

## **A Workshop: *companions on the journey*** **Friends + Bread = A Difference**

This is a creative opportunity for you and your members. The following is merely a suggestion – the sky is the limit! As an example, this year the parish councils in Nova Scotia were challenged by the provincial council to each produce their own unique prayer service focused on the League theme. The results were all different and collected into a booklet as a monthly resource for members. Depending on the time allotment, your workshop can be shorter or longer.

Plan on using various “voices” for prayerful variety, i.e., have:

- leader of song
- service leader
- scripture reader
- reflector
- intercession readers
- workshop leader and assistants

Whatever seems to fit your Christian community, the more people who participate, the more the message will be “owned.” After the plan is made, make a “Who Does What” list to ensure everyone knows her role and things run smoothly.

### **Materials:**

- three red cardboard or paper hearts, each with a straight pin
- pens
- a small bun or loaf of bread per person
- jugs of water and drinking glasses
- plain popsicle sticks
- raw materials for ritual making

Create an atmosphere. Symbolic decorations of the sacred space can set the mood and tone. Simplicity speaks volumes. Inclusive language is important.

The service leader (she doesn’t have to be you – delegation is the key!) leads the prayer service by doing the greeting, keeping the silences, listening to the scripture, leading the prayers and giving the instructions. She speaks distinctly and at a natural pace. She tries to make eye contact to include the whole assembly. She handles the prayer book or program sheet with respect. She does not rush through the service, but allows time for private prayer. Her movements are dignified and natural and she is dressed appropriately.

The workshop leader and her assistants guide the learning part of the event.

Music gathers the people together to praise God. It should mirror the theme and enhance the message. It unifies the group, so it ought to be sing-able and familiar. The closing hymn strengthens the message and sends forth the people to share the news.

## Workshop: Friends + Bread = A Difference

### Opening: Theme song

*Refrain:* “We are companions on the journey breaking bread and sharing life: and the love we bear is the hope we share, for we believe in the love of our God, we believe in the love of our God!”

1. No longer strangers to each other; no longer strangers in God’s house. We are fed and we are nourished by the strength of those who care, by the strength of those who care.

*Refrain*

2. We have been gifted with each other, and we are called by the Word of the Lord: to act with justice, to love tenderly, and to walk humbly with our God, to walk humbly with our God.” *Refrain*

**Greeting:** *Living with Christ* missalette as well as *Shorter Christian Prayer* (the Liturgy of the Hours) have a good variety of greetings and opening prayers that may be used. The reason for the gathering might be incorporated into this opening greeting.

**Opening prayer:** addresses God; invites people into the presence of God and may include a petition (check missalette for examples)

Formula for a prayer:

- address God by name, e.g., Lord God, Almighty or Eternal God, God our Father
- say something about God, e.g., Source of all unity, Who desires to be with us
- ask God to do something (make a petition)
- ending: usually “through Christ” and “in the Holy Spirit”

Remember:

- prayer is Trinitarian – to the Father, through the Son and in the Holy Spirit
- usually addressed to God, occasionally to Mary, as in Hail Mary
- can end by asking a saint or Mary to intercede but always includes “through Christ”
- KISS principle – Keep It Short and Sweet

**Scripture reading:** could be various incidents in the bible: the Visitation, choosing of the disciples, the Last Supper when Jesus called the disciples His friends, the woman at the well, the disciples on the road to Emmaus, the breakfast on the beach after the resurrection, Mary in the garden after the resurrection when she thought Jesus was the gardener, the commissioning of the apostles, the Martha and Mary encounter, the farewell discourse at the Last Supper, the little children...

How do you or how can the women in your council see Jesus and/or Mary or the disciples as a companion? What is the Holy Spirit trying to tell you is right for this group at this point in time?

The scripture reader “proclaims” the Word, and so ought to spend some time beforehand thinking about the context and the main theme of the reading. What words need emphasis? She should practice reading aloud, allowing the words to sink into the ears and hearts of the listeners; these words are God’s jewels!

**Response:** How will your members respond to this first reading? (by song, psalm, sung or recited, related to the theme, can be very short e.g., another verse of the opening song or with a left side/right side response)

**Reflection:** (approximately five minutes long) allows listeners to make the reading their own, helps them to see that God is working in their lives, calls them to action, shows God's love

The reflection can have a variety of forms:

- a shared reflection, e.g., "How does this reading speak to my heart?"
- preaching by one person
- silent meditation
- quiet music
- reflective questions

**Friends:** Begin with an ice breaker: each person was given three red cardboard hearts when they registered for the day.

**Workshop Leader:** As a large group, think about: *Who are your companions?*  
Think of three people and write each name on a red heart that you received when you arrived.  
Name a companion of your heart (who loves you?).  
Name a companion of your hand (who do you enjoy doing things with?).  
Name a companion of your mind (who challenges you to push yourself to try new things?).

Pin these hearts, face down, onto your shirt.

**Bread:** Have the members move into groups of four people. Have assistants pass each group a small bun or loaf of bread per person.

**Workshop Leader:** The word "companion" stems from the words *com panis*, meaning to share bread together. When you invite someone into your home, when you go to someone else's home for a meal, when you break bread together, you become real to one another. You share your stories, laughter, fears, joys and your lives. You can't be phony (you've got food in your mouth!) and you are honest and real with one another. You walk together; you become companions – friends for a while. You begin to love one another.

Ask each member to eat a small piece of bread as they go around the circle responding to the following:

- name the people in her family
- name some neighbours or friends who mean a lot to her
- name co-workers and fellow parishioners who matter to her
- name the people she serves in her community

Have jugs of water and glasses on the tables. Invite members to take a drink while recalling:

- Who are their friends in the League?
- Who are the people they serve?

- What kinds of people need their help in Canada?
- Who are they concerned with in the world?
- Who are their spiritual companions?
- Who walks with them closely through life?

**Workshop Leader:** Jesus is God’s way of companioning us. Jesus loved to break bread, to share a meal with people. Talk amongst yourselves (10 minutes): Who were the companions of Jesus? What did He say to them? What kinds of things did they do together?

### A Difference

**Workshop Leader:** The philosopher Pierre Teilhard de Chardin said: “We now understand that when Christ descends sacramentally into each one of his faithful it is not simply in order to commune with us; it is in order to join us, physically, a little more closely to Himself and to all the rest of the faithful in the growing unity of the world.”

When we gather around the Eucharistic table, we share the bread and wine, the body and blood of Jesus in communion. We become one around that table of sacrifice. We are a Christian community who gathers to celebrate our unity in Jesus. Jesus tells us that He loves us, He calls us His friends and invites us to gather often together around the altar and share the sacred bread of Himself.

Discuss in your small group for 15 minutes. Plain popsicles sticks have been provided. Write out any action plan suggestion on a popsicle stick.

- In your parish, do you feel like you are really joined together?
- Is there a deeper connection between each person and Jesus?
- Do you feel as if Jesus is your companion?
- In what ways might you endeavour to create such a Christian community?

### The Commission

**Workshop Leader:** Bishop Gerald Weisner OMI, has said that the church gathers us in around the table of sacrifice, and then we are sent out to share the good news. Gathers in, feeds, sends out...gathers in, feeds, sends out. It is a rhythm, just like a beating heart. The Eucharist is the beating heart of the Christian community, food for our journey and the bread of life. Jesus told us, “I am the Bread of life, whoever believes in me will be saved.” The bread sends us out on our “journey.” It gives us energy and ideas. We participate in life! We encounter other people and go out and make a difference. It can be scary out there on the journey, but we now can come back for more companionship, communion and courage. Then out we go again. The beating heart.

Discuss for 15 minutes:

- What is Jesus asking me to do now?
- What challenges are being offered to me now?
- What can I do about them?

## Ritual action

**Workshop Leader:** Liturgy is more than just words; it is action. Ritual helps to bring the meaning of the words together. Symbols help us to understand the deeper meaning of words. Jesus often used images and symbols to teach His Word.

Give each group a different standing committee sub-committee title, e.g., spiritual growth of members, leadership development, marriage and family, refugees, immigration and citizenship, Catholic education, to promote the League via media, resolutions, parish assistance. What can we do in these areas to make the theme come alive for members in our parish? (This will be what they remember about this service.)

Possible rituals: (keep in mind the KISS principle)

- greeting one another
- offering the red hearts to God in prayer
- building something with the popsicle sticks
- sharing a cup of tea
- exchanging telephone numbers
- sharing a common loaf of bread
- lighting a candle
- performing a skit, mime or liturgical dance
- washing the feet

## Conclusion: Theme song

*Refrain:* “We are companions on the journey breaking bread and sharing life: and the love we bear is the hope we share, for we believe in the love of our God, we believe in the love of our God!

3. No longer strangers to each other; no longer strangers in God’s house. We are fed and we are nourished by the strength of those who care, by the strength of those who care.

*Refrain*

4. We have been gifted with each other, and we are called by the Word of the Lord: to act with justice, to love tenderly, and to walk humbly with our God, to walk humbly with our God.” *Refrain*

## Prayer of the Faithful (Intercessions)

- can be developed by your committee, yet delivered by others
- based on readings and theme
- workshop leader offers the opening and concluding prayer while the intercessions (numbered) can be read by several people
- people may read from their place or go to the front, whatever adds dignity to the service

Progression of intercessions:

1. for the church
2. for the world and society
3. for the sick and suffering
4. for the deceased
5. special intentions

Response can be varied and/or sung. e.g., “Lord hear our prayer,” “O Lord, answer my prayer,” or “Show us your mercy, Lord.”

**The Lord’s Prayer:** the workshop leader invites all to pray as Jesus taught us

**Concluding Prayer:** can be a short scripture text, a composed prayer of petition, thanksgiving or praise

The *Companions on the Journey* prayer can be done as a left side/right side prayer, e.g.:

**LS:** We are all companions on the journey and God is with us each and every day.

**RS:** We are being led by the Spirit in many hidden ways.

**LS:** We share in God’s revelation to His beloved Son.

**RS:** Sharing and teaching the faith of God is a great spiritual journey.

**LS:** God gives us the light of wisdom as we confront the struggles.

**RS:** Lord, help us to pray for the companions which You have given us.

**LS:** We thank God that He has blessed us so much.

**RS:** For when our journey ends, the darkness of sin will be no more.

**All:** Thanks be to God! Amen

**Blessing:** ask God to bless and strengthen the people who have gathered (check missalette or *Liturgy of the Hours* for examples)

**Dismissal:** a sending forth to be disciples of Jesus in the world

**Closing:** a song or sign of peace

**Theme song:**

*Refrain:* “We are companions on the journey breaking bread and sharing life: and the love we bear is the hope we share, for we believe in the love of our God, we believe in the love of our God!”

5. We will seek and we will find; we will knock and the door will be opened; we will ask and it shall be given, for we believe in the love of our God, we believe in the love of our God. *Refrain*

6. We are made for the glory of God, for service in the name of Jesus; to walk side by side with hope in our hearts, for we believe in the love of our God, we believe in the love of our God.” *Refrain*

We are *companions on the journey!*

The Catholic Women's League of Canada  
is a national organization  
rooted in gospel values  
calling its members to holiness  
through service to the people of God.

Good luck, may God bless you as you enter into the planning of your workshop. Give yourself the quiet time to pray and seek guidance. Work with a team, feed off the fire of each other's ideas and enthusiasm. This challenge is a privilege, a precious gift to yourself and your committee; this is another way that Jesus is inviting you into a relationship with Him. This is another way in which your own personal spiritual life will deepen and be enriched.

Betty Anne Brown  
National Spiritual Development Chairperson  
2005