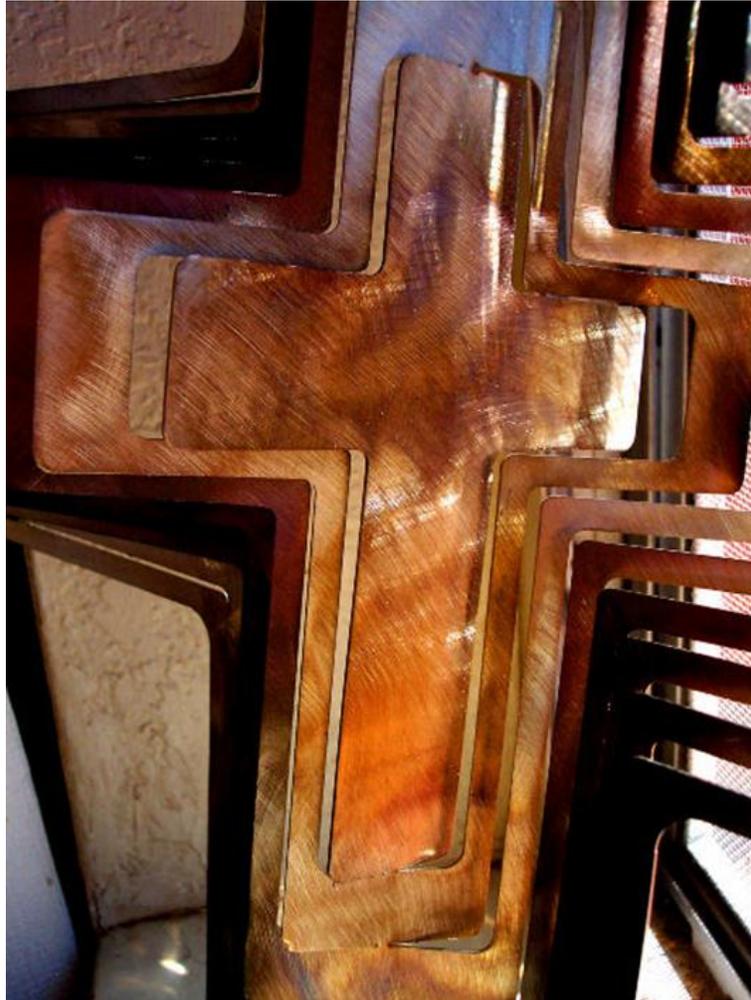


A Facilitator's Guide for *The Faith We Believe: Unpacking the Creed*



Prepared by
David Dayler, Deacon Peter Gittens,
Anne Jamieson

Pastoral Offices
Diocese of Hamilton © 2012

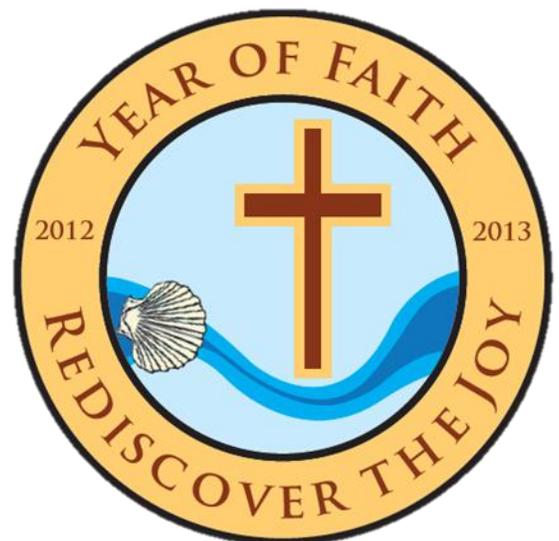


TABLE OF CONTENTS

Letter of Introduction.....	p. 1
What is a Creed?	p. 2
About the PowerPoint Presentation	p. 3
Suggested Formats for Sessions	
For 45, 60 or 90 minute formats	p. 4
The Elements of a Session in Detail.....	p. 6
A Note about Prayer and Ritual throughout the Sessions	p. 7
Notes for Facilitators	p. 8
Session 1 -.....	p. 10
Session 2 -	p. 16
Session 3 -	p. 20
Session 4 -	p. 24
Session 5 -	p. 28
What else can we do in the Year of Faith?	p. 33



D I O C E S E O F H A M I L T O N

This guide is meant to accompany *The Faith We Believe: Unpacking the Creed*, the booklet which is being distributed throughout Hamilton Diocese on the occasion of the Year of Faith.

In his Apostolic Letter announcing the Year of Faith, *Porta Fidei*, our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, expressed his desire that this year would be an opportunity for Catholics to deepen their relationship with Jesus Christ, to renew their understanding of their faith and to be empowered to bear witness confidently to their faith in our world today. *The Faith We Believe: Unpacking the Creed* is one resource being provided by the Pastoral Offices of the Diocese of Hamilton to assist the people of our Diocese to seize the opportunity which the Year of Faith affords us.

In this guide you will find suggestions for facilitating a five week study group using *The Faith We Believe: Unpacking the Creed* booklet. Each meeting may last from 45 to 90 minutes, depending on the options you choose. Each session outline includes an opening prayer, Scripture texts for reflection, discussion questions, and a closing ritual.

At the conclusion of this resource we have included a section entitled, “What else can we do in the Year of Faith?” Here you will find further resources (books, study programs, DVDs, etc.) for those who wish to continue their learning in other areas of the faith.

For further information on resources for adult faith development in the Year of Faith and beyond, please contact David Dayler, Director of the Discipleship and Parish Life Office at 905-528-7988, ext. 2226.

Thank you for taking up the challenge to rediscover the joy of your relationship with Jesus Christ by studying the faith we believe. May your time spent in prayer, reflection and discussion be for you a source of rich blessings.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Monsignor Murray J. Kroetsch, PH, VG
Moderator of the Pastoral Offices

700 KING ST. WEST, HAMILTON, ONTARIO, CANADA L8P 1C7
TEL (905) 528-7988 FAX (905) 528-1088

WHAT IS A CREED? *

The word “creed” comes from the Latin word *credo* meaning to believe. What does it mean to believe, though? These days, people often hear the word ‘believe’ and think it means agreeing with or acknowledging something that cannot be backed up by facts. But *credo* does not mean “what I think”; it means “**this is where I stand**”, “**this is where I rest my heart**” and “**this is the most profound truth I hold**”.

Imagine again what it means to profess the Christian Creed...

It means that God is the Creator of the Universe – God Almighty. And you and I are created in the image of God.

It means that God loved us so much, God desired to save us. It means that Jesus Christ was willing to die for you and me and was raised from the dead for you and me.

It means that God so loves us that God’s Holy Spirit is given to us to guide us and comfort us always. God never wants us to feel alone or to be alone.

I believe in God. Created out of love. Saved out of love. God with us forever in love.

As Catholic Christians, this is our Creed. We rest our hearts knowing this to be true and allowing this to change our lives.

Have you ever rushed through the Creed at church?

Has it been a while since you really thought about what we profess?

Please, read on, remember, and rediscover the joy of belief!

*A summary of this material with reflection questions is available on the accompanying PowerPoint presentation. You may choose to use this at the beginning of your first session or on its own as an introduction to the study sessions.

ABOUT THE POWERPOINT PRESENTATION

There is a complete PowerPoint Presentation available on the diocesan website at www.hamiltondiocese.com to accompany this guide. Click on the Year of Faith logo to access it.

The PowerPoint includes images, the text of the Opening Prayer and Closing Rituals, the suggested Scripture and further questions for reflection.

In it, the black and white images of the Creed booklet can be seen in full colour.

The PowerPoint can be altered to meet the needs of your group. Its purpose is to:

1. Keep the session and the participants on track.
2. Give people a visual on which to focus. Some people find this particularly helpful.
3. Give people the words to prayers that are meant to be read together. This way, you can choose whether to photocopy the words for people or simply project them on a screen to save on printing.

A word about copying and/or altering the presentation:

It is good copyright practise to acknowledge the source of the work if you are copying from it for your group.

The images in the presentation, however, may not be copied into other works or for distribution without the written consent of the Pastoral Offices of the Diocese of Hamilton.

SUGGESTED FORMATS FOR SESSIONS USING *The Faith We Believe: Unpacking the Creed*

Format of Sessions

Sessions can be anywhere from 45 minutes (following the celebration of Sunday Mass, for instance) up to 90 minutes (for those who enjoy extended reflection time). Find a time and a format that works best in your community.

These are the common features of any session:

1. Opening Prayer
2. Reflection on the words of the Creed itself
3. Time to look at related Scripture
4. Time to share answers to the reflection questions
5. Closing Ritual

In a 45 Minute Session (may be following a Mass or for staff at a Catholic school or other workplace)

This works well over coffee and cookies.

Can your parish offer babysitting for children so parents can chat? Could children have their snack time and a brief video in a separate space?

Remember: This is a compressed time. It's very important for participants to share their ideas about the reflection questions. You may choose to provide the related Scripture as something they can read on their own at home. You may also be flexible and offer the reflection time over 6 weeks. That way, if your discussion needs to be carried over from one week to the next, you have built in extra time.

In a 60 Minute Session

Note: The discussion time in this format is relatively brief but you must remember that you are trying to start a conversation here that lasts a lifetime in reflection!

Timing would look like this:

- | | |
|--|------------|
| 1. Opening Prayer | 5 min. |
| 2. Reflection on the words of the Creed itself | 10 min. |
| 3. Time to look at related Scripture | 15 min. |
|
BREAK |
5 min. |
| 4. Time for one or two of the reflection questions | 20 min. |
| 5. Closing Ritual | 5 min. |

In a 90 Minute Session

Note: Here, participants can take more time to savour the reflection. The break in the middle of the session is an opportunity for relaxed discussion and socializing too! Of course, you will still just be scratching the surface of what one could say about the Creed so encourage participants that faith is a life-long learning opportunity!

Timing would look like this:

- | | |
|--|-------------|
| 1. Opening Prayer | 5 min. |
| 2. Reflection on the words of the Creed itself | 15 min. |
| 3. Time to look at related Scripture | 15 min. |
|
BREAK |
15 min. |
| 4. Time for the reflection questions | 30 min. |
| 5. Closing Ritual | 10 min. |

THE ELEMENTS OF A SESSION IN DETAIL

1. Opening Prayer

We use the same prayer every week. It is the opening prayer that was used before each session of Vatican II. In this Year of Faith, Our Holy Father, Benedict XVI, has asked us to consider how Vatican II speaks to us today and so we thought that this would be an appropriate prayer to begin each of our study sessions.

2. Reflection on the words of the Creed itself

Have one person read the section of the Creed for that particular week. It must be read slowly. It may be desirable, after a period of silence, for the entire group to repeat the words slowly.

The question for the group is then:

What strikes you as we read these words?

3. Related Scripture

For each session, there are related passages of Scripture that may assist in opening up the meaning of our faith and help participants in their reflection. Read the passage together or suggest that people read them at home when time is limited.

The question to ask here is always:

Do these passages provide new insights to the words?

BREAK

4. Reflection Questions

Although the booklet itself contains reflection questions, there are further questions provided in this guide. Consider the questions that most capture the interest of the group. In a 90 minute session, you could provide 5 minutes for participants to sit quietly with the questions and jot down any thoughts. Then open it up to group discussion. Remember, there are no right or wrong answers.

5. Closing Ritual

There is a special Closing Ritual that has been written for each session which highlights the aspect of the Creed under study. These are simple rituals that require little preparation but will deepen the reflection for participants.

A NOTE ABOUT PRAYER AND RITUAL IN THE SESSIONS

Prayer: Facilitators should note that the same prayer is used to begin each session.

The moment of prayer is also an excellent opportunity to model prayer for the group.

This means that when a leader invites a group to prayer with words such as “Let us pray”, these words should always be followed by a moment of silence.

The general flow of prayer should be:

Invitation to prayer ... silence ... prayer ... Amen.

We encourage you to be intentional about this modeling so that the whole group can enhance their prayer experience here or when celebrating liturgy.

Ritual: There is a closing ritual provided for each of the sessions. These are meant to be brief but meaningful and give participants another means through which to enter and experience the mystery that is expressed in our Creed.

We have suggested hymns from the *Catholic Book of Worship III*. Feel free to use other hymns or simply play instrumental music quietly in the background.

Each session contains a list of materials needed for that particular ritual. In general, there is always a candle and a Bible. Use the materials for the ritual to create a display on a small table at the front or in the center of the room. This can provide a prayer focus for the group.

NOTES FOR FACILITATORS

The verb “facilitate” means “to make easy”. The role of the facilitator is to establish an atmosphere that will enable the group to accomplish the task they set for themselves and to enjoy the time they spend together.

The following are some helpful hints for facilitators.

The same person may facilitate all five sessions or the facilitator’s role can be rotated among members of the group.

Preparation

- Read all the materials provided for you ahead of time.
- Set up the meeting place well ahead of time so you are available to welcome people.
- You may want to identify volunteers who would be willing to help with the Scripture readings, reading the Creed, or taking a part in the closing ritual.

Environment

- People need to be comfortable. Make sure the thermostat is set at an appropriate temperature.
- Seating needs to be comfortable and arranged so people can see and hear each other.

Hospitality

- Be available to welcome people as they arrive.
- Quiet instrumental music playing in the background sets a relaxed atmosphere.
- You may choose to have nametags ready if appropriate for the size of the group.
- Refreshment should be made available.
- Introduce people to one another if they are meeting for the first time.
- Indicate the location of restrooms.

Facilitating the Session

The following list of Do's and Don'ts may be helpful.

DO

- Everyone must have the opportunity to speak.
- No one is obliged to speak.
- Speak for yourself by using 'I' language, ie. 'I am concerned about the unemployed.'
- Good listening means not interrupting.
- Everyone is committed to maintaining confidentiality

DON'T

- Don't preach.
- Don't solve one another's problems.
- Don't speak first every time.
- Don't force another to speak. All sharing is voluntary.
- Don't talk more than other group members or monopolize the discussion.
- Don't judge other group members or try to change their opinions.

Adult Learners

- Expect a variety of personalities and temperaments in the group.
- Respect that each adult comes with a wealth of lived experience.

Materials and Resources

- Each person should bring their Creed booklet, a Bible and a pen or pencil.
- Review the Closing Ritual in each session to know what you will need. Items such as a candle, a lighter, water, seeds, etc. are used for various sessions. If you are singing, the hymnals need to be available.

SESSION 1

Opening Prayer

We stand before you, Holy Spirit,
conscious of our sinfulness,
but aware that we gather in your name.

Come to us, remain with us,
and enlighten our hearts.
Give us light and strength
to know your will,
to make it our own,
and to live it in our lives.

Guide us by your wisdom,
support us by your power,
for you are God,
sharing the glory of Father and Son.

You desire justice for all;
enable us to uphold the rights of others;
do not allow us to be misled by ignorance
or corrupted by fear or favour.

Unite us to yourself in the bond of love
and keep us faithful to all that is true.

As we gather in your name
may we temper justice with love,
so that all our discussions and reflections
may be pleasing to you,
and earn the reward
promised to good and faithful servants. Amen.

(This prayer was said before every session of Vatican II.)

Begin with the Opening Prayer.

Follow with the slow reading of this section of the Creed.

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth...

Ask: What strikes you as we read these words?

Look at the related Scripture. (see below)

Ask: Do these passages provide new insights to the words?

Related Scripture:

From the booklet: Genesis 1:1-3

Further Scripture for reflection:

As a small group, read the following scripture passages aloud or individually and then discuss them in light of the questions which follow.

Genesis 1 - 2: 4 and Genesis 2: 5-25

The two Genesis stories are the most well know Creation accounts in the Bible. But there are many descriptions of Creation in Scripture. If you are planning the longer study session spend time discovering the beauty and power of some of these other accounts.

Job 38

See what God has to say to Job about what God's role is in Creation in chapter 38 and 39. Note how Creation is not an event but an ongoing process and how God both laid the foundations of the earth (38:4) but also knows the timing of the birth of the mountain goat (39:1).

Psalm 148

This is a hymn of praise. All creation is called to praise God. See how God commanded and the heavens were created, "*Praise him, you highest heavens, and you waters above the heaven! Let them praise the name of the Lord, for he commanded and they were created.*" (verses 4 and 5)

Isaiah 44: 24

“Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, who formed you in the womb; I am the Lord, who made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who by myself spread out the earth.”

Questions for Reflection:

1. The Genesis stories can make us feel that Creation was a one-time event. How do God’s words to Job change that?
2. How do the words from Isaiah strike you? The Lord of the whole Universe is the same Lord who forms us in the womb.

Closing Ritual:

Begin by lighting a candle on the table prepared at the front or in the center of the room.

Suggested Hymn: *God Created Earth and Heaven*, CBW III, 512

During the singing of this beautiful hymn have each participant come forward and gently plant a seed in a pot that has been prepared for planting on the same table as the candle.

If you choose not to sing, introduce the ritual as an image of God planting not only the source of our food but also planting the Word of God within each one of us. Choose a piece of instrumental music appropriate for this activity and play it as each participant comes forward.

Following this ritual activity gather together and pray *The Cantic of Creation* (by Saint Francis of Assisi) on the following page. You may choose to photocopy this prayer for participants or use the PowerPoint Presentation that accompanies this guide.

Materials needed:

- hymnals or instrumental music
- a candle and lighter
- a pot or tray with soil for planting
- seeds – enough for each participant – bean seeds work well
- you may also have a watering can to water the seeds once all have been planted
- a copy of the prayer for participants or use the PowerPoint
- a Bible

Let us pray +

O Most High, all-powerful, good Lord God,
to you belong praise, glory,
honour and all blessing.

Be praised, my Lord, for all your creation
and especially for our Brother Sun,
who brings us the day and the light;
he is strong and shines magnificently.

O Lord, we think of you when we look at him.
Be praised, my Lord, for Sister Moon,
and for the stars
which you have set shining and lovely in the heavens.

Be praised, my Lord,
for our Brothers Wind and Air
and every kind of weather
by which you, Lord,
uphold life in all your creatures.

Be praised, my Lord, for Sister Water, who is very useful to us, and humble
and precious and pure.
Be praised, my Lord, for Brother Fire,
through whom you give us light in the darkness:
he is bright and lively and strong.

Be praised, my Lord,
for Sister Earth, our Mother,
who nourishes us and sustains us,
bringing forth
fruits and vegetables of many kinds
and flowers of many colours.

Be praised, my Lord,
for those who forgive for love of you;
and for those
who bear sickness and weakness
in peace and patience
- you will grant them a crown.

Be praised, my Lord, for our Sister Death,
whom we must all face.
I praise and bless you, Lord,
and I give thanks to you,
and I will serve you in all humility.

SESSION 2

Opening Prayer

We stand before you, Holy Spirit,
conscious of our sinfulness,
but aware that we gather in your name.

Come to us, remain with us,
and enlighten our hearts.
Give us light and strength
to know your will,
to make it our own,
and to live it in our lives.

Guide us by your wisdom,
support us by your power,
for you are God,
sharing the glory of Father and Son.

You desire justice for all;
enable us to uphold the rights of others;
do not allow us to be misled by ignorance
or corrupted by fear or favour.

Unite us to yourself in the bond of love
and keep us faithful to all that is true.

As we gather in your name
may we temper justice with love,
so that all our discussions and reflections
may be pleasing to you,
and earn the reward
promised to good and faithful servants. Amen.

(This prayer was said before every session of Vatican II.)

Begin with the Opening Prayer.

Follow with the slow reading of this section of the Creed.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary ...

Ask: What strikes you as we read these words?

Look at the related Scripture. (see below)

Ask: Do these passages provide new insights to the words?

Related Scripture:

From the booklet: John 3:16

Further Scripture for reflection:

In the season of Advent, we wait in quiet anticipation for the celebration of the Incarnation. In this time of waiting, we are asked to pray and reflect on the coming of Christ into the world. Look at a couple of other references from the Psalms which speak of our wait for the coming of God.

Psalm 46: 10

“Be still, and know that I am God! I am exalted among the nations, I am exalted in the earth.”

Psalm 62: 5-8

“For God alone my soul waits in silence, for my hope is from him. He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be shaken. On God rests my deliverance and my honor; my mighty rock, my refuge is in God. Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us.”

Psalm 130: 5-8

“I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I hope; my soul waits for the Lord more than those who watch for the morning, more than those who watch for the morning. O Israel, hope in the Lord! For with the Lord there is steadfast love, and with him is great power to redeem. It is he who will redeem Israel from all its iniquities.”

For longer sessions, consider Luke 1:26-38 (The Annunciation).

Questions for Reflection:

1. Has God ever asked something which seemed impossible?
2. What has been one of the hardest things God has asked of me?
3. Is God asking anything of me now?

Closing Ritual:

Begin by lighting a candle on the prayer table at the front or in the center of the room.

Suggested Hymn: *Word of God, Come Down on Earth, CBW III, 429*

Sing one verse of this beautiful hymn.

Let us now reflect on the prayer of St. Theresa of Avila....

The leader reads as participants listen and reflect.

**Christ has no body but yours,
No hands, no feet on earth but yours...**

Pause for a moment and look at your hands and feet. The leader should ask participants to reflect for a moment in silence on how we can be Christ's hands on earth and where we are being called to walk with Christ.

(after a moment of silence, continue...)

**Yours are the eyes with which he looks
Compassion on this world....**

Pause for a moment and ask participants to look into the flame of the candle. Ask participants to reflect for a moment in silence on seeing the face of God in all we meet.

(after a moment of silence, continue...)

**Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good.
Yours are the hands, with which he blesses all the world.**

**Yours are the hands, yours are the feet,
Yours are the eyes, you are his body.**

**Christ has no body now but yours,
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,
Yours are the eyes with which he looks
compassion on this world.**

Christ has no body now on earth but yours.

Pause for a moment and ask participants to reflect on how we can be the voice of Christ for those who suffer from injustice, prejudice or oppression both at home and far away.

We cannot take Christ to the world unless we have entered his presence in prayer. Let us pray in these words that the priest prays on Christmas Day +

O God, who wonderfully created the dignity of human nature and still more wonderfully restored it,
grant, we pray
that we may share in the divinity of Christ,
who humbled himself to share in our humanity.
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God
for ever and ever.
Amen

Materials needed:

- hymnals or recorded music
- a candle and lighter
- a copy of the closing prayer or use the PowerPoint
- a Bible

SESSION 3

Opening Prayer

We stand before you, Holy Spirit,
conscious of our sinfulness,
but aware that we gather in your name.

Come to us, remain with us,
and enlighten our hearts.
Give us light and strength
to know your will,
to make it our own,
and to live it in our lives.

Guide us by your wisdom,
support us by your power,
for you are God,
sharing the glory of Father and Son.

You desire justice for all;
enable us to uphold the rights of others;
do not allow us to be misled by ignorance
or corrupted by fear or favour.

Unite us to yourself in the bond of love
and keep us faithful to all that is true.

As we gather in your name
may we temper justice with love,
so that all our discussions and reflections
may be pleasing to you,
and earn the reward
promised to good and faithful servants. Amen.

(This prayer was said before every session of Vatican II.)

Begin with the Opening Prayer.

Follow with the slow reading of this section of the Creed.

He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried;
he descended into hell;
on the third day he rose again from the dead;

Ask: What strikes you as we read these words?

Look at the related Scripture. (see below)

Ask: Do these passages provide new insights to the words?

Related Scripture:

From the booklet: Romans 6: 9 -11

Further Scripture for reflection:

John 11: 38-44.

Jesus' resurrection is not the same as the raising of Lazarus.

Christ really died on the cross for our redemption and really rose from the dead to show us how to live as God intended us to live. It is important to recognize that, although he died a real death, and descended to the dead (our new words say 'hell'), still the Church teaches that, by the power of God, Jesus' body was preserved from natural corruption and decay after his death. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 627)

John 20: 11 - 29 and all of chapter 21.

Most of the encounters between the risen Christ and the apostles were in the context of a meal, where Jesus was able to eat and the disciples were able to touch him. In the breaking of bread, their eyes were opened and they knew that it was the Lord.

The risen Jesus broke bread with the apostles as a sign of his forgiving love. Among Jewish people of Jesus' time, if someone offended another, and was sorry, forgiveness was sought and obtained by the offender inviting the offended to dinner. If the invitation was accepted, forgiveness was offered and received in the act of breaking bread together. In denying, betraying, and

abandoning Jesus, the apostles were very much in need of forgiveness. As Christians, we believe that Jesus' crucifixion, death, and resurrection were for the forgiveness of sins.

Luke 24:30-31

“When he was at table with them, he took bread blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him.”

John 4:42 is cited in one of the three acclamations in the Eucharistic Prayer of the Roman Missal: *“Save us Saviour of the World for by your cross and resurrection you have set us free.”*

Questions for Reflection:

1. Why did Lazarus take his burial garments with him and why did Jesus leave his behind in the tomb?
2. What does the resurrection teach us about forgiveness?

Closing Ritual:

Have rocks in a basket on the table or scattered on a cloth around a candle. Allow each participant to choose a rock as the ritual begins. Have them hold it in their hand as you light the candle on the center table.

The leader says:

Our booklet says that the rock was not rolled away to let Jesus escape but to let us see that he is truly risen. As we hold our rocks, think of the things that keep us from seeing.

Pause for a moment of silence.

The leader continues by reading slowly:

Fear ... pride ... lack of forgiveness ... mistrust ... the experience of betrayal ... too much trust in my own self and my own power... addictions of all kinds.

Let our rocks be set aside so we can see clearly once again. (Set down your rock on the table around the candle and say...) Truly, he is risen!

Pause to allow participants to consider this. Ask each participant to say the same words as he or she lays the rock on the table. As the rock is set down, let each person say aloud: “Truly, he is risen!”

Conclude with a hymn.

Suggested hymn: *Come and Journey with a Saviour*, CBW III, #476

Materials needed:

- hymnals or instrumental music
- candle and lighter
- a Bible
- small rocks – enough for each participant
- possibly a basket for the rocks

SESSION 4

Opening Prayer:

We stand before you, Holy Spirit,
conscious of our sinfulness,
but aware that we gather in your name.

Come to us, remain with us,
and enlighten our hearts.
Give us light and strength
to know your will,
to make it our own,
and to live it in our lives.

Guide us by your wisdom,
support us by your power,
for you are God,
sharing the glory of Father and Son.

You desire justice for all;
enable us to uphold the rights of others;
do not allow us to be misled by ignorance
or corrupted by fear or favour.

Unite us to yourself in the bond of love
and keep us faithful to all that is true.

As we gather in your name
may we temper justice with love,
so that all our discussions and reflections
may be pleasing to you,
and earn the reward
promised to good and faithful servants. Amen.

(This prayer was said before every session of Vatican II.)

Begin with the Opening Prayer.

Follow with the slow reading of this section of the Creed.

He ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand
of God the Father almighty;
from there he will come to judge
the living and the dead.

Ask: What strikes you as we read these words?

Look at the related Scripture. (see below)

Ask: Do these passages provide new insights to the words?

Related Scripture:

From the booklet: Romans 8:34

Further Scripture for reflection:

The Ascension is not a farewell signaling the end of Jesus' presence in the world. It is not a departure of Jesus from earth, but a continuing presence of Jesus, among us in a different way. The Ascension signifies a change of the way in which Jesus is present in the world and to the world. Jesus is ever present in the Holy Spirit.

John 16:7-10

As Jesus told us, "It is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you... I am going to the Father and you will see me no longer". Jesus was speaking about the abiding presence of God in the Holy Spirit. At the Ascension, "The Father's power 'raised up' Christ, his Son and by so doing perfectly introduced his Son's humanity, including his body, into the Trinity" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 648).

Acts 1:9-11

"When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. While he was going and they were gazing up toward heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. They said, 'Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up towards heaven? This Jesus

who has been taken away into heaven will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven'.”

Questions for Reflection:

1. In what way is the Ascension a going, a coming and a staying?
2. In what ways is Christ present in the Church and in our lives today?
3. What are some ways in which I can exercise a ministry of presence?

Closing Ritual:

Have readers chosen for each section of the prayer ahead of time. Divide your group into mini groupings so that you have a mini grouping for each of the four sections of the prayer.

Give all participants a copy of the prayer. Have them scatter themselves around the room away from the candle. When it is time to read their section, they will walk forward to stand close to the candle. Either everyone in the mini grouping reads together or one of them reads but they all walk together. The large group, that has been divided and scattered, will wind up a unified group around the candle at the end.

Begin by lighting a candle. Invite the first group to walk towards the candle as they read their part. All join in the refrain.

All: We are not alone. We are promised the Spirit is with us.

First group: In the communion of saints – all those who have gone before us and all of us living now.

All: We are not alone. We are promised the Spirit is with us.

Second group: In the inspired Word, proclaimed in our liturgies, shared among friends and read in our quiet, private moments.

All: We are not alone. We are promised the Spirit is with us.

In the Church throughout the world. Guiding us, challenging us, and protecting us.

All: We are not alone. We are promised the Spirit is with us.

Fourth group: In our own selves. Both calling and empowering us to serve.

All: We are not alone. We are promised the Spirit is with us.

As everyone is now gathered at the front (or center) around the candle, sing a suitable closing hymn.

Suggested Hymn: *Lord You Give the Great Commission*, CBW III, #691

Materials needed:

- copies of the prayer or use the PowerPoint
- a candle and a lighter
- a Bible
- hymnals

SESSION 5

Opening Prayer:

We stand before you, Holy Spirit,
conscious of our sinfulness,
but aware that we gather in your name.

Come to us, remain with us,
and enlighten our hearts.
Give us light and strength
to know your will,
to make it our own,
and to live it in our lives.

Guide us by your wisdom,
support us by your power,
for you are God,
sharing the glory of Father and Son.

You desire justice for all;
enable us to uphold the rights of others;
do not allow us to be misled by ignorance
or corrupted by fear or favour.

Unite us to yourself in the bond of love
and keep us faithful to all that is true.

As we gather in your name
may we temper justice with love,
so that all our discussions and reflections
may be pleasing to you,
and earn the reward
promised to good and faithful servants. Amen.

(This prayer was said before every session of Vatican II.)

Begin with the Opening Prayer.

Follow with the slow reading of this section of the Creed.

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

Ask: What strikes you as we read these words?

Look at the related Scripture. (see below)

Ask: Do these passages provide new insights to the words?

Related Scripture:

From the booklet: John 20: 21-22

Further Scripture:

Pentecost is the birthday of the Church. Our reflection focuses on the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles and other disciples including Mary, the Mother of God, the Mother of the Church.

Acts 2: 1-4

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

Isaiah 11: 1-5

The Holy Spirit, in being the culmination of God’s love for us, gifted us with wisdom, understanding, knowledge, fortitude and courage to be God’s witnesses everywhere. In coming in the form of fire, the Holy Spirit came to enkindle in us the fire of love.

John 13:35

“By this everyone will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another.”

John 14: 15-17

“If you love me you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will send you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.”

The Catholic Church believes that the Holy Spirit guides the Church along the path of truth, and preserves the Church from error. At the Last Supper Jesus, told the Apostles: *“The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all I have said to you.”* (John 14:26) *“When the Spirit of truth comes he will lead you to the complete truth.”* (John 16:13)

Questions for Reflection:

1. Why did Jesus, in John’s Gospel, speak of the coming of the Holy Spirit and the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit among us in terms of love?
2. In what way is my body a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19)?

Closing Ritual:

Suggested Hymn: *Come Holy Spirit*, CBW III #416

Light the candle on the center table. You may have many unlit tea-light candles – one for each participant available. If you use the small candles, participants would come forward one at a time during the reading of the litany to light one of the candles and then return to their place in the group leaving their lit candle around the center candle.

Have participants share in the reading of the litany. It may be read antiphonally (that is, right side of the room reads one line and left side

responds) or with a leader who reads the whole litany as the whole of the group responds.

Materials needed:

- candle and lighter
- a Bible
- smaller candles – tea lights – one per participant
- a copy of the litany for each participant or the PowerPoint
- a bowl of water and a small container of oil could be used on the table as a reminder of our Baptism – if you include these elements, you may want to make reference to them

We will pray a litany of both the gifts and the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

Let us pray +

For the gift of Wisdom,

We thank you, Holy Spirit.

For the gift of Understanding,

We thank you, Holy Spirit.

For the gift of Right Judgment,

We thank you, Holy Spirit.

For the gift of Courage,

We thank you, Holy Spirit.

For the gift of Knowledge,

We thank you, Holy Spirit.

For the gift of Reverence,

We thank you, Holy Spirit.

For the gift of Wonder and Awe,

We thank you, Holy Spirit.

For the love in our lives

We acknowledge your great works, Holy Spirit.

For our peace,

We acknowledge your great works, Holy Spirit.

For patience,

We acknowledge your great works, Holy Spirit.

For kindness and goodness,

We acknowledge your great works, Holy Spirit.

For faithfulness,

We acknowledge your great works, Holy Spirit.

For gentleness,

We acknowledge your great works, Holy Spirit.

For self-control,

We acknowledge your great works, Holy Spirit.

As we rediscover our joy,

We acknowledge your great works, Holy Spirit.

Let us close in prayer+

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful, and kindle in them the fire of your love.

Send forth your spirit and they shall be created

And you shall renew the face of the earth. Amen.

What else can we do in the Year of Faith?

The answer to this question is, of course, that you can do many things. In the Diocese of Hamilton, there are events and conferences, trips and courses all specially planned for this year. Please consult our website at www.hamiltondiocese.com and click on the logo for Year of Faith to find a complete listing.

If you want to continue with a group study of some other aspect of the faith, our diocesan library has many resources. Here are a few suggestions by topic:

For Theology/ Basics of Faith

- Catholicism – Robert Baron series (DVD with leader’s manuals for each session)
- The Mystery of God series (3 VHS – Father, Son, Holy Spirit) with leader’s guide for each tape
- In Your Faith from Salt & Light – for teenage audiences
- What Catholics Believe About series (in both DVD and VHS formats with study guide and questions)

For Biography/Saints

- The Footprints of God series (8 DVDs with study guide)

Personal/Moral Development

- Film Clips (8 DVDs) – thematically grouped with reflection for young people
- Creating Sabbath Space in Our Lives (DVD retreat with Ron Rolheiser – 5 sessions with leader and participant materials)

Scripture Study

- Threshold Bible Study 23 volumes (books) with one general DVD

Seasonal Material

- An Advent and Christmas Journey (VHS 5 tapes) by Gregory Himes
- A Lenten Journey (4 sessions on DVD or VHS) by Gregory Himes

Other DVDs and videos are available concerning social justice, family-oriented material, more Ron Rolheiser, Courageous, Fireproof, etc. Most of these do not come with leader’s guides.

Feel free to contact our library at 905-528-7988, ext. 2250 for further information regarding hours of operation and borrowing procedures.

The Office of Discipleship and Parish Life would be pleased to assist your group by recommending resources. Call David Dayler, Director, at 905-528-7988, ext. 2226.