) is without question revealed in God's word. The biblical term is "Godhead" and it is used three times in Scripture: *Act 17:29; Romans 1:20; Colossians 2:9*. The word "Trinity" is not found in Scripture, which is a theological word Christians use to refer to the Godhead.

Opening Prayer:
† In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.
Lord Jesus, You reminded us that You and the Father are one, that You came to do His will, and that in seeing You we would see Your Father. Your unity with Him, in the unity of the Blessed Trinity, gave us the perfect example of being one with each other. Grant us the will, the strength and determination also to be one with each other and to rejoice in our unity of heart and mind. We ask this in Jesus' name. *Amen.*

Scripture:
A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew: (Matthew 28: 16 – 20)

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. When they saw Him, they worshipped Him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'

The Gospel of the Lord.
All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Silence:
Meditate silently on the Word which has just been proclaimed.

Music:
CBW 3, # 466 – *Father, Lord of Earth and Heaven*
CBW 3, # 422 – *Sing We Praises to the Father*

Closing Prayer:

Daily Prayer to the Most Holy Trinity

O most holy Trinity, Almighty God, we adore You, who give life and vigour to every creature and who shed light eternal where there is darkness. We offer You our hearts, our souls, and our whole being, today and on the days to come, that we may offer perfect praise and love to Your glorious Name.

O Father almighty, we thank You wholeheartedly for all the blessings and graces You have so generously given us then and now.

O merciful Christ Jesus, wash away our sins with Your most precious blood. Feel the beating of our hearts and make them like Your own. Oh, dear Jesus, wipe away our tears and pardon us for our sinfulness. Be with us, O Lord, until our dying day that we may be worthy of Your mercy and forgiveness.

O Holy Spirit, our guide and inspiration, lead us to the right path. And if, on our way, we encounter difficulties and trials, do not allow us to fall or lose hope. Grant us the graces we need daily that we may also share our blessings with our fellowmen. And when the time comes, O Holy Spirit, lead us to the place that is secure, full of joy and eternal peace. *Amen.*

† In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Closing Ritual:

All are invited to make the sign of the cross on their neighbour's forehead or hands.

Extension Activities:

Pray and reflect upon any or all of the following:

Prayer to the Holy Trinity:

Glory be to the Father, who by His almighty power and
love created me, making me in the image and likeness of God.
Glory be to the Son, who by His Precious Blood delivered
me from hell, and opened for me the gates of heaven.
Glory be to the Holy Spirit, who has sanctified me in the sacrament of Baptism,
and continues to sanctify me by the graces I receive daily from His bounty.
Glory be to the Three adorable Persons of the Holy Trinity, now and forever.
Amen.

Prayer to the Holy Trinity:

O Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, I adore Thee profoundly. I offer Thee the most precious Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ present in all the tabernacles of the world, in reparation for the outrages, sacrileges and indifferences by which He is offended. By the infinite merits of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary I beg the conversion of poor sinners.

Glory Be:

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. *Amen.*

Apostles' Creed:

I believe in God, the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried; he descended into hell; on the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty; from there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. *Amen.*

Act of Faith:

O my God, I firmly believe that You are one God in three divine Persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. I believe that Your divine Son became man and died for our sins, and that He will come again to judge the living and the dead. I believe these and all the truths which the holy Catholic Church teaches because You have revealed them, who can neither deceive nor be deceived.

~ Adult Faith Reflection Exercise ~

23. The Vocation of Catholic Education

Environment Suggestions: display table, crucifix, Bible, books, school supplies.

Introduction:
"As Catholic Educators, we have our mission. Education is a life-long experience leading us forth from where we are, to where God would have us be, in the example of Jesus. We ask God to help us to deepen our knowledge and understanding, our awareness and our sensitivity, our discipleship and our serving others in God's name."

(from "Catholic School Communities: We Have Our Mission", Gifts of Love, York CDSB)

Opening Prayer:
† In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Dear God, You have called us to the vocation of Catholic Education. When pressures become burdensome, help us never lose sight of our mission. May Your love provide us with the comfort and confidence we need to meet all life's challenges. May our own faith life be an inspiration to all those with whom we live and work. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Scripture:
A reading from the holy Gospel according to John: (John 13: 12 – 17)

After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, 'Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.'

The Gospel of the Lord.
All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Silence:
Meditate silently on the Word which has just been proclaimed.

Reflection:
"God has created me to do Him some definite service; He has committed some work to me, which He has not committed to another. I have my mission... I am a link in the chain, a bond of connections between persons. God has not created me for naught. I shall do good, I shall do my sacred work. I shall be an angel of peace, a preacher of truth in my own place while not intending it – if I do but keep his Commandments.

Therefore I will trust God, whatever, wherever I am, I can never be thrown away..."

(Verses on Various Occasions by John Henry Cardinal Newman, Longmans, Grenn and Co., London, 1903)

Silence:

Faith Sharing:

"Teachers and educators fulfill a specific Christian vocation and share an equally specific participation in the mission of the Church, to the extent that it depends chiefly on them whether the Catholic School achieves its purpose." *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the New Millenium, 1997, p.19.*
Discuss with a partner what drew you to the vocation of Catholic education.

Closing Prayer:

We Are Carriers of the Dream

As educator, we are carriers of Jesus' dream that all may be one loved and accepted as persons of immeasurable value. Being is the measure of one's worth.

All: **We are carriers of the dream**

We are called to be educators of the Gospel identifying with Christ in the many passages of life committed to conversion in our effort to become a community of disciples who live simply, love tenderly, act justly.

All: **We are carriers of the dream**

We are called to be educators of the Church, faithful to who we are, our identify and graced history choosing to live the present with an awareness of the past and an openness to the future, committed to an ongoing dialogue and collaboration.

All: **We are carriers of the dream**

As educators, we are entrusted with the responsibility and privilege; of carrying a new vision for humanity as collaborators, as stewards of the earth and its resources, as life givers, as co-creators, as mutual partners in expressing the depth and wonder, of the feminine and masculine dimensions of reality, as peacemakers living in harmony with one another, the earth, the universe.

All: **We are carriers of the dream.** (www.cpco.on.ca)

† In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Extension Activities:

1. Read and reflect upon the CCSTA resource "The Special Vocation of Teachers in Catholic Schools".

2. Read and reflect upon Section 1.3 (Evangelization, Culture and the Catholic School) of the Ontario Catholic Elementary Curriculum Policy Document Grades 1 – 8, Religious Education.

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