

NAFSCC E-Newsletter

North American Forum on Small Christian Communities

Volume 1, Issue 3

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Happy New Year!

The NAFSCC E-Newsletters sent bi-monthly to members

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1. News and Ideas

The Octave of Prayer for Christian Unity

Christ, the one Foundation of the Church (1 Cor 3:1-23)

The dates of the **Week of Prayer** are normally from **January 18 to 25** around the world. These dates are chosen because they represent the feasts of two saints significant to our understanding of Christian unity. **January 18** is the feast of the **chair of St. Peter**. **January 25** is the feast of the **conversion of St. Paul**. Peter and Paul are understood as representing two competing experiences of Christianity which are reconciled in the gathering at Jerusalem. In a similar way it is understood that Christianity today experiences a multitude of differing expressions of Christianity which are nevertheless ultimately reconcilable. During the Week of Prayer, all Christians are encouraged to pray for unity and encouraged to share in prayer services on an ecumenical basis.

Resources for **THE WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY** and throughout the year 2005 can be found from the **PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN UNITY** www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/weeks-prayer-doc/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_20040701_week-prayer-2005_en.html

Family Faith Communities

In *Family Faith Communities* author Amy Sluss provides both vision and practical steps for starting family-based small Christian communities. Each of the 10 gatherings this book provides mixes the basic ingredients of prayer, faith sharing, activities, and social time. Cost: \$12.50. Contact Good Ground Press in St. Paul, MN. Phone 1-800-232-5533 | alternate phone 651-690-7010 | fax 651-690-7039 | phone hours: M-F 8:30am - 4:30pm CST | e-mail to: sales@goodgroundpress.com

Includes

- How to start family faith communities
- 10 step-by-step gatherings
- 10 Kitchen Table Pages for family at-home preparation before each gathering.

Amy has developed these gatherings with the feedback and support of 100 participating families from the Catholic Community of Pleasanton, California, where she is Coordinator of Intergenerational Faith Communities. Amy and her husband Gene have three children, Kelsey, Lisa, and Noah.

Contents:

- Introduction
- Gathering 1: Our Family Faith Community
- Gathering 2: We Are Part of the Body of Christ
- Gathering 3: Prayer
- Gathering 4: Family Prayer
- Gathering 5: Gratitude, Thanksgiving
- Gathering 6: Seasons of Life, Seasons of Faith
- Gathering 7: Sacraments
- Gathering 8: The Bible - God's Story, Jesus' Story, and Ours
- Gathering 9: Finding Justice, Caring for Others
- Gathering 10: Who Are We Becoming?

Lectionary Storybook

Dr. Robert Bela Wilhelm has been editing the Lectionary Storybook for ten years, and it has been well received. The weekly stories teach a theme from Sunday Scriptures through (1) stories from the people of the world -- from Latin America to Europe to Africa to Asia -- or (2) from the lives of the saints in Catholic tradition. There are 156 stories for the Liturgical Years A, B, and C.

A complimentary three month subscription to the Lectionary Storybook is available for review.

Send your request with your (1) a name, (2) a postal address and (3) an email address.

For more information on the publication, please visit the website listed:

<http://www.lectionarystorybook.com>

Guide d'animation Parole et vie

for a Small Faith Sharing Group

Course of Lent 2005



The editorial team informs you that the *Guide d'animation Parole et vie* will be on sale starting January 12, 2005 for the people who wish to take part of the course of the Lent 2005. This guide is prepared at the Paroisse Sainte-Trinité, diocese of Rouyn-Noranda, Québec. It presents a course of seven meetings for the French speaking small faith sharing groups. Each member of a group gets the guide which supports the animation and the personal reflection.

A small faith sharing group, formed from three to ten people, allows to meet at the house to look further into its experiments of life in the light of the Sunday Gospel. The greeting of others, the common prayer, the faith sharing, the preparation for Easter and the actions in the daily life are activities suggested by the *Guide d'animation Parole et vie*.

One can get the *Guide d'animation Parole et vie* at the cost of 3\$/unit near:

Hélène Girard

Librairie diocésaine of Rouyn-Noranda

515, avenue Cuddihy

Rouyn-Noranda (Québec) J9X 4C5

Tel: (819) 764-4660

Fax: (819) 764-3972

diocese.rouyn-noranda@cablevision.qc.ca

Good course of Lent!
Pierre Goudreault, priest
Responsible for the Pastoral Team
Paroisse Sainte-Trinité, diocèse de Rouyn-Noranda

Guide d'animation Parole et vie

pour les petits groupes de partage de foi
parcours carême 2005



L'équipe de rédaction vous informe que le *Guide d'animation Parole et vie* sera en vente dès le 12 janvier 2005 pour les personnes qui désirent vivre le parcours du carême 2005. Ce guide est préparé à la Paroisse Sainte-Trinité, diocèse de Rouyn-Noranda, Québec. Il présente un parcours de sept rencontres pour les petits groupes de partage de foi. Chaque membre d'un groupe se procure le guide qui soutient l'animation et la réflexion personnelle.

Un petit groupe de partage de foi, formé de trois à dix personnes, permet de se réunir à la maison pour approfondir ses expériences de vie à la lumière de l'évangile du dimanche. L'accueil des autres, la prière commune, le partage de foi, la préparation à la fête de Pâques et les actions dans le quotidien sont des activités proposées par le *Guide d'animation Parole et vie*.

On peut se procurer le *Guide d'animation Parole et vie* au coût de 3\$/unité auprès de :
Hélène Girard
Librairie diocésaine de Rouyn-Noranda
515, avenue Cuddihy
Rouyn-Noranda (Québec) J9X 4C5
Téléphone : (819) 764-4660
Télécopieur : (819) 764-3972
Courriel :
diocese.rouyn-noranda@cablevision.qc.ca

Bon parcours de carême!
Pierre Goudreault, prêtre
Responsable de l'Équipe pastorale
Paroisse Sainte-Trinité, diocèse de Rouyn-Noranda

We welcome comments and items for inclusion in future E-Newsletters. Please submit items to be considered for inclusion or responses to post questions to: DBQCFL/AF@arch.pvt.k12.ia.us.

2. Upcoming Events

NCCL Convention April 10-14, 2005 at Galt House, Louisville, Kentucky

NAPRC (National Alliance of Parishes Restructuring into Communities) Conference July 28-31, 2005, St. Charles Borromeo Parish, Cinnaminson, New Jersey. Keynote speaker: Ronald Rolheiser OMI, with small group workshops.

Buena Vista Convocation August 4-7, 2005, University of St. Thomas, St. Paul, Minnesota
Theme: *Creating Communities of Hope: Making a Difference in Our World*. Keynote speakers: Mike Cowan, Felicia Wolf, Jose Marins, followed by small group workshops and workshops in Spanish.

National Pastoral Life Center Annual Parish Convention
Spirituality and the Parish, Keynote: Ron Rolheiser, OMI Conference
November 17-19, 2005, Radisson Hotel, Ft. Worth, Texas

NAICE (North American Institute for Catholic Evangelization) Conference July 12-15, 2006, Xavier University, Cincinnati, Ohio

3. Share Your Views

Transformative Journey: SCCs as a Way to Spiritual Growth

A way to grow spiritually is through fostering healthy relationships with self, others, the world and God. In his workshop presentation at the Diocese of Las Cruces' Diocesan Assembly, title, *Transformative Journey: SCCs as a Way to Spiritual Growth*, Dr. Dan Luby, the director of the Division of Christian Formation for the Diocese of Fort Worth, emphasized the importance of relationships among the members of SCCs as a means to grow spiritually.

The relationship between the members of an SCC as, with any other type of relationship, moves through different phases. Most probably there are times when our feeling for the member/members of our groups seems not to be as accepting and loving as it initially was. The honeymoon phase has ended and we start seeing the person as she/he really is and not as we wish they were. Then, it is time to reflect and consider accepting them as they are. When we decide to do this, we can say that real love for them has come to our heart and then, the possibilities of bonding and intimacy present themselves.

Here Dr. Luby explains in a more specific and scientific way the different stages encountered in any relationship:

A common pattern describes the arc of spiritual growth, both for individuals, and, by extension, communities.

- **Phase 1:** Attraction/illusion – the honeymoon phase, where the attractive features of the other (the individual, the group, the Church, God) crowd out any challenges, which may reside in the changes the relationship demands. Those attractive traits are really there, but we operate under the illusion that there is no cost attached to the changes a relationship of intimacy calls forth. When the illusion can no longer be sustained and the truths we don't want to face bleed through our idealized image, we enter phase 2.
- **Phase 2:** Disillusion/crisis – often experienced as a sense of disappointment or even betrayal. The illusion falls away and the challenges of conversion take center stage. Typically, this invites a crisis, a moment of decision, in which we have either to find another illusion, blame it on the other, or embrace denial. Eventually, if we stick with it, we will enter into phase 3.
- **Phase 3:** Reality/love – this is the phase in relationship where we have to give up trying to make the other into whom we want them to be, and face the truth of who they really are. That opens the door to the possibility of more deeply embracing the other on their own terms, and invites greater trust and generosity.

This pattern is a kind of spiral, moving partners into deeper and deeper communion.

Dr. Luby continued his exploration of SCCs stating the following:

Five qualities/virtues for conversion, which SCCs can help their members to cultivate:

- **Presence** – really listening to others, being focused on their stories and needs rather than appearing to listen while formulating our next response.

- **Self-acceptance** – SCCs help members to come to terms with our true selves, slowly and imperfectly perhaps, but transforming all the same. Through the listening presence of others, we are drawn to tell our own stories in new, deeper ways that reveal us to ourselves. Through the acceptance of others – with our flaws as well as our strengths – we learn to be ourselves and to treat ourselves with patience, honesty, and generosity.
- **Discipline** – the asceticism of SCCs includes a discipline of time devoted to reflection and study; of attending to the needs and stories of others; of the trust-building exercise of confidentiality; of working through the challenges of disillusionment and difference to find the common ground which binds us together.
- **Mission** – SCCs need to have an outward dimension if they are to be a path for spiritual growth, and the group experience helps members take the risks necessary for outreach and humble service. SCCs offer opportunities for “foot washing,” both within the community and outside.
- **Connection** – SCCs help put the Church into a “human scale” and so assist members in feeling connected to the Church. Corporately, SCCs help members understand scripture more richly, confront our illusions more bravely, and structure our time more fruitfully.”

Dr. Dan Luby holds a doctorate in theology from the Angelicum in Rome and has been an adjunct faculty member of the University of Dallas since 1980. Past chair of the National Advisory Committee on Adult Religious Education for the USCCB, he is a regular contributor to the “Faith Alive” feature distributed by Catholic News Service.

4. Resources

We hope you enjoyed reading this.
 For additions, comments and address changes, to the
 NAFSCC E-Newsletter
 please email Marci Blum OSF at DBQCFL/AF@arch.pvt.k12.ia.us