



# Celebrating God's Enduring Presence

A Professional Development  
Steering Committee Project

HOUSAO ENGLISH  
Catholic  
Teachers  
ASSOCIATION



# Celebrating

## God's Enduring Presence in the Seasons of Our Lives

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# A Retreat Resource for Nurturing Catholic School Communities

OECTA has traditionally supported the work of Catholic teachers by nurturing their faith and that of their school communities. This retreat manual, *Celebrating God's Enduring Presence in the Seasons of Our Lives*, continues OECTA's tradition that started with an earlier retreat resource, *Becoming Communities of Faith*.

*Celebrating God's Enduring Presence in the Seasons of Our Lives* provides a theological framework for facilitating staff retreats. It offers a practical approach for planning and facilitating staff retreats; it does not assume previous expertise and experience in retreat facilitation. The manual includes background information and practical sessions that help you plan and conduct meaningful staff retreats. Facilitator(s) are free to copy all overviews, ice breakers, handouts, and prayer services.

This manual is intended to help staff deepen their spiritual connection and become enlivened witnesses of faith. We acknowledge the human limitations of our work and trust in God's abiding grace in keeping minds open and hearts free.

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# The Context for Staff Retreats

*For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven.*

(Ecclesiastes 3:1)

Staff in Catholic schools play an important role in nurturing the faith life of students. It is essential, therefore, that we nurture our own faith because we cannot give to others what we do not have ourselves. We need to “come to the well” to be spiritually nourished. Staff retreats are one way this nourishment can be provided.

Retreats allow people the opportunity to get in touch with themselves, with one another, and with God. This retreat manual, *Celebrating God’s Enduring Presence in the Seasons of Our Lives*, connects the Liturgical year and God’s active movement in and throughout our journey.

Part of planning and facilitating a meaningful retreat is being aware of and sensitive to the various needs within one’s particular Catholic school community.

Consider the following when planning an authentic retreat:

- Be aware of the size and composition of staff
- Respect the different life experiences of staff members
- Honour the variety of faith traditions that may exist among your staff
- Be sensitive to the comfort level and readiness of each participant
- Allow for the expression of individual interpersonal styles
- Recognize tensions that might exist among staff
- Acknowledge the joys (for example, births, weddings) and sorrows (for example, death of a staff member or student, loss of job security) that may exist within the school community.

You may also find the Checklist for Organizing the Retreat Session (page 7) helpful in planning your retreats.

## Creating a Conductive Atmosphere

Explore various retreat locations in your local community and their costs. It is ideal to have staff retreats take place off-site, but financial restrictions may not allow you to do this. There are various ways that you can create an appropriate retreat atmosphere within the school setting.

We cannot overemphasize the impact the choice of facility and setting has on the effectiveness of the retreat.

Wherever possible, the retreat location should include the following:

- Outdoor grounds for walking
- A large area for full group gatherings
- Breakout rooms for small group dialogue and sharing
- Appropriate washroom and dining facilities
- A warm and quiet atmosphere – with subdued lighting if possible
- Comfortable chairs
- Tables for writing
- Capability for audio-visual use
- A quiet area for individual and/or communal prayer, for example, a chapel or other sacred space.

## The Liturgical Year, the Seasons of Our Lives

The eight retreats in this manual are centred on the Liturgical year – the seasons of our lives.

### **Retreat 1 – New Beginnings: God Within and Around Us**

This retreat is ideal for the beginning of the school year. It encourages self-reflection and communal reflection. Where are we as individuals and as a community? The lead writer is David Smibert.

### **Retreat 2 – Thanksgiving: With Grateful Hearts**

This retreat is ideal for Thanksgiving. It calls us to share our many blessings and gifts with others. The lead writer is David Smibert.

### **Retreat 3 – Creation: God in All Seasons**

This retreat could be used anytime in the school year, but it would be particularly appropriate during Earth Week. It encourages us to be stewards of creation. The lead writer is Joan Grundy.

### **Retreat 4 – Advent: Becoming Light in the Darkness**

This retreat focuses on the ways that we can truly be light for one another and for our world, and in this way truly incarnate Emmanuel, God with us. The lead writer is Robert McGarrigle.



### **Retreat 5 – Lent: Called from the Ashes**

This retreat helps staff identify ways that, as individuals and as a school community, they need to grow and change in order to more fully reflect Christ for others. The lead writer is Robert McGarrigle.

### **Retreat 6 – Healing: Letting Go and Letting God**

This retreat addresses the day-to-day stress experienced by staff and asks them to “come to the well” for rest and renewal. It could be particularly useful for a school community that has experienced significant stress, such as the death of a staff member or a student. The lead writer is Joan Grundy.

### **Retreat 7 – Easter: Called to be Messengers of Hope**

This retreat is built around the theme of hope and emphasizes the call to discipleship. The lead writer is Robert Ford.

### **Retreat 8 – Spirit of Transformation: Renewing Ourselves and Our World**

This retreat has a Pentecost theme that focuses on the ways that we are called to keep the Spirit alive in our lives and in our world. The lead writer is Robert Ford.

## **Guidelines for Preparing a Liturgy of the Word**

The following are key questions to be considered when preparing a Liturgy of the Word.

### **Theme**

- Where in the Liturgical Year does your prayer service fall? This is important to consider when looking at a theme.
- Who will be gathering to celebrate the Liturgy, and what are the needs of the community at this time?

### **Atmosphere**

- Where will you celebrate the Liturgy?
- If you are not gathering in a chapel or other established sacred space area, what concrete things will you do to help develop a prayerful atmosphere?
- What are a few simple, focused symbols that might enhance the theme and heighten the prayer experience?

### **Full Participation**

- How will you invite everyone to be active participants in the Liturgy?
- Are there any gestures or rituals that you need to inform the community of before the Liturgy so that everyone feels comfortable and there are no surprises?

### **Time Frame**

- Where will you place the Liturgy in the context of the overall retreat?
- How much time have you scheduled for the Liturgical celebration?

### **Elements for Inclusion in a Liturgy of the Word**

- A method of gathering the community to begin prayer
- Choice of Scripture reading(s) built on the theme of your retreat. It is preferable to use the readings of the day from the Liturgical calendar.
- Songs
- Gestures, movement, ritual to support the theme
- Prayers of the Faithful
- Time for silence and/or personal reflection.

### **Retreat Follow-Up Ideas**

The following are some ideas that you may want to consider as follow-up for your retreats:

- Have a post-retreat meeting at which you record concrete suggestions made by planning team members and staff on the Retreat Feedback Sheet (page 9) and plan the direction for future retreats.
- Send thank you letters or cards to guest facilitators and other volunteers.
- Send guest facilitators or speakers a few retreat pictures as a way of showing gratitude for their contribution to the retreat.
- Include a brief article about the staff retreat in your school newsletter.
- Ask a staff member to give a brief presentation at a school council meeting about the staff retreat experience.
- Display pictures of the retreat, symbols, etc., in the staff room to promote continuity of the retreat experience.
- Compile a staff retreat resource where resources and planning information can be stored for future retreats.
- Establish follow-up times for staff to continue to gather to pray and reflect together. For example, you could offer a twilight retreat – dinner and evening – option for staff who are interested. Ensure that individual freedom of choice is respected.
- Develop follow-up activities built on the theme of the retreat. For example, if the retreat has a social justice focus, staff and students might organize a school-wide social justice activity.

## Resources

### Print Resources

- Batchelor, Mary. *Doubleday Prayer Collection*. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
- Brussat, Frederic, and Mary Ann Brussat. *Spiritual Literacy: Reading the Sacred in Everyday Life*. New York: Scribner, 1996.
- Cirocco, Grace. *Take the Step: The Bridge Will Be There*. Toronto: Harper Collins, 2004.
- Dreamer, Oriah Mountain. *The Invitation*. New York: Harper Collins, 1999.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Dance*. New York: Harper Collins, 2001.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Call*. New York: Harper Collins, 2003.
- Farry, Ginger. *A Teacher's Prayerbook: To Know and Love Your Students*. New London, CT: Twenty-Third Publications Inc, 1997.
- Frost, Nina H., et al. *Soul Mapping: An Imaginative Way to Self-Discovery*. New York: Marlowe and Company, 2000.
- Gilmartin, Richard. *Pursuing Wellness, Finding Spirituality*. New London, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1996.
- Harrington, Donald, and Julie Kavanagh. *Prayer for Parish Groups*. Dublin: Columba Press, 2000.
- Kirvan, John. *Silent Hope: Living with the Mystery of God*. Indiana: Quest Associates, 2001.
- Levin, Michael. *Meditation: Path to the Deepest Self*. New York: DK Publishing, 2002.
- Levoy, Gregg. *Callings: Finding and Following an Authentic Life*. New York: Three Rivers Press, 1997.
- McGlaun, Steven, editor. *The Covenant Retreat: A Discernment Experience for High School Seniors*. Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 2005.
- Ontario Conference of Catholic Bishops. "Celebrating an Education for Justice and Peace: A Letter to the Catholic High School Students of Ontario," 1996.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Family Life Education for Secondary Students: A Message to the Catholic Education Community," 1996.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "For the Good of All," 1991.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Fulfilling the Promise: The Challenge of Leadership," 1993.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "This Moment of Promise," 1989.
- Pope John Paul II. *Reflections on Humanae Vitae: Conjugal Morality and Spirituality*. Boston: Daughters of St. Paul, 1984.
- Rupp, Joyce. *The Cosmic Dance: An Invitation to Experience our Oneness*. New York: Orbis Books. 2002.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Cup of Life: A Guide for Spiritual Growth*. Indiana: Ave Maria Press, 1997.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Fresh Bread and Other Gifts of Spiritual Nourishment*. Indiana: Ave Maria Press, 1985.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *May I Have This Dance?* Indiana: Ave Maria Press, 1992.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Out of the Ordinary: Prayers, Poems and Reflections for Every Season*. Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2000.

\_\_\_\_\_ *Prayers to Sophia*. Philadelphia: Innisfree Press. 2000.

\_\_\_\_\_ *Your Sorrow Is My Sorrow: Hope and Strength in Times of Suffering*. New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1999.

Rupp, Joyce and Macrina Wiederkehr. *The Circle of Life*. Notre Dame, IN: Sorin Books, 2005.

Tenny-Brittian, William. *Prayers for People Who Can't Sit Still*. St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2005.

Van Bommel, John. *100 Prayers for Making Faith Connections*. Allen, TX: Thomas More Publishing, 1999.

Vanier, Jean. *Made for Happiness*. Toronto: House of Anansi Press Limited, 2001.

### **Compact Discs**

Anderson, David. Conductor. "In the Spirit of Taize." Chicago: GIA Publishing. 2004.

Rupp, Joyce. "Out of the Ordinary: Chants." Indiana: Ave Maria Press, 2000.

(A Companion Resource to Rupp's book *Out of the Ordinary*, see above in print resource section.)

### **Web Sites**

[www.prayingeachday.org](http://www.prayingeachday.org)

[www.ltp.org/resources.html](http://www.ltp.org/resources.html)

[www.easterbrooks.com/personal/calendar/index.html](http://www.easterbrooks.com/personal/calendar/index.html)

[www.catholic.org](http://www.catholic.org)

For information on locating a Spiritual Retreat Centre in your area of the province, visit one of these sites:

[www.retreatsonline.com/canada/ontario](http://www.retreatsonline.com/canada/ontario)

[www.findthedivine.com](http://www.findthedivine.com)

[www.catholiclinks.org/retirosCanada.htm](http://www.catholiclinks.org/retirosCanada.htm)

[www.retreatsintl.org/list.htm#ontario](http://www.retreatsintl.org/list.htm#ontario)

For information on obtaining appropriate music for your retreats, visit one of these sites:

[www.catholicshopper.com/music/](http://www.catholicshopper.com/music/)

[www.catholicmusicnetwork.com/news/Krebs.asp](http://www.catholicmusicnetwork.com/news/Krebs.asp)

[www.christmusic.org/store.shtml](http://www.christmusic.org/store.shtml)

[www.giamusic.com/scstore/P-catholic-classics.html](http://www.giamusic.com/scstore/P-catholic-classics.html)

[www.catholicnetlinks.com/catholicnetlinks/Catholic%20Music.htm](http://www.catholicnetlinks.com/catholicnetlinks/Catholic%20Music.htm)

[www.catholiccompany.com/display\\_results.cfm?category=1020](http://www.catholiccompany.com/display_results.cfm?category=1020)

## Checklist for Organizing the Retreat Session

- 1. Ensure that the date and time of the retreat does not conflict with another school commitment. Refer to the Liturgical calendar when selecting a date.
- 2. Book any outside facilitators well ahead of time.
- 3. Warmly invite all staff members to be part of the retreat planning team.
- 4. At the planning stage, gather input from all representative groups, for example, teachers, custodians, within the school administration.
- 5. Present initial retreat plan to staff for feedback. Determine whether you will have a full day or a half day retreat.
- 6. If desired, invite others to participate in the retreat, for example, parish priests, parish pastoral team members, board office personnel.
- 7. Secure a location for your retreat and pay the deposit.
- 8. Arrange for refreshments and food.
- 9. Clearly communicate retreat plans to administration.
- 10. Send out pertinent information about the retreat to staff ahead of time.
- 11. Arrange for audio-visual equipment if needed.
- 12. Designate person(s) to introduce and thank guest speaker(s) or facilitator(s).
- 13. Prepare a participant feedback form to help direct planning of future staff retreats.
- 14. Designate person(s) to collate staff feedback form suggestions.
- 15. Designate a person to prepare thank you letters for guest facilitator(s).
- 16. Identify a post-retreat follow-up meeting date/time/place.

Add any other items specific to your retreat.

# Eucharistic Liturgy Planning Sheet

Copies to:        Presider                          Coordinator  
                       Music Committee                Other

## Eucharistic Liturgy Plan

Date	
Presider	Servers
Homilist	Cross
Eucharistic Ministers	Incense
	Candles
	Other
Theme of Celebration	
Items Needed	Program: <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Prelude	
Opening Song	Book
	Page Number
Greetings	Penitential Rite
Glory to God	Book
	Page Number
First Reading	Reader
Responsorial Psalm	Cantor/Reader
Second Reading	Reader
Gospel Acclamation	
Gospel	
Creed	Book
	Page Number
Prayers of the Faithful	
Preparing of the Table	Procession of Gifts
Song for Preparation of Gifts	Book
	Page Number
Holy, Holy	
Memorial Acclamation	
Great Amen	
Lord's Prayer	
Doxology	
Lamb of God	
Communion Song	Book
	Page Number
Special Directions for Communion	
Meditation or Thanksgiving	
Closing Song	Book
	Page Number
Postlude	
Other Remarks	

# Retreat Feedback Sheet

Please take a moment to respond to the following three statements to help us plan future retreats.

Circle the evaluation – “Absolutely” or “Very much so” or “Yes” or “Somewhat” or “Not at all” – that best reflects your response. We would also appreciate any additional ideas for improvements.

Thank you for your help.

1. The format of the retreat met my needs, for example, opening prayer, personal reflection time, small group/large group sharing, closing prayer.

Absolutely                  Very much so                  Yes                  Somewhat                  Not at all

Suggestions:

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2. The activities were meaningful and respectful of my comfort level.

Absolutely                  Very much so                  Yes                  Somewhat                  Not at all

Suggestions:

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3. The retreat location and facilities met my needs.

Absolutely

Very much so

Yes

Somewhat

Not at all

Suggestions:

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Additional Suggestions:

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# RETREAT 1

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## New Beginnings God Within and Around Us

*In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.*

(Matthew 5:16)

This retreat celebrates the beginning of a new school year. Staff will be encouraged and challenged, through a variety of activities, to make a difference in their school community and in the broader community within which they live and work. Ideally, this retreat should take place away from the school site to avoid any unnecessary distractions throughout the day.

Given the theme “New Beginnings,” this retreat is particularly appropriate for use at the beginning of a new school year.

## You will need

### Materials

- Copies of New Beginnings Handouts A to E, one for each retreat participant
- Flip chart
- Adhesive tape
- Multi-coloured markers
- Pencils
- Candle and matches or a lighter
- Various colours of modelling clay
- Round tables
- Plastic to cover tables
- Recycling bin

### Personnel

- A person to welcome everyone
- A Scripture reader
- A staff member to light a candle
- Staff members to read the Prayer of the Faithful
- Staff members to help get tables ready for clay activity
- A staff member who plays the piano or other musical instrument and who can lead singing

## Retreat Plan

### 8:30 – Gathering Time, Coffee, Tea, Juice, and Muffins

Encourage staff to participate in this time to build community and develop a positive start to the retreat.

### 9:00 – Welcome

Distribute New Beginnings Handout A, Retreat Outline so that staff members are clear about the timeline and expectations of the retreat.

**Note:** This outline could also be distributed prior to the retreat day.

### 9:15 — Ice Breaker

Distribute pencils and copies of New Beginnings Handout B, Ice Breaker Bingo to retreat participants. Ask everyone to circulate and find individuals for whom the descriptions in the squares apply. Each person is to sign their name in the appropriate square and can sign their name only once on each bingo sheet. Once someone has a completed bingo card, they call, “Bingo.”

After about five minutes, ask everyone to sit in a circle. Invite the person who has a completed bingo sheet — or the highest number of signed squares — to introduce everyone on their sheet. Then ask the person who has the next highest number of filled-in squares to do the same. Once everyone has been introduced, you could give a little token to the winner and also a token to a person who has the least squares filled.

**Note:** This plan for the game requires at least 24 participants. If you have fewer participants, you may want to allow people to sign their names twice.

### 9:35 – Opening Prayer

Ask everyone to bow their heads in prayer. The presider then reads the following:  
Creator God, as we begin this year together, we place ourselves in Your hands.  
Help us to always appreciate the goodness within and see goodness in those around us.  
Help us to model faith in You by loving words and actions toward those around us.  
Fill us with your wisdom and compassion.  
As we begin this new school year together, give us the strength we will need to be active witnesses to Your love and compassion. May we support one another on the journey and stand by each other in difficult times.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen

### **9:45 – Session 1: Spirit, Small Group Table Discussion**

Begin by reading the following quotation out loud. Post the quotation on large chart paper around the room so participants can see it throughout the day.

“Community is God’s idea. Only in community can we know and be known, love and be loved, celebrate others and be celebrated by them.

And only through close transparent relationships can we be transformed as individuals.”  
(John Ortberg, Laurie Pederson, Judson Polling. *Groups: The Life-Giving Power of Community*, 2000.)

Explain to staff that, as you begin a new school year, it is important to be intentional about building community. One way to do this is to gather together and reflect on the spirit of your particular school community so that the community can be celebrated and can identify ways to deepen that spirit.

Divide your staff into groups of five or six per table. Distribute copies of New Beginnings Handout C, Spirit. Each group is invited to answer the reflection questions on this handout. Ask each group to designate someone to record information and someone to be the spokesperson.

Staff who are new to the school may draw from the experiences at other schools. They can talk about their hopes and dreams for what school spirit might “look like.”

### **10:15 – Session 1: Continued**

Ask the spokesperson from each group to summarize their group’s responses to New Beginnings Handout C, Spirit. Record the summaries on chart paper for everyone to see.

### **10:30 – Break**

### **10:45 – Session 2: Soul, Small Group Table Discussion**

Ask staff to get back into their Session 1 groups. Distribute copies of New Beginnings Handout D, Soul, and ask everyone to consider and respond to the questions on the handout.

Then ask the spokesperson from each group to summarize the group’s responses. Record the summaries on chart paper for everyone to see.

### **11:45 – Closing Prayer for Morning Sessions**

Ask everyone to bow their heads in prayer. The presider then reads the following: Creator God, we thank you for being with us throughout our morning sessions. Bless the food we will share together. May we be strengthened in mind and spirit. We ask our prayer in Jesus’ name. Amen

**Note:** Review afternoon schedule and any process and lunch details.

### **12:00 – Lunch**

It is preferable to have the entire staff share lunch together. If people finish lunch early, invite them to enjoy the retreat grounds. Remind them that Session 3 starts at 1 p.m. sharp.

### **1:00 – Session 3: Symbols**

In this session, retreat participants will use modelling clay to create a symbol that depicts the gifts and talents they feel they bring to their school ministry. Participants can choose to work at any table for this session.

### **1:30 – Session 4: Gifts**

Ask everyone to form a large circle and invite them to share the symbol they have created. Invite people to briefly explain why and how their symbol reflects their gifts and talents.

After the first person shares their symbol with the group, you may want to invite others in the circle to share what they feel the person's gift provides to the school community.

List these gifts on chart paper. You could display this list in the staff room after the retreat day is over.

### **2:15 – Closing Prayer**

Distribute copies of New Beginnings Handout E, Closing Prayer to retreat participants.

## **Suggestions for a half-day retreat**

Choose Session 1 or Session 2. Shorten the time frame for the session you choose by reducing the time allowed for retreat participants to give feedback in the large group.

# New Beginnings Handout A

## Retreat Outline

8:30 – 9:00	Coffee, Tea, Juice, Muffins
9:00 – 9:15	Welcome and Instructions for the Day
9:15 – 9:35	Ice Breaker
9:35 – 9:45	Opening Prayer
9:45 – 10:30	Session 1: Spirit
10:30 – 10:45	Break
10:45 – 11:45	Session 2: Soul
11:45 – 12:00	Closing Morning Prayer
12:00 – 1:00	Communal Lunch
1:00 – 1:30	Session 3: Symbols
1:30 – 2:15	Session 4: Gifts
2:15 – 2:45	Closing Prayer, Community

# New Beginnings Handout B

## Ice Breaker Bingo

The object of this game is to find people who relate to each square and ask them to sign their names on the relevant square. Each person can only sign on one square per sheet.

<b>B</b>	<b>I</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>O</b>
plays golf	is new to staff	went out of province this summer	has been on a boat	lifts weights
is wearing blue	has seen Gone With The Wind	read a book this summer	skipped breakfast today	has been to a Blue Jays game
speaks a second language	has a passport	FREE SPACE	was born outside Canada	keeps a diary
plays guitar	has been to Europe	has never been to Saskatchewan	likes to go camping	owns a pet
likes roller coasters	took a course this summer	taught summer school	has a watch	watches "The National"

# New Beginnings Handout C

## Spirit

Please discuss and respond to the following questions.

1. Where have I observed our school spirit at its best?

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2. When have I observed our school spirit to be low?

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3. What positive things can be done to enrich the school spirit at our school?

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4. As we start a new school year, what are some of my hopes and dreams for school spirit in the year ahead?

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# New Beginnings Handout D

## Soul

Please discuss and respond to the following questions.

1. In what ways am I thankful for the opportunity to be part of Catholic education?

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2. What two things would I include in my personal mission statement for Catholic education?

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3. In what way(s) does my school community achieve the two points I listed above?

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4. In what way(s) do I still need to grow to help my school achieve the goals of its mission?

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# New Beginnings Handout E

## Closing Prayer

### Gathering

Presider calls the community together and lights large candle.

### Opening Song

Play “Children of the Light” (O’Reilly, Eugene. *The Silver Collection: 25th Anniversary Celebration*. The Redemptorist Order, CD, 2002)

### First Reading

“As God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.” (Colossians 3:12-14)

### Prayers of the Faithful

Four would be appropriate.

### Quiet Reflection Time

### Insights from the Day

Ask volunteers to offer insights they gained from the day.

### Blessing

Each person comes forward to the front of the room and receives a clay model. Once everyone comes to the front, the facilitator re-reads the John Ortberg quotation from Session 1 and leads the group through the following blessing:

Creator God, all praise and glory are Yours.  
Bless these men and women, Your servants – they serve You by the witness of their lives.  
May they continue to live in Your love and Your light in the upcoming year.  
May the Lord bless you and keep you, may His face shine upon you and give you everlasting peace.  
Amen

### Sign of Peace

### **Closing Song**

“Companions on the Journey” (*Glory & Praise*)

### **Closing Prayer – Prayer of Generosity**

Lord, teach me to be generous

Teach me to serve You as You deserve:

To give and not to count the cost,

To fight and not to heed the wounds,

To toil and not to seek for rest

To labour and not ask for reward,

Save that knowing that I do Your will.

Amen



## RETREAT 2

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# Thanksgiving With Grateful Hearts

*Your success and happiness lie in you . . . resolve to keep happy and joyful and you shall form an invincible host against difficulties*

(Helen Keller)

Be thankful that you don't have everything you desire;

If you did, what would there be to look forward to?

Be thankful when you don't know something

For it gives you the opportunity to learn.

Be thankful for the difficult times

During those times you grow.

Be thankful for each new challenge

Because it will build your strength and character.

Be thankful when you're tired and weary

Because it means you've made a difference.

(Author unknown)

Although this retreat is suitable for use any time throughout the school year, it would be particularly meaningful if used around Thanksgiving time. It is easy to take our own gifts and the gifts of others for granted. This retreat is designed to help participants take time to reflect upon their gifts and give thanks for the many blessings that grace their lives.

The retreat concludes with a call to action because God calls us not only to enjoy our gifts but also to share them with the people around us, especially with those who are often taken for granted, forgotten, or less fortunate.

## You will need

### Materials

- CD player
- CD of *Perennial* by Twila Paris (Twila Paris Productions, Integrity Music. Sparrow Label, 1998)
- CD of *In the Spirit of Taizé*, recorded at Ascension Church, Oak Park, Illinois, David Anderson conductor (Giant Records, 2005)
- CD of soft instrumental background music for Session 2
- Copies of *Catholic Book of Worship III* for all participants
- Copies of Thanksgiving Handouts A to F for all participants
- Bible
- Carrots of roughly the same weight and size for all participants
- Chart paper
- Markers and pencils
- Adhesive tape
- “Giving Thanks” tree with branches for Session 1
- Cut-out cardboard leaves (Thanksgiving Handout D)

### Personnel

- A person to welcome everyone at the beginning of the day
- Presiders and readers for the various prayer services throughout the day
- Someone to read the list of retreat participants to come forward
- Someone to prepare cardboard copies of leaves for Session 1: All that We Have
- Someone to set up the thanksgiving tree
- Participant(s) who plays guitar or piano and can lead singing

# Retreat Plan

## **8:30 – Gathering Time, Coffee, Tea, Juice, and Muffins**

Encourage staff to participate in this time to build community and develop a positive tone for the day.

## **9:00 – Welcome**

Distribute Thanksgiving Handout A, Retreat Outline so that staff members are clear about the timeline and expectations of the retreat.

**Note:** This outline could also be distributed prior to the retreat day.

## **9:15 – Ice Breaker**

Distribute copies of Thanksgiving Handout B, Ice Breaker Carrot Game to all participants. Explain that each carrot is representative of the person who receives it. Just as each carrot has unique features, we as individuals have unique features. At the end of the game, the participants have to pick out their original carrot. They are able to do this because they have previously studied it.

The game demonstrates that even a vegetable has been uniquely created by God. How much more so are we, who are created in God's image, unique individuals with unique gifts and talents to share with our community.

Ask all participants to read and then follow the steps outlined in Handout B.

## **9:35 – Opening Prayer**

Distribute Thanksgiving Handout C, Opening Prayer to all participants and ask them to bow their heads in prayer.

## **9:45 – Session 1: All That We Have**

Distribute leaves cut out from Thanksgiving Handout D, All that We Have. Divide retreat participants into groups of three or four. In the groups, each member identifies things in life for which they are grateful – for example, family, friends – and records them on their leaves (from Handout D).

Invite staff to share their “thanksgivings” with members of their small groups and then with the larger group. After each person reads their thanksgiving, ask them to place the leaves on the branches of the “Giving Thanks” tree at the front of the room.

## **10:45 – Break**

### **11:00 – Session 2: All that We Offer**

Briefly discuss how important it is not only to give thanks but also to offer our gifts to help others. Distribute a reflection sheet containing three questions – Thanksgiving Handout E, Offering Our Gifts – and invite staff to spend 20 minutes alone reflecting upon and answering the questions. Play soft music during this time.

Ask everyone to return to the same groups they were in for Session 1 and to share – to the degree each person is comfortable in doing so – their responses to the three questions from Thanksgiving Handout E.

### **12:00 – Lunch**

It is preferable to have the entire staff share lunch together. If people finish lunch early, invite them to enjoy the retreat grounds. Remind them that Session 3 starts at 1 p.m. sharp.

### **1:00 – Session 3: Thanksgiving in Action**

Gather all retreat participants together and invite them to brainstorm a number of concrete ways that their school community can show thanksgiving through outreach.

Ask them to record their suggestions on chart paper.

This part of the retreat is designed such that one or two of the ideas brainstormed might be put into action as a follow-up to the retreat. For example,

- Some staff members might choose to volunteer at a local food bank one evening or one weekend morning.
- An evening could be designated as an “Our School Gives Thanks” night during which a fun family carnival is held and the money raised supports the needs of the community.
- Grandparents and other elder relatives of staff and students could be invited to the school for a “We Give Thanks for the Wisdom and Contribution of Our Elders” day. Ahead of time, a few elder community members could be invited to speak about their life experiences. Staff and students could then provide entertainment and refreshments.
- Staff could prepare a “We Give Thanks for Our Students” day. Staff members could greet students at the front door in the morning, and special events could take place throughout the day to make students feel appreciated.

### **2:00 – Prayer Service**

Distribute Thanksgiving Handout F, Closing Prayer. Be sure the “Giving Thanks” tree created during Session 1 is part of the décor for this closing prayer service.



# Thanksgiving Handout A

## Retreat Outline

8:30 - 9:00	Coffee, Tea, Juice, Muffins
9:00 - 9:15	Welcome and Instructions for the Day
9:15 - 9:35	Ice Breaker
9:35 - 9:45	Opening Prayer
9:45 - 10:45	Session 1: All that We Have
10:45 - 11:00	Break
11:00 - 12:00	Session 2: All that We Offer
12:00 - 1:00	Communal Lunch
1:00 - 2:00	Session 3: Thanksgiving in Action
2:00 - 2:30	Closing Prayer, Giving Thanks

# Thanksgiving Handout B

## Ice Breaker Carrot Game

### How to Proceed

1. Sit in a circle and take a carrot from the container that is passed around the circle.
2. Examine your carrot carefully, observing any unique features.
3. Discuss the unique features of your carrot with the person next to you to help you identify your carrot with your eyes shut.
4. Work with a partner. One person shuts their eyes and the other person holds two carrots (the partner's carrot and their own carrot). The partner with closed eyes has to try to recognize their own carrot.
5. Then repeat this exercise in groups of four.
6. Return to the circle. At this point, all carrots are collected.
7. The carrots are then passed hand-to-hand behind people's backs so they cannot see the carrots.
8. Keep your carrot once you recognize it.
9. The game ends when all participants recognize their original carrot.

### Questions for Discussion

1. How did you identify your carrot?

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2. What feelings did you experience during the process?

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3. Did you learn anything about yourself during this process?

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# Thanksgiving Handout C

## Opening Prayer

### Presider – With Grateful Hearts

Lord, as we gather for this retreat we thank You for the time given to us today to reflect on the many blessings we have been given. We give thanks for the gift of our lives and for the people around us who love us and support us along the way. We ask You to be with us in a special way as we gather today for this staff retreat. We make this prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen

### Reading 1

Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.  
(Philippians 4:6-7)

### Reading 2

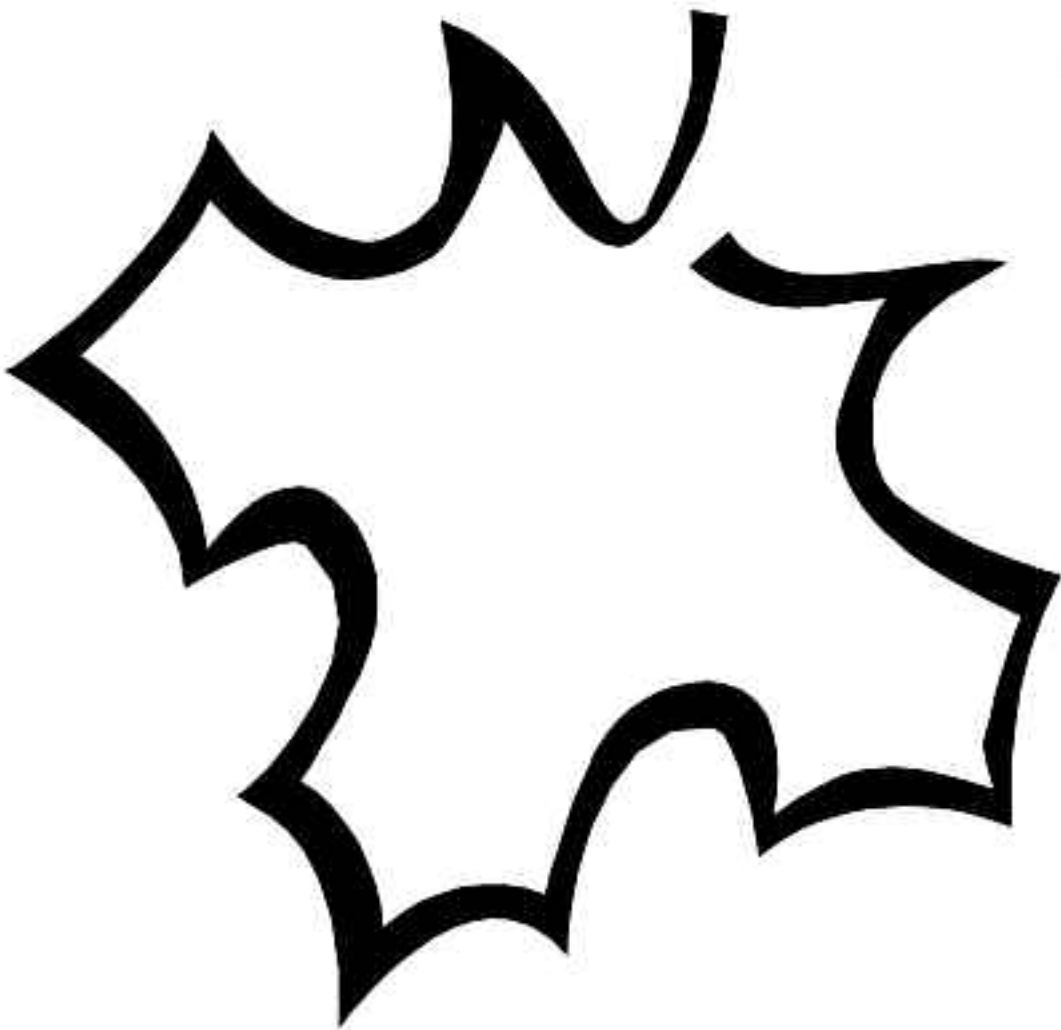
Trust in the Lord with all your heart,  
and do not rely on your own insight.  
In all your ways acknowledge him,  
and he will make straight your paths.  
Do not be wise in your own eyes;  
fear the Lord, and turn away from evil.  
It will be a healing for your flesh  
and a refreshment for your body.  
(Proverbs 3:5-8)

### Closing Song

“Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing” (from CD *Perennial* by Twila Paris) or “All the Ends of the Earth” (from *Catholic Book of Worship III*)

Thanksgiving Handout D

All That We Have



# Thanksgiving Handout E

## Offering Our Gifts

Please discuss and respond to the following questions.

1. What are the ways you presently use your God-given gifts to help enrich the lives of others?

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2. What sometimes gets in the way of us using our gifts and talents?

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3. What are some of your personal gifts you would like to continue to develop and use more fully?

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# Thanksgiving Handout F

## Closing Prayer

### Opening Song

“For the Beauty of the Earth” (*Catholic Book of Worship III*)

### Opening Prayer

God of goodness, open our hearts to the messages You continue to speak to us in the words of Scripture.

### Reading 1

For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land, a land with flowing streams, with springs and underground waters welling up in valleys and hills, a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates; a land of olive trees, and honey; a land where you may eat bread without scarcity, where you will lack nothing, a land whose stones are iron, and from whose hills you may mine copper. You shall eat your fill and bless the Lord your God for the good land which He has given you.

(Deuteronomy 8:7-10)

### Reading 2

O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; His steadfast love endures for ever!

Let Israel say, ‘His steadfast love endures for ever.’

Let the house of Aaron say, ‘His steadfast love endures for ever.’

Let those who fear the Lord say, ‘His steadfast love endures for ever.’

Out of my distress I called on the Lord; the Lord answered me and set me in a broad place.

With the Lord on my side I do not fear. What can mortals do to me?

The Lord is on my side to help me; I shall look in triumph on those who hate me.

It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to put confidence in mortals.

It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to put confidence in princes.

(Psalms 118:1-9)

### Brief Reflection

Presider shares a few words on the theme of giving thanks based on the first reading and Psalm response.

### Prayers of the Faithful

For all those who have gathered here today, that we might be thankful for our own giftedness and for the gift of those around us.

Response: We pray to the Lord.

For family and friends who are struggling in mind, body or spirit.  
May we reach out to them and give them an experience of God's healing touch.  
Response: We pray to the Lord.

For our staff community that we might continue to try to be faithful witnesses and models  
of God's love and compassion.  
Response: We pray to the Lord.

For Church and world leaders that they be grounded in humility and truth and  
be people of justice so that they lead in peace.  
Response: We pray to the Lord.

### **Quiet Reflection Time**

Play a Taizé song

### **Sign of Peace**

As a sign of our ongoing commitment to continuing to use our gifts to build up the  
community of God's people here on Earth, let us share with one another a sign of peace.

### **Closing Prayer – The Prayer of St. Francis**

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

### **Closing Song**

“Let Us Build a City of God” (*Catholic Book of Worship III*)





# RETREAT 3

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## Creation God in All Seasons

*The four seasons tell a story of transformation every year . . . .*

*The seasons invite us to honour the earth out of which new life germinates, sprouts, develops, blooms, blossoms, and grows.*

(Joyce Rupp, *The Circle of Life*, 2005)

This retreat celebrates the gift of creation. Through ritual, prayer, and personal sharing, the retreat focuses on giving thanks to God for the magnificent wonders of creation and emphasizes nature's ability to help get us in touch with ourselves. The retreat calls us to be more effective stewards of creation.

While this retreat can be used anytime throughout the school year, it would be particularly meaningful if performed near Earth Week or Thanksgiving, since these times are set aside to give thanks for the world around us.

Because the focus of this retreat is on celebrating God's presence in creation, it is important that the retreat take place at a location that enables staff to get outside and experience the stillness and beauty of creation.

**Note:** Staff need to be told ahead of time to dress appropriately for the weather. Special consideration needs to be made for staff members who are less mobile. A buddy system works well in these circumstances.

## You will need

### Materials

- CD of nature music or soft instrumental music to accompany the Opening Prayer
- A slide show of nature scenes (optional for Opening Prayer)
- Copies of Creation Handouts A to F for each participant
- Chart paper and markers for Session 4
- Copies of *Catholic Book of Worship III* for all participants

### Personnel

- A minister of hospitality — to greet the staff and direct them to take a seat in the prayer circle when it is time for Opening Prayer to begin
- A presider, a Scripture reader, and five mini-reflection readers for the Opening Prayer
- A staff member who plays piano or another musical instrument for the Opening Prayer, or a recording of “Morning Has Broken” that staff can sing along with, or a person who will lead the song a cappella
- Facilitators for Sessions 3 and 4
- A recorder for ideas gathered in Session 4
- Someone to set out the circular route ahead of time for the Creation Walk prayer
- A presider and four readers for the Creation Walk prayer

## Retreat Plan

### **8:30 – Gathering Time, Coffee, Tea, Juice, Muffins**

Encourage staff to participate in this gathering time, as it is a key time for community building as well as for setting a positive and relaxed tone for the retreat.

### **9:00 – Welcome**

Distribute Creation Handout A, Retreat Outline so staff members are clear on the timelines and expectations.

**Note:** This outline could also be given out ahead of the retreat day.

### **9:15 – Ice Breaker: Movie Titles**

Distribute Creation Handout B, Ice Breaker.

### **9:30 – Opening Prayer**

Distribute Creation Handout C, Opening Prayer: Giving Thanks For God’s Gift of Creation. This prayer sets the focus and tone for this retreat. It would be ideal if chairs could be placed in a circle to reinforce the theme of the cycle of the seasons. Have nature music or other soft instrumental music playing as people are gathering for prayer. Continue to play this music while the presider begins the Gathering Prayer. The presider can be any staff member who is comfortable and confident in leading the community in prayer.

Suggest to the five readers that they read their lines slowly and prayerfully. The reflections are meant to be meditative and should not be rushed. Leave at least three minutes between each reading (at this time the soft music is still playing).

As soon as Reader 1 begins, the music should be turned up slightly. Once Reader 5 is finished, it is slowly turned down and then completely off.

Alternative suggestions for the Opening Prayer closing song: “All the Ends of the Earth” (*Catholic Book of Worship III*) or “This Day God Gives Me” (*Catholic Book of Worship III*).

Extension: This prayer service can be enhanced by having a slide show of nature scenes presented on a screen while the music is playing and the five reflections are read.

### **9:45 – Session 1: Personal Reflection Time**

Distribute copies of Creation Handout D, God Alive in the Seasons of My Life. This session will give staff time alone in nature to reflect on the different seasons of their lives and to look for the ways God has been present throughout.

### **10:30 – Break**

### **10:50 – Session 2: God Alive in the Seasons of My Life, Triad Sharing**

During this time staff are invited to form groups of three. They will be asked to share two ideas: a) the experience of what it was like for them to spend some quiet time alone in nature, and b) any personal insights gained from their alone time and/or from their answers to the questions in Creation Handout D.

### **11:30 – Session 3: God Alive in the Seasons of My Life, Large Group Sharing**

Once staff members have had an opportunity to speak with two colleagues in small triad groups, the facilitator gathers the whole group together and invites open dialogue about the experience of the triad sharing and the insights gained from personal time alone or from the triad sharing time.

### **12:00 – Lunch**

Ideally, lunch should be shared together as a staff rather than staff leaving the retreat site to share lunch in smaller groupings.

### **1:00 – Session 4: Called to be Stewards of Creation**

In this session, staff members will reflect on the ways they personally are stewards of creation and on how they might deepen and extend their personal commitment to being a caretaker of creation.

They will also be invited to reflect on how they are being stewards of creation as a school community. They will be asked to identify ways they might be more intentional in modelling stewardship for students.

Distribute copies of Creation Handout E, Called to be Stewards of Creation and ask staff to take a few minutes to respond to the questions on their own. The facilitator then leads the large group discussion focusing on questions 1 and 2 from the “As a School Community” section. Ask someone to record the ideas that are offered on chart paper.

Before you move into this session, you may need to spend a few minutes exploring with everyone what the concept of stewardship means. It does not mean lording over or ruling creation, but rather acknowledging our interdependence and connection with creation and, therefore, our need to be caretakers of creation.

This retreat lends itself nicely to follow-up activities whereby ideas that are identified during Session 4 could be put into concrete action. For example, as a staff we will do a more effective job of celebrating Earth Week this year. Or as a staff we will be more intentional about talking to students about recycling and trying to cut back on the amount of waste in the school.

### **2:00 – Closing Prayer and Creation Walk**

Distribute Creation Handout F, Creation Walk. Ideally, the Creation Walk prayer should be celebrated outdoors so that participants can be surrounded by the beauty of creation.

However, this prayer may be adapted for use indoors. You would exclude the five-minute walk between the four direction readings. If you are able to do the walk outdoors, prepare your route ahead of time. Design the walk so it goes in a circle that reinforces the cyclical nature of the seasons and of life. You want to end up where you started by the end of the prayer.

If you have a staff member who is not very mobile or who uses a wheelchair, you will want to ensure that this person is given assistance. In this case, you will want to keep the walking portion of this prayer to a minimum. It is important that all staff be included and be able to participate.

### **Suggestions for a half-day retreat**

Include the welcome, skip the ice breaker, and celebrate the Opening Prayer as set out in Creation Handout C. Shorten the time for Sessions I and 2 to half an hour. Shorten Session 3 to 15 minutes. Skip Session 4 (you can revisit the stewardship discussion at a later time as a follow-up retreat activity). End the retreat with the Creation Walk.

# Creation Handout A

## Retreat Outline

8:30 – 9:00	Coffee, Tea, Juice, Muffins
9:00 – 9:15	Welcome and Instructions for the Day
9:15 – 9:30	Ice Breaker: Movie Titles
9:30 – 9:45	Opening Prayer: Giving Thanks for God’s Gift of Creation
9:45 – 10:30	Session 1: God Alive in the Seasons of My Life, Personal Reflection Time
10:30 – 10:50	Break
10:50 – 11:30	Session 2: God Alive in the Seasons of My Life, Triad Group Sharing
11:30 – 12:00	Session 3: God Alive in the Seasons of My Life, Large Group Sharing
12:00 – 1:00	Communal Lunch
1:00 – 2:00	Session 4: Called to be Stewards of Creation
2:00 – 3:00	Closing Prayer and Creation Walk

## Creation Handout B

### Ice Breaker: Movie Titles

Circle the movie or TV show title listed below that most closely describes how you have been feeling lately. Yes, you may circle more than one! Then move around the room and

1. Find one other person who circled the same title you did and ask the reason for that choice. If no one else picked the title you did, then find one person who will listen to you explain why you picked it.
2. Approach at least five other people and ask them what title(s) they picked and why.

As Good as It Gets	Dumb and Dumber	Love Story
Far Far Away	Must Love Dogs	Survivor
Born Free	Ants in Pants	Even Cowgirls Get the Blues
One Life to Live	Just for Laughs	Bound
Heaven Can Wait	Close to Home	The Incredible Lightness of Being
Turbulence	The Amazing Race	Speed
24	Fear Factor	Where Angels Go Trouble Follows
One Fine Day	Trading Spaces	Braveheart
As the World Turns	Bob the Builder	Frenzy
The Young and the Restless	Grill Room	Sleepless in Seattle
One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest	Touched by an Angel	Life is Beautiful
Friends	Overboard	The Rock
Funny Girl	Superman Returns	Inferno
Courage Under Fire	Family Guy	Over the Hedge
Singing in the Rain	Fast and the Furious	Going My Way
Another World	Failure to Launch	Inferno
Jeopardy	Down in the Valley	

# Creation Handout C

## Opening Prayer: Giving Thanks for God's Gift of Creation

### Presider

God of all time and all spaces we gather together to slow down the pace of our lives and reflect on the beauty of creation. Today we celebrate Your ongoing presence in the seasons of our lives. Companion us this day and enable our hearts to be open to the many ways You speak to us through the created world around us. We ask this prayer in Your name. Amen

### Scripture Reading

“And God said, ‘Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and the dry land appear.’ And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. Then God said, ‘Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it.’ And it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it.”  
(Genesis 1:9-12)

### Presider

Today’s reading reminds us of the gift and goodness of creation. The gift of creation at times is taken for granted. It is important to stop and reflect on its wisdom and beauty. As human beings we are created in the image and likeness of God and at times we take the gift of self and one another for granted.

I now invite you to sit back, relax, and listen to the reflections that will be read to help us deepen our connection with the fullness of creation.

### Reader 1

Maker of the morning, we gather and greet this new day.  
As constant as the sun rising each morning is Your abiding love for us and for all of creation.  
We turn to You and open ourselves to Your wisdom and grace.  
Our spirits bow with gratitude in thanksgiving for the beauty of creation.  
For, indeed it is good.

(Music plays for some reflection time)



**Reader 2**

Shelter in the storm, at times we feel as restless as the jostling sea.  
We fight the waves that beckon us to new shores.  
May this be a day of surrendering, a day of letting go.  
May we trust in Your active presence in our lives.  
You are the eternal tide that moves us to where we are called to be.

(Music plays for some reflection time)

**Reader 3**

Heart of the earth,  
Your created world renews itself with each new season.  
May we embrace the seasons of our lives.  
May we experience inner transformation and may we deepen in wisdom.  
Creator God, change and risk can be frightening.  
Be with us in our “seasoning.”

(Music plays for some reflection time)

**Reader 4**

Sheltering God,  
Help us trust in Your branches that shadow us in love.  
Bring us closer to the inner peace for which we long and help us be strength for one another.

(Music plays for some reflection time)

**Reader 5**

And God looked out over all creation . . .

Response (*all five readers together*)  
And it was good.

**Presider**

It is our hope that each person gathered here will be able to slow down and experience God within the created world and in one another. Let us now pray together a final time. I invite the women to begin.

## Be With Us God in Our Springtime

### Women

Spring is here.

The sun illuminates our morning and the pastel sky bids us a good night.

All around us life reminds us once again that it is alive, and all shall be well.

### Men

Trees eagerly unfold their offering – green buds exuberant with potential.

Magnificent roots planted firmly in the earth, taking a stand for creation.

### Women

And so it is the spring of our lives.

A time for graced renewal of others, of self.

A time to turn our face once again to the sun, which has always been there yet now makes itself more fully known.

### Men

We are people called to live in its light and its warmth.

To turn boldly, yet humbly toward the Creator who continues to sustain us.

And calls us time and time again to greater light.

### Together

May we in our spring have strength and courage to continue our growing, our seasoning.

May we be enlivened witnesses to others of the sacred potential of life, and of being — that in our joy, others too may be drawn in, and see that life indeed is alive. And all shall be well.

Amen

(Joni Grundy, 2004)

### Closing Song

“Morning Has Broken,” *Catholic Book of Worship III*.

Alternate suggestions for the closing song: “All the Ends of the Earth” or “This Day God Gives Me” (*Catholic Book of Worship III*).

# Creation Handout D

## God Alive in the Seasons of My Life

### Personal Reflection Questions

For the next 45 minutes, you are invited to take time alone in nature for personal reflection. Here are a few questions to help guide your reflection time.

<p><b>Fall</b> Fall asks us to surrender. What do you need to let go of in your life right now? What are you hanging onto that needs to be set free?</p>	<p><b>Winter</b> Winter asks us to wait. What do you need to be patient about? What are you called to “let die” so new growth can come forth?</p>
<p><b>Spring</b> Spring asks us to hope. What needs to come alive in you? What is trying to burst forth? Is there anything getting in the way of new life being able to emerge within you?</p>	<p><b>Summer</b> Summer asks us to ripen and bear fruit. What do you need to continue to nourish in your life? What has to change in order for you to grow toward greater fullness?</p>

Which season resonated most with you?

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What season of life most describes the season you are presently in?

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# Creation Handout E

## Called to Be Stewards of Creation

### Personal

1. What are some of the concrete actions I already take to be a steward of creation?

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2. What are several ways I might deepen and extend my commitment to be a steward of creation?

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### As a School Community

1. What are some of the concrete actions our school has taken that shows it is a steward of God's creation?

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2. What are further actions our school community could take to be more effective stewards of God's creation?

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# Creation Handout F

## Creation Walk

### **The Prayer of the Four Directions of Life**

At the beginning of the prayer, the presider invites all participants to pick up a symbol of creation and carry it with them on this prayer walk as a sign of their willingness to care for creation. The community is asked to walk in silence so that nature can speak its quiet wisdom.

After five minutes of silent walking in nature the presider stops the group and begins.

### **Presider**

At this time I would invite us to stop and gather (*allows time for people to assemble and then continues*). God gave us four directions: East, South, North and West. Let us face the East (*all turn and face the east*). We bow before the beauty of God's creation (*all bow*).

### **Reader 1**

The East represents our birth. It is the direction where the sun rises each morning to begin a new day. Like the sun rising, our birth represents new beginnings, new life experiences, new places, and new ways of seeing things. Let us pray that God will be close to us in all of our new beginnings – the beginning of a new day, the beginning of a new friendship, the beginning of a new direction in life, the beginning of starting all over again. May we always face the East with gratitude to God for unexpected blessings and fresh insights that come to us from the East throughout all of our life.

### **All**

This is good. This is very good.

*The silent walk continues for another five minutes.*

### **Presider**

Let us stop and face the South

*All turn and face the south and bow.*

**Reader 2**

The South is a warm place in our lives. It is a place where we find love and feel nurtured. When the cold winds blow, even our winged friends know that it is time to seek warmer places, and so they leave to fly south. There are times in our lives when all is going well, we are safe, and we feel warm and cared for. God wants us to enjoy the warm and comforting moments in our lives. May we always know the warmth of the South and give God thanks for the many blessings that warm our lives.

**All**

This is good. This is very good.

*The silent walk continues for another five minutes.*

**Presider**

I would invite us to stop once again and to face the North.

*All turn northward and bow*

**Reader 3**

The North is a place where we feel the cold and where the difficult events in our life cause us to shiver. We may experience sadness due to an illness in our family or the loss of a loved one. We may be deeply disappointed by the actions of someone we care about. The North is the place we feel most alone.

In the North, we are called to face our pain. We are challenged to embrace it and confront it rather than run from it. Only then can we melt frozen moments away and allow warmer times to come back into our lives. When in the North, let us remember that we are never alone even though it may seem that way. God is always with us, always ready to be our strength and lead us to new wisdom when the cold winds blow.

**All**

This is good. This is very good.

*The silent walk continues for another five minutes.*

**Presider**

Let us now stop and face the West.

*All turn to the west and bow.*

**Reader 4**

The West is the place where the sun sets. It is a beautiful place because it is a meeting place where light meets the darkness and together they become friends. This marriage of light and darkness causes us to reflect upon the setting sun and how important it is to put away our differences, our prejudices, and our hang-ups so that a new day can begin.

The West is the place of good-byes and letting go. Sometimes as much as we do not want to, we must let go of an old idea, a stage of life, or someone we love, so that this person can move on. Let us respect the West, let us thank God for those beautiful sunsets, rainbows, and all that causes us to stand in wonder and awe. The West reminds us that time is forever changing, so we need to fully enjoy each moment, each day, and each loved one in our life while the sun still shines.

**All**

This is good. This is very good.

*Silent walk for a final three minutes.*

**Presider**

We now stop and notice that we have returned from whence we came. So too we will one day return to our Creator from whom we were birthed. We have been cradling a symbol of creation throughout our walk together as a way of showing our call to be caretakers of the earth. We now return our symbols of creation back to their home. As we do this, let us make a commitment in our hearts to be people who preserve and care for creation.

Participants return their symbols to the earth.

**Presider**

Let us bring our Creation Walk and our day together to a close by praying these final words together.

**All**

Creator God, You have given us the earth to work and play upon, and to enjoy in all its beauty and splendour. You created us male and female that we might have companionship and a clear glimpse of your goodness in one another. May we be noble stewards of creation. Help us to respect the earth and more fully understand our intimate connection to it. May we challenge ourselves and one another when we contemplate doing that which is harmful to the world around us.

Thank You for this retreat day and for the opportunity to see more fully the connection between the cycle of nature and our personal seasons of life. May the rest and refreshment we have experienced today give us the strength to continue the important work to which You have called us and entrusted us. Amen





# RETREAT 4

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## Advent Becoming Light in the Darkness

*Arise, shine; for your light has come,  
and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.  
For darkness shall cover the earth,  
and thick darkness the peoples;  
but the Lord will arise upon you,  
and his glory will appear over you.  
Nations shall come to your light,  
and kings to the brightness of your dawn.*  
(Isaiah 60:1-3)

This retreat celebrates the season of Advent. During Advent, we wait in joy for a humble birth. However, Advent is a season of contradictions. The wait for that humble birth takes place in an atmosphere of impatient consumer excess. It is ironic that secular values have taken hold of the season in which we are called to prepare for the coming of Christ. The message that Jesus brought to us is at odds with the values of our consumer-driven society. While Jesus taught us about justice, community and compassion, our culture sometimes appears to encourage greed and isolation.

This retreat is intended to allow us to stop, wait, and reflect as we contemplate the truly joyous coming of Jesus and the call for us to be a light in others' darkness.

## You will need

### Materials

- Photocopies of Advent Handouts for everyone except where specified: A, B (one for each group of five, C (one copy), D, E, F, G (optional), H and I
- Chart paper, markers and tape
- An Advent wreath and candles
- Matches or a lighter
- An assortment of Christmas catalogues and advertisements
- An overhead projector or LCD projector (desirable but not necessary)
- A television VCR or DVD player
- A copy of *It's a Wonderful Life*, the 1946 film directed by Frank Capra and starring Jimmy Stewart, Donna Reed, and Lionel Barrymore

### Personnel

- A person to welcome everyone
- A Scripture reader or readers
- A staff member to light a candle
- Seven staff members for the prayer service "The Candles of Advent"
- Staff member who plays the piano or other musical instrument and who can lead singing

## Retreat Plan

### **8:30 – Gathering Time, Coffee, Tea, Juice, Muffins**

Encourage staff to participate in this time to build community and develop a positive start to the retreat.

### **9:00 – Welcome**

Distribute Advent Handout A: Retreat Outline so that staff members are clear about the timeline and expectations for the retreat.

**Note:** This outline could also be distributed prior to the retreat day.

### **9:15 — Ice Breaker: Seasonal Trivia**

Randomly divide the staff into groups of five. Distribute a copy of Advent Handout B: Seasonal Trivia to each group and ask members to work together to answer the questions as quickly as possible. The first group finished with all the correct answers wins the contest. You could play fast seasonal music during the game.

When everyone is finished, read out the correct answers from Advent Handout C: Seasonal Trivia Answers.

### **9:30 – Opening Prayer: Being the Candles of Advent**

Distribute copies of Advent Handout D: Opening Prayer, Being the Candles of Advent.

This prayer was adapted – with permission – from an Advent prayer written by Les Miller of the York Catholic District School Board. It sets the focus and tone for the retreat and includes the lighting of the four Advent candles.

It would be ideal if chairs could be placed in a circle to represent the circular aspect of the Advent wreath.

### **9:45 – Session 1: Christmas Wish Lists**

The goal of this activity is to help participants identify and discuss the pressures to participate in the consumerism that is usually associated with the buildup to Christmas.

Divide the staff into random groups of five or six. The formation of these groups should allow individuals to work and dialogue with colleagues they might not regularly associate with closely.

Provide each group with chart paper and markers and with a selection of Christmas advertisements, store flyers, and catalogues.

Distribute copies of Advent Handout E: Reflections on Christmas Wish Lists, and ask participants to take five minutes to list a few items that they would like to receive and a few that they are planning to give for Christmas. Invite group members to compare and discuss their lists and post them on the chart paper.

Then using Christmas catalogues, advertisements and flyers, ask group members to take ten minutes to estimate the costs of the various items on the chart paper. Ask members to total the estimated costs for the wish list items for their group and to briefly report on those costs.

Ask participants to personally reflect on the questions on Advent Handout E. Then invite group members to discuss and share reflections with each other. If time permits, you may wish to include some whole group sharing.

### **10:30 – Break**

### **10:50 – Session 2: Perspectives on Spending Priorities**

Ask participants to return to their groups from the first session. Distribute copies of Advent Handout F: Impact of Global Wealth Distribution. Allow time for individual reflection on the questions and then for small and large group discussion.

### **11:30 – Session 3: It's a Wonderful Life**

Remind retreat participants that Advent is not a time of despair or guilt but a time of hope. It is a season of joyful, reflective waiting. We know that Christ gives us a light out of the darkness in which we may find ourselves. Invite them to watch the final scene of the film *It's a Wonderful Life*. Suggest that, as they watch this classic, they try to be aware of their reactions and emotions.

Either distribute Advent Handout G: *It's a Wonderful Life* or read the reflection questions to retreat participants and invite them to discuss their responses together as a group.

### **12:00 – Lunch**

It is preferable to have the entire staff share lunch together. If people finish lunch early invite them to enjoy the retreat grounds. Remind them that Session 4 starts at 1 p.m. sharp.

### **1:00 – Session 4: Social Justice**

Ask retreat participants to return to their small groups. Tell them that this session revolves around one of the great lights of our faith tradition: Catholic teachings on social justice. Despite the darkness that may surround us, our faith demands that we look for the light, that we be light.

Distribute Advent Handout H: Lighting a Candle in the Darkness. Suggest that each participant select one biblical quotation on which to focus and comment on how it may be read in a current context.

Allow ten minutes or more for individual reflection; then encourage group members to share their teaching and personal reflections.

### **2:00 – Closing Liturgy**

The songs and readings suggested in Advent Handout I: Liturgy of the Word are appropriate for the Advent season. You may wish to choose readings of the day from various Advent liturgy resources that are published yearly.

### **Additional Resources**

You may find the following useful as an additional resource for this retreat: *Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions*. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1998.

### **Suggestions for a half-day retreat**

After the opening prayer, you could choose Sessions 2 and/or 4. Shorten the time frame for the session you choose. Complete the retreat with the Liturgy of the Word.

# Advent Handout A

## Retreat Outline

8:30 – 9:00	Coffee, Tea, Juice, Muffins
9:00 – 9:15	Welcome and Instructions for the Day
9:15 – 9:30	Ice Breaker
9:30 – 9:45	Opening Prayer
9:45 – 10:30	Session 1: Christmas Wish Lists
10:30 – 10:50	Break
10:50 – 11:30	Session 2: Perspectives on Spending Priorities
11:30 – 12:00	Session 3: It's A Wonderful Life
12:00 – 1:00	Communal Lunch
1:00 – 2:00	Session 4: Social Justice
2:00 – 2:30	Liturgy of the Word

# Advent Handout B

## Ice Breaker: Seasonal Trivia

1. In what movie did Clarence get his wings?

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2. The Grinch tried to steal Christmas from what town?

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3. What name is now given to the Christmas tree in the Peanuts Christmas special?

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4. What would the other reindeer not let Rudolph do?

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5. What did the children use to make Frosty's nose?

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6. In *Miracle on 34th Street*, how was it proven in court that Kris Kringle was not crazy?

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7. In the Fat Albert Christmas special, who was the voice of Fat Albert?

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8. What company gave us our current vision of Santa?

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9. On *Seinfeld*, what holiday did George's father invent?

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10. What song did David Bowie and Bing Crosby sing together?

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11. What classic Christmas story starred Bill Murray, Mickey Mouse, and Kermit the Frog?

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# Advent Handout C

## Seasonal Trivia – Answers

1. In what movie did Clarence get his wings?  
*It's a Wonderful Life*
2. The Grinch tried to steal Christmas from what town?  
Whoville
3. What name is now given to the Christmas tree in the Peanuts Christmas special?  
Charlie Browner
4. What would the other reindeer not let Rudolph do?  
Play in any reindeer games
5. What did the children use to make Frosty's nose?  
Button
6. In *Miracle on 34th Street*, how was it proven in court that Kris Kringle was not crazy?  
The post office delivered to him the mail addressed to Santa Claus.
7. In the Fat Albert Christmas special, who was the voice of Fat Albert?  
Bill Cosby
8. What company gave us our current vision of Santa?  
Coca Cola
9. On *Seinfeld* what holiday did George's father invent?  
Festivas
10. What song did David Bowie and Bing Crosby sing together?  
"Little Drummer Boy"/"Peace on Earth"
11. What classic Christmas story starred Bill Murray, Mickey Mouse, and Kermit the Frog?  
*A Christmas Carol*



# Advent Handout D

## Opening Prayer: Being the Candles of Advent

### Presider

As we enter these days before Christmas, we often hear the song lyric “It’s the most wonderful time of the year.” We know that tradition and culture demand this sentiment; however, at times it is hard to feel this optimism. The daylight hours are getting shorter the demands of family, friends and work are ever increasing, and the feeling of wonder is darkened by a series of local and world events, which have left many with heavy hearts.

Watching the evening news, reflecting on recent community and personal losses, and facing the pressure of living up to others’ expectations can leave us fatigued and with a sense of darkness.

We may need some light shed in our lives.

### Reader 1

*Holding an Advent candle*

#### Candle of Hope

The first candle we light is one of hope. Sometimes our job can be full of frustration and disappointment. Our best efforts can be met with apathy and disinterest in the classroom. We may ask, “What is the point?” This Advent candle reminds us that every teacher is a missionary of hope. It may sound clichéd, but it is true. As a teacher, you bring possibility into the lives of students; you make their roads into the future bigger and better. You provide options; you equip those in your care with a map to guide them on their way. You are a messenger of hope.

*Reader places candle in wreath and lights it.*

### Reader 2

*Holding an Advent candle*

#### A Candle of Faith

The second candle is one of faith. As Catholic teachers we know that faith is an integral part of our vocation. In our schools, our teaching is supposed to encompass faith, and we are to be shining examples of faith and virtue to our students. It may seem like a daunting expectation. There is so much curriculum to cover, and sometimes it is a struggle just to get the students to stand still for prayer. Teaching faith seems complex to say the least. In times of darkness we may question our qualifications in this area.

What you must remember is that each act that creates learning about goodness is a prayer. Know that goodness is not just moral action. Goodness is God's creation. All that leads a person to know God's creation is goodness and prayer. It is science, it is history, it is geography, it is art, it is expression in languages and math and the skills we have in creating good lifestyles. Have faith, because you teach faith in all that you do.

*Reader places candle in wreath and lights it.*

### **Reader 3**

*Holding an Advent candle*

#### **A Candle of Joy**

The third Advent candle is one of joy. Joy? Our world, including our schools, is filled with so much sadness. The morning headlines are dominated by stories of violence, loss, suffering, and injustice. Schools are not isolated from this sadness.

Remember and believe that yours is a sacred profession. It is a noble calling. Think of all the great people who have been teachers. You follow a great line: Moses, Aristotle, Buddha, and Confucius. They were all great teachers. Remember that during Advent we wait; we wait for the coming of the greatest teacher of all. They called him rabbi-teacher. You are in good company, a reason to feel joy.

*Reader places candle in wreath and lights it.*

### **Reader 4**

*Holding an Advent candle*

#### **A Candle of Love**

There is one more Advent candle to light. The last one we light as we get ready to welcome Jesus. This is Jesus' candle of love. In a world full of hatred, senseless violence, and division it may be easy to ask, "Where is the love?"

As we light this candle, remember that you often bring love. When you break down the barriers of injustice by establishing good order in your classrooms, you teach love. When you break down the barriers of ignorance with knowledge, you teach love. When you break down the barriers caused by unjust social systems through acts of justice and caring, you teach love.

*Reader places candle in wreath and lights it.*

**Reader 5**

We light these candles as we gather together to celebrate the Advent season. During this season we prepare ourselves to welcome Jesus. Of course, Jesus does not come just once a year. He comes when we are in trouble, when we rejoice, when we pray, when we celebrate, and when we love one another.

Life is a constant Advent season; we are continually waiting to become, to discover, to complete. Hope, struggle, fear, expectation, and fulfillment are all part of our advent experience. The world is not as just, not as loving, not as whole as we know it should and can be. But the coming of Christ and his presence among us – as one of us – gives us reason to live with a special hope. A hope that light will shatter darkness, that we can be liberated from our fears and prejudices, that we are never alone or abandoned.

**Reader 6**

Remembering the promise of Advent we pray:

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

God of wonder, our hearts are looking for the warmth of Your love, and our minds are looking for the light of Your word. Wake us to the new morning that is waiting for us.

Increase our longing for Christ our Saviour, and give us strength to grow in love. The dawn of Jesus' coming will find us rejoicing in light and truth.

Amen

# Advent Handout E

## Reflections on Christmas Wish Lists

List some of the items you are hoping to receive this Christmas.  
Also list some of the items you are planning to give.

Items I hope to receive	Items I plan to give

## Respond to the following questions

1. How does the immediate gratification mentality of consumerism at this time of year relate to the reflective waiting message of Advent?  

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2. Comment on the amount of money that might be spent on Christmas gifts by participants at this retreat as indicated in cost estimates.  

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3. Do you find the pressure to buy more gifts or spend more money at Christmas is different today compared to what it was in the past?  

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4. How do you reconcile the birth of Christ (and the teachings of Christ) with the commercialization and consumerism in our celebration of Christmas?  

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# Advent Handout F

## Impact of Global Wealth Distribution

International Statistics from the United Nations Human Development Report, 2006

Factors	High Human Development Countries	Medium Human Development Countries	Low Human Development Countries
Life expectancy at birth (2000–2005)	77.7 years	66.9 years	45.6 years
Infant mortality rate per 1000 live births (2004)	9	45	106
Under–five mortality rate per 1000 live births (2004)	10	60	178
Probability at birth of surviving to age 65 – female (2000–05)	88.7%	73.5%	36.7%
Probability at birth of surviving to age 65 – male (2000–05)	79.6%	64.5%	34%
Adult literacy rate, percentage ages 15 and over (2004)	over 99%	80.5	57.9
GDP per capita, PPP US\$ (2004)	\$26 568	\$4901	\$1113

(Statistics from the 2006 *Human Development Report, Beyond Scarcity: Power, Poverty and the Global Water Crisis*, published by Palgrave Macmillan, pages 286 and 318. Reproduced with permission.)

**Reflection Questions**

1. What general reactions or observations did you have on seeing these statistics from the 2006 Human Development Report?

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2. Which specific statistic surprised you?

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3. How should people in affluent countries feel about the data in the chart?

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4. Is there any benefit to be gained from being reminded of the global inequities demonstrated in these United Nations statistics?

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# Advent Handout G

## It's A Wonderful Life

### Post Film Reflections

1. Why do you think that this film has remained popular over the many decades since it was made?

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2. Comment on George being the “richest man in town”?

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3. How does this film relate to the Advent themes of light and hope?

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4. What are some of your favourite movies, programs, and songs that help you escape the busyness of the season and come closer to the true joy of Advent?

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5. How does the following quotation relate to the themes of Advent?

“In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid: for see – I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.’ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, ‘Glory to God in the highest heaven and on earth peace among those whom he favours.’” (Luke 2:8-14)

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# Advent Handout H

## Lighting a Candle in the Darkness

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives  
and recovery of sight to the blind,  
to let the oppressed go free,  
to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.” (Luke 4:18)

“A shoot shall come out from the stock of Jesse,  
and a branch shall grow out of his roots.  
The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him,  
the spirit of wisdom and understanding,  
the spirit of counsel and might,  
the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.  
His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord.  
He shall not judge by what his eyes see,  
or decide by what his ears hear;  
but with righteousness he shall judge the poor,  
and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;  
he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth,  
and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.  
Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist,  
and faithfulness the belt around his loins.” (Isaiah 11:1-5)

“What do you think? If a shepherd has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? And if he finds it, truly I tell you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. So it is not the will of your Father in heaven that one of these little ones should be lost.”  
(Matthew 18:12-14)

“He has told you, O mortal, what is good;  
and what does the Lord require of you  
but to do justice, and to love kindness,  
and to walk humbly with your God?” (Micah 6:8)

# Advent: Handout I

## Liturgy of the Word

### Suggested Opening Songs

“O Come, O Come Emmanuel” or “You Are the Voice.”

*(Catholic Book of Worship III)*

### Suggested Opening Prayer (as the Advent wreath is lit)

God of true light, You have given us Yourself, born into our world as one of us. Christ is our Light, the path we follow, our saviour and friend. Help us follow Your ways as we encounter the darkness of injustice and suffering. We ask this through the one who is to come, Emmanuel, God with us. Amen

### Suggested readings

#### First reading

“The spirit of the Lord God is upon me,  
because the Lord has anointed me;  
he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed  
to bind up the broken-hearted,  
to proclaim liberty to the captives,  
and release to the prisoners;  
to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour,  
and the day of vengeance of our God.”  
(Isaiah 61:1-2a)

#### Second reading

“To you I lift up my eyes,  
O you who are enthroned in the heavens!  
As the eyes of servants  
look to the hand of their master,  
as the eyes of a maid  
to the hand of her mistress,  
so our eyes look to the Lord our God,  
until he has mercy upon us.

“Have mercy upon us, O Lord,  
have mercy upon us,  
for we have had more than enough of contempt.  
Our soul has had more than its fill  
of the scorn of those who are at ease,  
of the contempt of the proud.” (Psalm 123)

### **Third Reading**

“There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.”

“This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, ‘Who are you?’ He confessed, ‘I am not the Messiah.’ And they asked him, ‘What then? Are you Elijah?’ He said, ‘I am not.’ ‘Are you the prophet?’ He answered, ‘No.’ Then they said to him, ‘Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?’ He said, ‘I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness,

Make straight the way of the Lord,’  
as the prophet Isaiah said.” (John 1:6-8, 19-28)

### **Suggested Prayers of Intercession**

Loving God, help us to welcome Your light of love and justice, and as we are surrounded by the darkness of greed and violence. We pray.

Response: Loving God, help us be a light and sign of hope for the World.

Loving God, help us to be more conscious of our many gifts and blessings and more aware of how we can use them to help those in need. We pray.

Response: Loving God, help us be a light and sign of hope for the world.

Loving God, in thanksgiving for the people in our world who have modelled the teachings of Christ. We pray.

Response: Loving God, help us be a light and sign of hope for the world.  
(For the needs of your local community)

Response: Loving God, help us be a light and sign of hope for the world.

### **Suggested Closing Prayer**

“God, we pray that Your Spirit may rule over all things.

May Your Spirit rule over kings and presidents  
over prime ministers and generals  
over CEOs and party bosses  
over the legislature and over the bureaucrats  
over all citizens.

May Your Spirit guide us on the way of peace  
on the way of honest dialogue  
on the way of reconciliation between peoples  
on the way of disarmament and justice

on the way of freedom and life for all.

May Your Spirit lead us on the journey of blessings shared with all  
on the journey of educational opportunity for all our children  
on the adventure of research and study that helps all men and women  
on the road to meaningful work for all people  
on the path of solidarity and love between all our brothers and sisters.

May Your Spirit help us  
to speak up with courage  
to share what we have and what we are  
to challenge the powers that be  
to offer a message of liberation and life.

We make this prayer in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen  
(The Catholic Women's League of Canada. Reprinted with permission.)

**Suggested Closing Song**

“O Come Divine Messiah” *Catholic Book of Worship III*.

# RETREAT 5

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## Lent Called from the Ashes

*Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted for forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished. 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."*

(Matthew 4:1-4)

Lent is a time of renewal and spiritual growth. We enter into a desert journey and become aware of the ashes on our forehead. We focus on the challenging teachings of Christ. This is the time to examine ourselves: where we have come from, who we are, and where we want to go.

## You will need

### Materials

- Photocopies of Lent Handouts A, B, C, D, and F for each participant
- Photocopies of Lent Handout E-1 to E-5, one for each station in Session 4
- Chart paper, markers, and tape
- Seven copies of *The Catholic Catechism* with the following pages flagged: Prudence p. 1806, Justice p.1807, Fortitude p.1808, Temperance p.1809, Faith p.1814, Hope p.1817, and Charity p.1822
- A Paschal candle or image of one
- Pens, paper, markers, construction paper, glue, felt, magazines and assorted other art materials – enough for each participant to construct an image of a Paschal candle

### Personnel

- A person to welcome everyone at the beginning of the day
- Readers for the Opening Prayer and Closing Liturgy
- People to help set up the stations for Session 4

## Retreat Plan

### **8:30 – Gathering Time, Coffee, Tea, Juice, Muffins**

Encourage staff to participate in this time to build community and develop a positive tone for the day.

### **9:00 – Welcome**

Distribute Lent Handout A: Retreat Outline so that everyone is clear about the timeline and expectations of the retreat.

**Note:** This outline could also be distributed prior to the retreat day.

### **9:15 – Opening prayer**

Distribute Lent Handout B: Opening Prayer.

### **9:30 – Session 1: Remembering Our Stories**

During Lent, we are asked to reflect on our situation, our experiences, and our history. Part of the Lenten journey is to grow in faith, but real growth cannot happen without thoughtful reflection on where we have come from. This activity asks us to reflect on – and celebrate – a significant event in our lives that influenced who we are today.

Distribute Lent Handout C: Remembering Our Stories. Allow 10-15 minutes of quiet time to reflect upon the events and to plan the meals. Soft music could be played during this time.

At an appropriate time, ask participants to share their stories and their special meals with the people in their small groups. Allow 10-15 minutes for the discussion and sharing. If retreat participants wish to do so, their celebratory meal plans could be posted around the room.

### **10:15 – Break**

### **10:30 – Session 2: The Virtuous Journey**

Divide up retreat participants into seven groups. Distribute to each group a copy of *The Catholic Catechism*. Each of the copy should be flagged to a section that explains one of the following virtues: Prudence p. 1806, Justice p. 1807, Fortitude p. 1808, Temperance p. 1809, Faith p. 1814, Hope p. 1817, and Charity p. 1822.

Distribute a copy of Lent Handout D: Reflections on a Virtuous Journey to each participant. Assign one virtue to each group and ask one person from each group to read aloud *The Catholic Catechism* entry for the virtue that group will reflect on. Encourage participants to write down their initial responses to the reflection questions and then discuss those responses with the members of their group.

### **11:30 – Session 3: Designing a Paschal Candle**

To do this activity, you will need an assortment of art and craft supplies, construction paper, markers, scissors, glue, and magazines for pictures.

The Paschal candle is a powerful symbol of Easter and our Christian faith. The candle symbolizes the light of Christ and the beauty that is the Paschal mystery – the living, dying, and resurrection of our existence. Ask each retreat participant to reflect on personal Lenten experience and design a personal Paschal candle.

You may wish to discuss the sacredness of the Paschal candle and show the design of one. The Paschal candle represents Christ, the Light of the World, and it plays an important part in the Easter Vigil as it is carried into the darkened church, then lit and blessed.

Encourage retreat participants to think of ways the various aspects of their Lenten journey and this retreat can be brought into the design for their candle. Suggest that they use a variety of images, objects, pictures, or symbols to complete their Paschal candle.

### **12:00 – Lunch**

It is preferable to have the entire staff share lunch together. If people finish lunch early invite them to enjoy the retreat grounds.

### **1:00: Session 4: A Lenten Journey**

Place the five readings contained in Lent Handouts E-1 to E-5 around the room. Beside the handouts, place a sheet of chart paper. Then ask retreat participants to circulate around the room and read the contents of the handouts. At each station, invite people to write a response on the chart paper provided. How do the contents of this set of handouts relate to the virtues they reflected on earlier in the day?

Allow participants enough time to circulate and read the comments two or three times and add more comments if they wish to do so. Although various voices are included in Lent Handout E series, you may wish to add quotations or articles about issues that are of concern in your community.

### **2:00 – Eucharistic Celebration or Liturgy of the Word**

The “Guidelines for Preparing a liturgy of the Word” in the introductory section (page 3) of this manual will assist you in planning your Liturgy. Select staff ahead of time to exercise the various ministries within the Eucharistic celebration. If it is not possible to arrange for a priest presider for a Eucharistic celebration, use the readings in Lent Handout F to celebrate a Liturgy of the Word.

Distribute Lent Handout F: Liturgy of the Word.



## **Additional Resources**

“The Good Life from a Catholic Perspective: The Problem of Consumption” by Monsignor Charles Murphy (1995). Available at the Social Development and World Peace web site of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

[www.usccb.org/sdwp/ejp/background/articles/consumption.shtml](http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/ejp/background/articles/consumption.shtml)

Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us: A Pastoral Plan for Adult Faith Formation in the United States. Issued by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

November 17, 1999. Available online [www.usccb.org/education/ourhearts.htm](http://www.usccb.org/education/ourhearts.htm)

“A Pastoral Message: Living With Faith and Hope After September 11” by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, November 14, 2001. Available online

[www.usccb.org/sdwp/sept11.shtml](http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/sept11.shtml)

“Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity.” A Pastoral Statement from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, November 15, 2000. Available online

[www.usccb.org/mrs/welcome.shtml](http://www.usccb.org/mrs/welcome.shtml).

### **Suggestions for a Half-Day Retreat**

Choose Session 1 and Session 2. Shorten the time frame for the sessions you choose to use. Conclude the retreat with a Eucharistic Celebration.

# Lent Handout A

## Retreat Outline

8:30 – 9:00	Coffee, Tea, Juice, Muffins
9:00 – 9:15	Welcome and Instructions for the Day
9:15 – 9:30	Opening Prayer
9:30 – 10:15	Session 1: Remembering Our Stories
10:15 – 10:30	Break
10:30 – 11:30	Session 2: The Virtuous Journey
11:30 – 12:00	Session 3: Designing a Paschal Candle
12:00 – 1:00	Communal Lunch
1:00 – 2:00	Session 4: A Lenten Journey
2:00 – 2:45	Eucharistic Celebration or Liturgy of the Word

# Lent Handout B

## Opening Prayer

### Presider

In our Lenten journey, we enter a symbolic desert, not for the sake of suffering, but for the experience of true growth. We know that Lent is a time of conversion and development. As a Christian community, we embrace this time, with a deep desire for growth, a true longing for holiness, and a looking forward to the sacred days of Easter.

As we make our journey this Lent, we strip away our complacency and superficial masks; we dare to explore our true being. We turn to prayer as we strive to more closely take hold of the teachings and the way of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us offer God praise and thanksgiving.

### All

*Make the sign of the cross*

### Presider

Behold! Now is the acceptable time!

### All

Now is the day of salvation!

### Presider

I was hungry.

### All

And You gave me food.

### Presider

I was thirsty.

### All

And You gave me drink.

### Presider

I was a stranger.

### All

And You welcomed me.

**Presider**

I was naked.

**All**

And You clothed me.

**Presider**

I was ill.

**All**

And You cared for me.

**Presider**

I was in jail.

**All**

And You visited me.

**Reader**

Lord Jesus Christ,

Be with all those who are in need.

Help our families, our school, and our parish

Keep a good and holy Lent.

And bring us quickly to the glory of Easter.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen

# Lent Handout C

## Remembering Our Stories

Each time we celebrate mass we retell a significant story. The story of the Last Supper has a profound meaning, especially during Lent. It is a powerful story worth visiting and revisiting. It is also a story with an enduring legacy for us as Christians. The Last Supper itself was based on the tradition of retelling a significant story.

The Jewish Festival of Passover celebrates the Exodus from Egypt and freedom from slavery. Families and friends gather to share a special meal called a Seder and to tell the story of Passover from a special book called a Haggadah.

Special foods are eaten at a Seder meal as a reminder of the hardship of slavery and the miracle of being freed. At the centre of a Seder table is a special plate, containing specific items of food with symbolic meanings.

Reflect on a significant event in your life, one that you believe is worth remembering and celebrating through a symbolic meal.

Describe such an event in your life and design a symbolic meal that you could share with others to celebrate that event. Chose an event that helped shape you into the person that you are today, one that is worthy of remembering and celebrating.

### The event

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### The symbolic meal to celebrate and remember that event

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# Lent Handout D

## Reflections on a Virtuous Journey

1. What associations do you have with the virtue on which your group is meditating?

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2. What is your understanding of the description of this virtue in *The Catholic Catechism*?

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3. What practical difficulties do people experience in trying to practise this virtue?

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4. How does this virtue relate to our Lenten journey?

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5. Where is this virtue most needed in our society today?

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6. What aspects of our culture work against the practice of this virtue? What aspects work for the practice of this virtue?

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# Lent Handout E-1

## How to Recognize the Poor Today

“According to the United Nations, in spite of unprecedented economic growth in this century, material poverty remains a serious problem. In countries of the South, one person in three (in total about 1.3 billion people) lives in poverty, and more than 12.5 million children die each year from easily preventable diseases. Primary health care, basic education, safe drinking water and adequate nutrition are available to fewer than one billion human beings. The average income of the wealthiest 20 per cent in our world is 150 times greater than that of the poorest fifth. . . .”

### Poverty in Canada

“Canadians are faced with a deteriorating situation. At a time when the international community invites action toward the eradication of poverty, governments are pursuing three objectives: to cut social spending, to reduce deficits and to pay back our debts. But who raises their voice on behalf of the 4.8 million people (one of every six Canadians in 1994) living in poverty? Do Canadians realize the human cost of sustaining an overall national poverty rate of 16.6 per cent? There is no doubt: poverty must remain the top priority on the social policy agenda – and not only after the debt or other social ills have been addressed.”

“The existence of poverty in Canada seems contradictory to the fact that the country appears at the top of the United Nations Human Development Index. What is important to consider is that poverty strikes some Canadians harder than others – families headed by single-parent mothers and people living alone are more likely to be poor. Additionally, one study estimated that as many as one of every three Canadians will be poor sometime during their working lives.”

(“The Struggle Against Poverty: A Sign of Hope in Our World: A Pastoral Letter by the Episcopal Commission for Social Affairs on the Elimination of Poverty.” Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, Halifax October 17, 1996. Reprinted with permission.)

## Lent Handout E-2

### Working for Justice

“Today, more than ever, Christians are called upon to follow in the footsteps of the prophets, in the footsteps of Jesus, by performing an extremely delicate, often controversial, but nonetheless essential service: denouncing social sin that oppresses and impoverishes their brothers and sisters. We remain convinced that the proper emphasis should be placed on the eradication of structural injustice, one sure cause of poverty. Personal conversion and true repentance through the promotion and practice of social change, inspired by the Gospel, can further this goal.”

“As we approach a new millennium, it appears that the planet is becoming increasingly polarized into two distinct new groups: ‘service’ workers and ‘knowledge’ workers. Spurred by the often invisible forces of globalization, will the privileged minority of ‘knowledge workers’ come to see their marginalized brothers and sisters as irrelevant or as obstacles to their future aspirations? Will an even more deprived social sector be created, consisting of persons totally excluded from the market and economic participation? The moral quality of economic growth can also be measured by how it is shared. The Church continues to express grave doubts and criticism whenever the neoliberal economic agenda heightens the polarization between rich and poor, or excludes the latter from their due benefits.”

“The main issue in the coming years will be how to distribute equitably the wealth of the world that has been created, as we maintain the ecological balance that should be the inheritance of all peoples. To meet this seemingly immense challenge, what is called for is a new global ethic in this era of globalization. It is no longer logical to blindly equate economic liberalism with social advancement. The current catastrophic state of the world eloquently shows what happens when neoliberal economic policies impoverish women and men. Instead, economic democratization, genuine redistributive reforms and the resulting strengthening of civil society should be the primary goals.”

(“The Struggle Against Poverty: A Sign of Hope in Our World: A Pastoral letter by the Episcopal Commission for Social Affairs on the Elimination of Poverty.” Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, Halifax October 17, 1996. Reprinted with permission.)



## Lent Handout E-3

### The Good Samaritan

“Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. ‘Teacher,’ he said, ‘What must I do to inherit eternal life?’ He said to him, ‘What is written in the law? What do you read there?’ He answered, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself.’ And he said to him, ‘You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.’”

“But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, ‘And who is my neighbour?’ Jesus replied, ‘A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while travelling came near him, and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, ‘Take care of him, and when I come back, I will pay you whatever more you spend.’ ‘Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?’ He said, ‘The one who showed him mercy.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Go and do likewise.’ (Luke 10:25-37)

## Lent Handout E-4

### Mother Theresa

“There is so much suffering, so much hatred, so much misery, and we with our prayer, with our sacrifice are beginning at home. Love begins at home, and it is not how much we do, but how much love we put in the action that we do . . .”

“I want you to find the poor here, right in your own home first. And begin love there. Be that good news to your own people. And find out about your next-door neighbour – do you know who they are?”

(Nobel Prize Lecture, December 11, 1979)

“We all long, we all want – even the disbeliever wants – to love God in some way or another, and where is God? How do we love God, whom we don’t see? To make it easy for us, to help us to love, He makes himself the hungry one, the naked one, the homeless one. And you will, I’m sure ask me: ‘Where is that hunger in our country?’ Yes, there is hunger. Maybe not the hunger for a piece of bread, but there is a terrible hunger for love. There is a terrible hunger for the word of God.”

(Harvard’s Class Day address, June 9, 1982).

“And so let us ask our Lord to give us that courage to make every child feel wanted. And this is the love for one another. And where does this love begin? At home. And how does love begin? By prayer. Prayer deepens the faith, and the fruit of faith is always love. And the fruit of love is service. Prayer always gives us a clean heart, and a clean heart can see God. And if we see God in each other, naturally we will love one another as He loves us.”

(Address to the Convocation, University of Alberta, St. Paul, 1982)

## Lent Handout E-5

### Desmond Tutu

“When will we learn, when will the people of the world get up and say, Enough is enough. God created us for fellowship. God created us so that we should form the human family, existing together because we were made for one another. We are not made for an exclusive self-sufficiency but for interdependence, and we break the law of our being at our peril. . . .”

“When will we learn that human beings are of infinite value because they have been created in the image of God, and that it is a blasphemy to treat them as if they were less than this and to do so ultimately recoils on those who do this? In dehumanizing others, they are themselves dehumanized. Perhaps oppression dehumanizes the oppressor as much as, if not more than, the oppressed. They need each other to become truly free, to become human. We can be human only in fellowship, in community, in koinonia, in peace. . . .”

“God calls us to be fellow workers with Him, so that we can extend His Kingdom of Shalom, of justice, of goodness, of compassion, of caring, of sharing, of laughter, joy and reconciliation, so that the kingdoms of this world will become the Kingdom of our God and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever. Amen.”

(Desmond Tutu, Nobel Peace Prize Lecture, December 11, 1984)

# Lent Handout F

## Liturgy of the Word

### First Reading

“Now the Lord said to Abram, ‘Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’

“So Abram went as the Lord had told him and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.”

(Genesis 12:1-4)

### Second Reading: Psalm 23

“The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.  
He makes me lie down in green pastures;  
he leads me beside still waters;  
he restores my soul.  
He leads me in right paths  
for his name’s sake.

“Even though I walk through the darkest valley,  
I fear no evil;  
for you are with me;  
your rod and your staff —  
they comfort me.

“You prepare a table before me  
in the presence of my enemies;  
you anoint my head with oil;  
my cup overflows.  
Surely goodness and mercy  
shall follow me  
all the days of my life,  
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord  
my whole life long.”

**Third Reading**

“Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand, and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.”  
(Romans 5:1-5)

**Fourth Reading**

“Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white. Suddenly there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. Then Peter said to Jesus, ‘Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you wish, I will make three dwellings here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.’ While he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud a voice said, ‘This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!’ When the disciples heard this, they fell to the ground and were overcome by fear. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, ‘Get up and do not be afraid.’ And when they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus himself alone.

“As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus ordered them, Tell no one about the vision until after the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.”  
(Matthew 17:1-9)



# RETREAT 6

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## Healing Letting Go and Letting God

*Be still, and know that I am God.*

(Psalms 46:10)

This retreat celebrates the gift of rest and refreshment to which God calls us time and time again. The daily pace of school life is frenzied and fast, and, therefore, there is need for staff to “come to the well” to be nourished. Jesus consciously went away from the crowds to pray. We too need time away in order to connect with ourselves and with God.

This retreat may be used at any time during the school year. It is particularly suitable midway through the year when staff are feeling drained and in need of restoration. The retreat has been designed to be used anywhere. However, given the theme of “Letting go and letting God,” it is ideal that the site be outside the school so that staff can truly feel like they are getting away for the day.

**Note:** Sadly, there are times when a school community experiences loss, perhaps the death of a staff member or of a student. This retreat would be one way of providing an opportunity for prayer, reflection and, hopefully, healing during such tragic circumstances.

## You will need

### Materials

- Copies of Healing Handouts A to E, one for each retreat participant
- A blue cloth, a large clear glass bowl, a large water vessel filled with water, a Bible for a prayer centre (Opening Prayer)
- A slide show of waterfalls, ocean, etc. (optional to enhance Opening Prayer)
- A podium for guest speaker for Session 4
- If you don't have a guest speaker for Session 4, you will need articles for each of the three carousels depending on what you choose to offer
- If using carousels for Session 4, breakout areas will be needed
- Bread and wine for Eucharistic Liturgy
- Copies of Glory & Praise (Second Edition, OCP) for each staff member for the Opening Prayer
- Copies of Catholic Book of Worship III for each staff member for closing Eucharistic Liturgy

### Personnel

- A person to greet the staff and direct them to take a seat in the prayer circle when it is time for the Opening Prayer and the Closing Liturgy to begin
- A leader and four readers for the Opening Prayer
- A pianist/guitar player and singer to lead the "Come to the Water" song within the Opening Prayer and the song for the Closing Liturgy.
- A guest speaker for Session 4 or, if not using a guest speaker, three staff members who will oversee each of the three carousels
- A priest to be the presider for the Eucharistic celebration
- Staff to prepare and read the Prayers of the Faithful
- Two persons to take up the gifts at the Eucharistic Liturgy
- Two Eucharistic ministers
- A person to bake the bread for the Eucharistic Liturgy (optional)



## Retreat Plan

### **8:30 – Gathering Time, Coffee, Tea, Juice, Muffins**

Encourage staff to participate in this time to build community and develop a positive start to the retreat.

### **9:00 – Welcome**

In the welcoming remarks, hand out Healing Handout A: Retreat Outline to clarify the timelines and expectations for staff.

**Note:** This outline could also be given out ahead of the retreat day.

### **9:15 – Ice Breaker: Bluff Your Colleagues**

Give each retreat participant a copy of Healing Handout B: Ice Breaker: Bluff Your Colleagues. Ask everyone to form into groups of five. If your staff is small, you could do this activity as one large group. After about five minutes, invite the staff member who resides geographically closest to the retreat location to go first. Then move to the left of that person around the circle until everyone has taken a turn. The object of the exercise is to see who the best bluffer is.

### **9:30 – Opening Prayer: Come to the Well**

Distribute copies of Healing Handout C: Opening Prayer: Come to the Well. Place chairs in a circle and in the middle of the circle have a simple prayer centre that includes a blue cloth. Place on the cloth a large clear bowl and a large vessel filled with water. Beside the vessel and bowl have a large Bible opened to Isaiah 55:1 “Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters.” If anyone has a small wooden water well, this would also be nice to add to the prayer centre.

Ensure that the person you choose to pour the water as part of the Opening Prayer is asked to do so slowly and reverently. The reader should also be asked to speak slowly and prayerfully.

**Note:** A slide show of water scenes playing continuously throughout the liturgy would visually enhance this prayer service.

### **9:45 – Session 1: Letting Go and Letting God**

This session will give staff time alone to reflect on various Scripture passages that call them to “let go and let God.” Distribute copies of Healing Handout D: Letting Go and Letting God.

### **10:30 – Break**

### **10:50 – Session 2: Small Group Sharing**

Ask retreat participants to form groups of five and share a) the passages they found most relevant from Healing Handout D and b) personal insights gained from their reflection time.

### **11:30 – Session 3: Large Group Sharing**

Ask each group from Session 2 to pair up with another group and consider the three core questions contained in Healing Handout E: Group Discussion Questions.

### **12:00 – Lunch**

It is preferable to have the entire staff share lunch together. If people finish lunch early, invite them to enjoy the retreat grounds. Remind them that Session 4 starts at 1 p.m. sharp.

### **1:00 – Session 4: Finding a Balance and Staying Well**

This is an ideal time to have a guest presenter. Here are some ideas to consider:

- Have a doctor, who is engaging and interesting to listen to, speak about wellness and effective ways to manage stress.
- Arrange for a yoga instructor or tai chi instructor to lead staff in a session (you may have a person on staff who could lead this session).
- Invite a humourist to tell some funny stories and talk about the healing power of laughter and its connection to wellness.
- Have a family counsellor address strategies for finding balance between work and home.
- Have a drumming team in to explain the Native roots of this ritual and to lead your staff in a drumming activity. School staff who have experienced drumming together say it is good for the spirit and a wonderful community builder.

**Note:** If the staff has recently experienced a loss, Session 4 is an ideal time to invite in a grief counsellor to speak about the effects of loss both on individuals and communities, and to offer strategies for coping and healing.

If you do not have funding to have a guest speaker, consider doing the following for Session 4. Staff form three small subgroups and rotate through three 15-minute carousels. The rotation would need to be clearly outlined and music could be played to indicate to groups when to move to their next session.

Suggestions for carousels:

- View a short stand-up comedy clip (humour as healer)
- Participate in a fun non-competitive staff volleyball game
- Engage in a short, guided meditation session
- Participate in yoga or tai chi using a DVD that is easy to follow.

### **2:00 – Closing Eucharistic Celebration**

To assist your planning refer to the Eucharistic Liturgy Planning Sheet included in this resource (page 8).

This Liturgy is built around the retreat theme of Letting Go and Letting God. If you are unable to get a priest, this prayer service can be celebrated as a Liturgy of the Word. See the “Liturgy of the Word” on page 3.

In place of the homily, you could invite several staff members ahead of time to prepare brief reflections on the gospel reading and share these reflections after the gospel reading. Another option is to invite staff to get into triads after the gospel is read and invite them to share their thoughts on what spoke to them in the gospel reading. Some of the thoughts shared in earlier sessions (1 and 2) may be shared here as well.

It would be ideal if the priest you choose to preside at the Eucharistic Liturgy can participate in the full retreat with staff so that he can tie the experience of the day into his reflections within the Liturgy.

Invite a staff member to bake the bread for the Liturgy (ask a local parish team member regarding availability of recipe for bread).

## **Suggestions for Closing Liturgy**

### **Opening Songs**

“Gather Us In” from *Catholic Book of Worship III*

### **First Reading**

Liturgically, it is always ideal to use the readings of the day from the Liturgical calendar, but here are some alternative suggestions.

Isaiah 55:1-5 “Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; . . .”

Isaiah 41:9-14 “Do not fear, for I am with you, do not be afraid, for I am your God; . . .”

Ezekiel 36:25-28 “I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean . . .”

### **Psalm Response**

Psalm 23 “God leads me beside still waters.”

Psalm 27 “Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage.”

Psalm 94 “In the middle of my troubles, you console me and make me happy.”

### **Gospel Reading**

Matthew 11:28-30 “Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. . . .”

John 6:16-21 “But he said to them, ‘It is I; do not be afraid.’ . . .”

John 16:32-33 “In the world you face persecution. But take courage; I have conquered the world. . . .”

### **Prayers of the Faithful**

Although the priest can provide previously designed prayers of the faithful, it is ideal if these prayers have been thoughtfully prepared by the staff. The prayers will be more meaningful to the community. In preparing prayers of the faithful include a prayer for the Church and for the world at large. A special prayer for staff who are ill is most appropriate for inclusion.

In light of the theme of the retreat, an appropriate community response to these prayers might be, “God of comfort, hear our prayer.”

### **Songs**

All of the following songs are in the *Catholic Book of Worship III*.

For Preparation of Gifts: “You Are Near” or “Be Not Afraid”

For Communion: “Taste and See” or “Seed, Scattered and Sown”

For Recessional: “You Are the Voice” or “For You Are My God”

### **Suggestions for a half-day retreat**

Include the welcome and celebrate the Opening Prayer. Shorten the times for Sessions 1 and 2 to half an hour. Shorten Session 3 to 15 minutes and only do two of the three questions on Healing Handout E: Group Discussion Questions. Do only two carousels for Session 4. End the retreat with a Liturgy of the Word.

# Healing Handout A

## Retreat Outline

8:30 – 9:00	Coffee, Tea, Juice, Muffins
9:00 – 9:15	Welcome and Instructions for the Day
9:15 – 9:30	Ice Breaker: Bluff Your Colleagues
9:30 – 9:45	Opening Prayer
9:45 – 10:30	Session 1: Letting Go and Letting God
10:30 – 10:50	Break
10:50 – 11:30	Session 2: Small Group Sharing
11:30 – 12:00	Session 3: Large Group Sharing
12:00 – 1:00	Communal Lunch
1:00 – 2:00	Session 4: Finding a Balance and Staying Well
2:00 – 3:00	Eucharistic Liturgy

# Healing Handout B

## Ice Breaker: Bluff Your Colleagues

In the spaces below, write two things that are true about yourself and one that is false.

The goal is to bluff your colleagues. Each person reads aloud their three things. The other people in the group try to guess which of the three things is not true about their colleague.

Examples

1. I am from a family of nine children.
2. I was born in the kitchen of my family home.
3. As a teenager I played on a national hockey team.

**Okay, It's Your Turn to Bluff!**

1.

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2.

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3.

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# Healing Handout C

## Opening Prayer Come to the Well

The music used in this prayer service is “Come to the Water” in *Glory & Praise* (Second Edition, OCP)

### Leader

Be still within  
Be still without  
Calm your mind  
Settle your heart  
Centre yourself in God  
Who calls us  
To come,  
Come to the well.  
Savour the sound of the water as it is reverently poured.  
(*Water is poured slowly into the bowl*)  
Reminding us of God’s still waters  
Reminding us that we have a God who comforts  
An Enduring Presence to whom we can come to pour out our worries and stress.  
A God who is a deep, refreshing well  
from whom we come to drink  
And be renewed in mind and body and spirit.

### All Sing

First verse of “Come to the Water”

### Reading

“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.”  
(Isaiah 55:1)

### All Sing

Second verse of “Come to the Water”

**Reading**

“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 55:3)

**All Sing**

Third verse of “Come to the Water”

**Reading**

“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.”  
(Matthew 11:28-30)

**All Sing**

Fourth verse of “Come to the Water”

**Reading:**

“Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink.”  
(John 7:37-38)

**Leader**

Gracious God, may Your love, like water pour over our thirsty spirits, cleansing and renewing us. Be present to us in a special way today on our staff retreat as we “come to the well” to drink from Your life-giving waters. Renew our tired spirits. Help us come to know You more deeply, so we might love You more fully and serve You more humbly. Continue to guide us and call us back time and time again to the well. Deepen our trust and faith in You so we might truly “let go and let God.”  
Amen.



# Healing Handout D

## Letting Go and Letting God

Take time to reflect upon the following Scripture passages.  
Which passage(s) speak most to you right now in your life?

“Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.” (Matthew 11:28)

“Be still, and know that I am God!”  
(Psalms 46:10)

“Let anyone who is thirsty come to me.”  
(John 7:37)

“But he said to them, ‘It is I; do not be afraid.’ ”  
(John 6:20)

“The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything.”  
(Philippians 4:5)

“My God in whom I trust.” (Psalms 91:2)

“And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.” “  
(Exodus 3:6)

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.”  
(Colossians 3:16)

“Be strong and bold . . . It is the Lord who goes before you.  
He will be with you; he will not fail you or forsake you. Do not fear to be dismayed.”  
(Deuteronomy 31:7-8)

# Healing Handout E

## Group Discussion Questions

1. Some would argue that “letting go and letting God” is easier said than done!  
Why is it not always easy to surrender to God?

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2. In looking back over your life, do you remember times when you were able to truly “let go and let God?” If so, what was the end result?  
If not, what got in the way of you being able to let go?

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3. What is one way you try to gain balance in your life so that stress does not move in and take over?

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# RETREAT 7

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## Easter Called to be Messengers of Hope

*When you do nothing, you feel overwhelmed and powerless.  
But when you get involved, you feel the sense of hope and accomplishment  
that comes from knowing you are working to make things better.*  
(Pauline R. Kezer)

*If you lose hope, somehow you lose the vitality that keeps life moving,  
you lose that courage to be, that quality that helps you go on in spite of it all.  
And so today I still have a dream.*  
(Martin Luther King, Jr., *The Trumpet of Conscience*)

This retreat celebrates the gift of hope in our midst. In today's fast-paced world, we rarely have an opportunity to reflect upon and rejoice in the tremendous value of hope. Winston Churchill said, "The pessimist sees difficulty in every opportunity. The optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty."

It is important to strive to see the positive value in what we do every day. The goal of this retreat is to provide the essential tools to facilitate a day focused on recognizing our own gifts and celebrating the many gifts possessed by each member of the school community. It is through these gifts that we can find strength to be "Messengers of Hope."

## You will need

### Materials

- Copies of Easter Handouts A, B, C, D, and E for each retreat participant
- An up-to-date staff list
- Small bags of various coloured jelly beans or Smarties, one for each retreat participant
- Chart paper
- Adhesive or masking tape
- Multi-coloured markers
- Pencils

### Personnel

- Someone to prepare bags of jelly beans or Smarties for Ice Breaker activity and to set up the colour stations
- Someone to cut into strips the list of names of all the staff members in your school, and to cut Easter Handout C: What's in a Name? in half
- Priest (if possible) to preside over the Eucharistic Celebration
- Readers for the Opening Prayer and Reflection

## Retreat Plan

### **8:30 – Gathering Time, Coffee, Tea, Juice, Muffins**

Encourage staff to take part in this gathering time because it is a key time for community building as well as for setting a positive and relaxed tone for the retreat.

### **9:00 – Welcome**

Distribute Easter Handout A: Retreat Outline so that staff members are clear about the timeline and expectations of the retreat. At this time, go over any house rules that may apply to your location, for example, breakout rooms, lunch details, sacred space area(s), walking areas or trails, and out-of-bound areas. Introduce any special guests, guest facilitator, speakers, or parish pastoral team members who may be present.

**Note:** This outline could also be distributed prior to the retreat day.

### **9:15 – Ice Breaker: Jelly Beans**

For this activity you will need one small bag of jelly beans (or Smarties) for each participant. You will also need to have large signs positioned around the room designated for each colour of candy. Allow enough space at each colour station for a significant number of participants to gather and count their candies.

Pass out a small bag of jelly beans to each person in the group. Tell them to keep the bags closed until told otherwise. Explain that when you say “Go!” everyone needs to go around and trade with others to try and collect candies of one colour. Once they have candies of one colour, they need to go to specific colour areas and count their jelly beans. Those with the highest number of each colour group wins. Allow 15 minutes for this activity.

### **9:30 – Opening Prayer, Scripture Reading, and Reflection**

Distribute copies of Easter Handout B: Opening Prayer, which is based on the Gospel of Luke, Chapter 24. Invite a staff member or members to read the gospel account. Afterward, the presider will read the brief reflection in the handout.

This reading sets the tone for the day, which focuses on the theme of hope.

### **9:45 – Session 1: What’s in a Name?**

Before you do this activity, you will need a master list containing the names of all staff members at your school. Cut this list into strips with one name per strip. Give each retreat participant one staff member’s name. Make sure that no one gets their own name.

Distribute first half of Easter Handout C: What’s in a Name? to each participant. Ask participants to find a quiet spot alone to complete this activity. They are asked to reflect upon the person whose name is recorded on their piece of paper. Encourage them to think specifically of something that they admire about this person, for example, their

style of teaching, personality, coaching abilities, or ways of dealing with parents and students. Ask each participant to write down a positive quality that would reflect well on that person.

Once everyone has completed their sheets and handed them to the presider, everyone returns to their seats.

Invite several volunteers to randomly read the reflections for each staff member. Be sure to read all the sheets that are submitted, and instruct volunteers to read the reflections before they read them aloud to ensure the appropriateness of the comments.

Once all sheets have been read, pose these questions for discussion:

- How did it feel hearing all the reflections read for your colleagues?
- How did you feel when you heard the attributes attached to your name?

Allow for some responses to be heard from the group. Time will dictate how long this session can last.

### **10:30 – Break**

### **10:50 – Session 2: Small Group Discussion**

Divide retreat participants into groups by numbering them one through six (depending on your staff size). Manage your tables so that there are about six people (or fewer) at each. Have groups complete Easter Handout D, Small Group Questions.

### **11:30 – Session 3: All Star Messengers**

Ask retreat participants to remain in their groups (from Session 2) for this activity. Each group is to construct a Dream Team Movie List that will include actors who will star in a fictional movie entitled *Messengers of Hope*. The movie will be a full-length family feature that will deliver a hope-filled, inspired message to the children and teens of today.

For this activity, groups will decide on which actors they will cast in their movie and then record their reason(s) for their cast selection. Each cast must include a father, mother, brother(s), and sister(s), as well as a number of other supporting characters. After about 20 minutes, small groups will come back together as a large group to share their selections. Groups may choose to use chart paper for this activity.

### **12:00 – Lunch**

It is preferable to have the entire staff share lunch together. If people finish lunch early, invite them to enjoy the retreat grounds. Remind them that Session 4 starts at 1 p.m. sharp.

### **1:00 – Session 4: Quiet Reflective Activity**

Distribute Easter Handout E: Individual Reflection Questions and ask participants to think about and respond to the questions. Encourage people to walk around the grounds if this is possible (weather permitting) to read, reflect, and pray at their comfort level.

For the last 15 minutes of this session, ask participants to share their reflection question responses in small groups or in pairs.

### **2:00 – Eucharistic Celebration**

Ahead of time, select staff to exercise the various ministries within the Eucharistic celebration. If it is not possible to arrange for a priest presider for a Eucharistic Celebration, use the readings to celebrate a Liturgy of the Word.

### **Suggestions for Closing Liturgy**

The following suggested readings deal with the themes of hope, resurrection and discipleship.

#### **Hebrew Scripture Readings**

Proverbs 24: 14-34

Micah 6

Amos 5

Isaiah 40

#### **Psalms**

Psalms 27

Psalms 31

Psalms 136

#### **Christian Scripture Readings**

Hebrews 6: 1-20

Acts 2

Acts 17

Acts 20

1 Corinthians 15

#### **Gospel Readings**

Luke 14: 25-35

Luke 23-24

Matthew 25:14

Matthew 27-28

Mark 15-16

John 19-21

# Easter Handout A

## Retreat Outline

8:30 – 9:00	Coffee, Tea, Juice, Muffins
9:00 – 9:15	Welcome and Instructions for the Day
9:15 – 9:30	Ice Breaker: Jelly Beans
9:30 – 9:45	Opening Prayer
9:45 – 10:30	Session 1: What's in a Name? Whole Group Activity
10:30 – 10:50	Break
10:50 – 11:30	Session 2: Small Group Discussion
11:30 – 12:00	Session 3: All Star Messengers
12:00 – 1:00	Communal Lunch
1:00 – 2:00	Session 4: Quiet Reflective Activity
2:00 – 3:00	Eucharistic Celebration or Liturgy of Word



# Easter Handout B

## Opening Prayer

### Luke Chapter 24

“But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in, they did not find the body. While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, ‘Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again.’ Then they remembered his words, and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who said this to the apostles. But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; then he went home, amazed at what had happened.

“Now on the same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, ‘What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?’ They stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, ‘Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?’ He asked them, ‘What things?’ They replied, ‘The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him.’ Then he said to them, ‘Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?’ Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

“As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. But they urged him strongly, saying, ‘Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.’ So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table

with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, 'Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?'

"That same hour they got up and turned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying, 'The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!' Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread."

### **Reflection**

A common theme throughout the Resurrection stories is that the risen Jesus was changed and, at first, unrecognizable. Often we fail to recognize the very things and people in our lives that truly matter.

Sometimes these include our family, friends, co-workers, students, and our vocation as educators. At times, we too are "foolish" and "slow of heart to believe all that the prophets declared!" What we need to do is see the Lord God in everyone, every day.

We must try to be more like the true believers. As in the reading, "their eyes were opened, and they recognized him." So we need to open our eyes and search for God in everything we do.

We must open our hearts and minds so as not to exclude anyone in our lives. We need to be more like the believers and try to renew ourselves and our world. We need to look for the hope in each other, in our gifts and in our strengths and pray that God will help us in our weaknesses. We must try in our own way to commit to a life of humility, compassion, and love.

# Easter Handout C

## What's in a Name?

One thing I admire/like most about

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One thing I admire/like most about

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# Easter Handout D

## Small Group Questions

Each group selects a scribe to record group answers on chart paper.

- 1. What does our school do well to promote a sense of community?  
Give some examples.

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- 2. What does being a Messenger of Hope mean to you?

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- 3. Why is it more important today than ever for staff at your school to be Messengers of Hope?

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# Easter Handout E

## Individual Reflection Questions

Spend several minutes reflecting on the following questions before recording your answers.

1. What are some of the gifts that God has given me?

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2. What are areas in which I still need to grow?

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3. Why are times for quiet reflection (like today's retreat) particularly important for staff in Catholic schools?

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# RETREAT 8

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## Spirit of Transformation Renewing Ourselves and Our World

*The integration of faith and life is part of a life-long process of conversion until the pupil becomes what God wishes him to be.*

(“The Catholic School,” OCCB 1977, #45)

*Since the Christian vocation is a call to transform oneself and society with God's help, the educational efforts of the Church must encompass the twin purposes of personal sanctification and social reform in light of Christian values.*

(“To Teach as Jesus Did,” OCCB 1972, #7)

This retreat celebrates the gift of the Spirit of Transformation. Today, perhaps more than ever, we are in need of peace and renewed energy. We need to stop once in a while to recharge and rejuvenate. As Johann von Goethe stated, “We must always change, renew, rejuvenate ourselves; otherwise we harden.”

This retreat will offer an opportunity for staff to stop and reflect. Through prayer and sharing, they will be invited to open their minds and hearts to the ways God is working in and through them.

## You will need

### Materials

- A CD player and music to be played during the opening prayer and closing liturgy
- Small papers on which retreat participants will write their names for the closing Liturgy
- Index cards for word association in Session 4
- Copies of Transformation Handouts A to E for everyone
- A basket where retreat participants will place their names
- Enough paper clips and pipe cleaners so each person can receive four or five of each
- Chart paper and markers

### Personnel

- Someone to prepare papers for names of retreat participants
- Priest (if possible) to preside over the Eucharistic Celebration
- Readers for the Opening Prayer and Reflection and Closing Liturgy



## **Retreat Plan**

### **8:30 – Gathering Time, Coffee, Tea, Juice, Muffins**

Encourage staff to take part in this gathering because it is a key time for community building as well as for setting a positive and relaxed tone for the retreat.

During this time, ask each staff member to clearly print his or her name on a small sheet of paper (provided) and place it in the basket near the entrance.

### **9:00 – Welcome**

Distribute copies of Transformation Handout A: Retreat Outline so that staff members are clear about the timeline and expectations of the retreat.

At this time, go over any house rules that may apply to your location, for example, breakout rooms, lunch details, sacred space area(s), walking areas and trails, and out-of-bound areas. Introduce any special guests, guest facilitator, speakers, or parish pastoral team members who may be present.

**Note:** This outline could also be distributed prior to the retreat day.

### **9:15 – Ice Breaker: “If”**

Distribute copies of Transformation Handout B: Ice Breaker, and ask everyone to complete the statements on the handout. Then ask volunteers to read their statements aloud and explain why they chose to complete them in that way.

### **9:30 – Opening Prayer**

Distribute copies of Transformation Handout C: Opening Prayer. Ask eight staff members to read specific sections of this prayer service. When the readings are complete, have everyone pause and listen to some relaxing music, meditative sounds, or nature sounds for about five minutes. Encourage staff to reflect on what they have heard in the service as they listen to the music.

### **9:45 – Session 1: Small Group Activities**

Distribute copies of Transformation Handout D: Imagined Transformations. Ask staff to form into small groups of four to six people. The activities in this session are designed to help participants reflect on who they are and where they are in their life at present.

### **10:30 – Break**

### **10:50 – Session 2: Paper Clips and Pipe Cleaners Activity**

This activity is intended to encourage staff to work together and thus reinforce the role of collaboration in the transformational process. Each participant is given four or five paper clips and four or five pipe cleaners. Tell the groups that they have ten minutes to create something using all of their items.

Then ask them to partner with another person to combine their creations. Next, each pair is to join another pair to continue this merging process.

The partnering continues until there is one complete structure or creation. A discussion then follows as to what the final product represents.

### **11:30 – Session 3: Individual Reflection**

Distribute Transformation Handout E: Reflection Questions. Ask everyone to find a quiet location to reflect and respond to the questions in this handout.

### **12:00 – Lunch**

It is preferable to have the entire staff share lunch together. If people finish lunch early, invite them to enjoy the retreat grounds. Remind them that Session 4 starts at 1 p.m. sharp.

### **1:00 – Session 4: Word Association**

Ask participants to break into their original groups and meet at their table. Everyone is to choose one word that best describes Jesus' vision of renewal and hope for the world. Once they decide on their word, ask them to ensure that this word is not repeated within their group. Ask everyone to write their word on a card and then tape the card to the large chart paper(s) posted in the front of the room.

Then ask the groups to discuss the significance of their chosen words. Are there any repeated words? Are there any words that could have appeared but did not? If so, what are they?

### **2:00 – Closing Liturgy**

Ask volunteers to carry out the various ministries within the concluding prayer service. See Guidelines for Preparing a Liturgy of the Word (page 3) included in this resource to assist with Liturgy preparation.

## **Suggestions for Closing Liturgy**

The following readings are related to the theme of renewal, transformation and Pentecost.

### **Old Testament Readings**

Isaiah 57:9-11

Deuteronomy 29:1-3

2 Kings 23:2-4

Isaiah 40:30-32

### **Psalms**

Psalms 51:9-11

Psalms 103:4-6

### **New Testament Readings**

Romans 12:1-3

Philippians 4:9-11

Colossians 3:9-11

Acts 2:1-3

Acts 20:15-17

### **Gospel**

Matthew 19:27-29

Matthew 23:22-24

Luke 18:6-8

During this celebration the staff names that were placed in a basket earlier can be brought up with the gifts. The presider refers to the names during the Intentions. If it is not a Eucharistic celebration, the names may be brought forward at the Prayers of the Faithful and a special prayer may be read as the basket with names is processed forward.

At the end of the prayer service each staff member comes forward and picks out a paper from the basket containing the names of staff. Throughout the remainder of the school year, each participant will pray for the person whose name they selected. Play reflective music as people come forward to pick a name from the basket.

### **Suggestions for a half-day retreat**

After the opening prayer, you could choose Sessions 1, 2 and/or 3. Shorten the time frame for the session you choose. Complete the retreat with the Liturgy of the Word.

# Transformation Handout A

## Retreat Outline

8:30 – 9:00	Coffee, Tea, Juice, Muffins
9:00 – 9:15	Welcome and Instructions for the Day
9:15 – 9:30	Ice Breaker: “If”
9:30 – 9:45	Opening Prayer
9:45 – 10:30	Session 1: Small Group Activity
10:30 – 10:50	Break
10:50 – 11:30	Session 2: Paper Clips and Pipe Cleaners
11:30 – 12:00	Session 3: Individual Reflection
12:00 – 1:00	Communal Lunch
1:00 – 2:00	Session 4: Word Association
2:00 – 3:00	Closing Liturgy

# Transformation Handout B

## Ice Breaker: "IF"

Complete each of the following sentences.

If I were the Prime Minister, the first law I would enact or create would be

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If I won a million dollars today, I would

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My favourite vacation would be

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One of the values I always try to live by is

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# Transformation Handout C

## Opening Prayer

### Reader 1

“Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarrelling, to be gentle, and to show every courtesy to everyone. For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, despicable, hating one another. But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Saviour appeared, he saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy, through the water of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit. This Spirit be poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. The saying is sure.

“I desire that you insist on these things, so that those who have come to believe in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works; these things are excellent and profitable to everyone. But avoid stupid controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless. After a first and second admonition, have nothing more to do with anyone who causes divisions, since you know that such a person is perverted and sinful, being self-condemned.”

(Titus 3:1-11)

### Reader 2

Heavenly Creator, we humbly ask you to send down your blessings on all of us gathered here today. We ask your forgiveness when “we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures.”

Response: For Your forgiveness we are thankful.

### Reader 3

Forgiving God, we ask Your forgiveness for all the times we passed “our days in malice and envy, despicable, hating one another.”

Response: For your forgiveness we are thankful.

### Reader 4

Compassionate God, we know that “He saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but according to His mercy.”

Response: For this we are truly thankful.

**Reader 5**

Redeeming God, we know he saved us “through the water of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit. This Spirit be poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”

Response: For all this we are thankful.

**Reader 6**

Comforting God, we insist on these things, “so that those who have come to believe in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works; these things are excellent and profitable to everyone.”

Response: For all this, Lord, we are thankful.

**Reader 7**

Heavenly Creator, help us to listen to Your warnings and heed Your advice. Help us all, the staff of \_\_\_\_\_ school, to be active witness of Your Spirit of Transformation and with Your help renew ourselves and our world.

We ask all this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

# Transformation Handout D

## Imagined Transformations

### Movie Title

Imagine that a movie is to be made of your life as it has been over the last few months. Make up a movie title that would capture this recently lived experience. Share your title with other members of your group. If you wish, you could also choose which actor would play you in the movie.

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### Your Imaginary House

Picture yourself as a living house. How do you look? Are you a small quaint cottage overlooking the ocean, or a little house on a dead-end street? Are you a beautiful new building just ready for moving in? A very nice bungalow – but all boarded up? Be creative and share your thoughts with the members of your group.

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### What Animal are you? Why?

If you were an animal, which animal would you be? Consider the reasons for your choice and explain your choice to the other members of your group.

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# Transformation Handout E

## Reflection Questions

1. What area(s) in my life need renewal? How can I work towards renewal of these areas?  
Suggest concrete examples.

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2. How would I describe my prayer life at present? Is it in need of renewal?  
If so, what can I do to bring about this change?

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**Explain what the following quotations mean to you.**

“To cherish what remains of the Earth and to foster its renewal is our only legitimate hope of survival.” (Wendell Berry, American poet, philosopher and farmer)

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“If there are flaws, they are in ourselves, and our task therefore must be one not of redesign but of renewal and reaffirmation, especially of the standards in which all of us believe.”  
(Elliot L. Richardson, American lawyer and politician)

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“Liturgy is like a strong tree whose beauty is derived from the continuous renewal of its leaves, but whose strength comes from the old trunk, with solid roots in the ground.”  
(Pope Paul VI)

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“The great renewal of the world will perhaps consist in this, that man and maid, freed of all false feelings and reluctances, will seek each other not as opposites, but as brother and sister, as neighbours, and will come together as human beings.”  
(Rainer Maria Rilke, 20th century German poet)

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