

JESUS + CARITAS FRATERNITY

of Montreal – Group 7

Meetings Dynamics

ADORATION Adoration is the ideal place to start – a way of coming together in the Lord to make the bridge from the routine to our fraternal gathering. It's also a good idea to give ourselves this time before a meal – a hungry body gives expression to our hungry soul and is also more attentive and acutely aware.

RELAX / BANTER It's important for us to reverently hold what we received from the Lord during adoration. A good way to do that is not to get into serious sharing yet, but rather just connect with each other in natural and spontaneous ways, as the occasion permits and the creativity and love of the brothers allows. This is a good way to prepare ourselves for the social pleasures of dining together.

MEAL / WALK The meal is a gift from our Father and an opportunity to remember our purpose in continuing to receive life – we are designed for communion. By allowing ourselves to share a meal and walk after adoration, we ease into fraternal sharing by passing from the Lord's comforting/challenging presence towards our life review by way of something that is effortless and generally pleasant, relaxing and satisfying. This is a good place to do it, bringing us to the best possible disposition for what comes next.

LIFE REVIEW We can and have at times found our life review a chore, a labor, I think, but it really isn't supposed to be that way – quite the contrary! In actual fact, all of us are to present something from our own life review “exercise” which we usually do quite naturally in the usual course of our prayer, but especially during our monthly “desert” day – or our closest approximation to that.

Specifically, then, for the sake of our group exercise, we are each to very briefly (2-3 minutes) present “un fait de vie” – that is, (literally a ‘fact of life’) a “life

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happening". Examples: "I experienced an awful tension in a situation 2 weeks ago, and it still hurts." Or "I met a woman a month ago, and I can't get her out of my mind." Or "This past month, I've been feeling discouraged." Or "It's been a year since I prayed the Breviary." Or "I'm really quite happy in my ministry right now – many exciting things are happening, a lot of fruitfulness." Or "The color of my life these past few weeks/months is blue... I've accumulated some disappointments, and I'm feeling flat."

Or "The Lord's love is a fire burning in my heart – I'm in awe since my retreat." And so on. Once we have all shared a single life happening, then as a group we decide which life happening stands out for us or most begs our care or attention. We decide to focus on this particular life happening; which may touch more than the one(s) who presented it.

GOSPEL SHARING We can read, ponder, and read again one or more of the readings for that Sunday's Liturgy. Recently this has been very fruitful for us. Another way is for each to share a chosen Gospel passage, and when appropriate, a spiritual reading (eg. John of the Cross, Teresa of Avila, Mother Teresa, Jean Vanier, John XXIII, Augustine, Pope John Paul II, etc.), to speak to the life happening in question. Preference should be generally given to the Gospels.

The ones touched by the life happening under scrutiny respond to the Gospel passage. Depending on how a brother responds, others attempt to draw him forth- for example: "Did you entrust that to the Lord?" Or "Could it be that you are too bent on success?" Or "Have you given yourself the time to celebrate this grace/wonderful experience?" Or "Would you have any opportunity to do a little more sharing with someone from day to day?"

At times, we will find life happenings drawing us into issues that touch the whole church or our generation or every human being; such as the church's struggle to reform herself, the aging of our parents, issues or dynamics in our immediate family, the changing face of the priesthood, the strain of living co-responsibility with the laity, etc.

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