

## **Part 1—Who am I?**

1. Summer Review
2. My Covenant w God
3. Who am I?
4. My Inner Journey
5. I Am Special
6. Me and Myself
7. My hands, God's hands Meditation
8. Me and God
9. Quarter Review

## **Part 1: Who Am I?**

### **1/ Summer Review**

- Purpose: to find God in summer break
- Exercises: feet-tracing activity
- Action: pray, “What do you to get out of CLC this school year?”

### **2/ My Covenant with God**

- Purpose: to get in touch with our hopes and goals for the year and make covenant with God
- Exercises: questions
- Action: create a prayer center in your room; prayer partner

### **3/ Who am I?**

- Purpose: to grow in awareness of how **I** see and define myself
- Exercises: my self box
- Action: pray with the box

### **4/ My inner journey**

- Purpose: to see how **God** sees and defines myself
- Exercises: Jesus’ questions; My inner journey (facts, choices, truth)
- Action: pray, “To see myself as God sees me”

### **5/ I am special**

- Purpose: to see how I allow **Others** see and define me
- Exercises: “You are Special” story
- Action: notice how others see and define me

### **6/ Me and Myself**

- Purpose: to identify how we reject or embrace ourselves
- Exercises: true self vs. false self
- Action: pray with Ignatian Awareness Examen

### **7/ My Hands, God’s Hands Meditation**

- Purpose: to discover our truest selves through service
- Exercises: guided meditation, “Hands”
- Action: to get involved in service

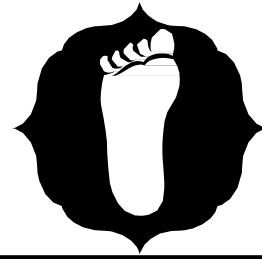
### **8/ Me and God**

- Purpose: to get in touch with our restless hearts and what can bring our hearts greater peace
- Exercises: Inner thoughts of a College Student
- Action: pray with Awareness Examen (focus on restlessness and loneliness)

### **9/ Quarter in Review**

- Purpose: to identify the graces and come up with a response in living out those graces
- Exercises: Quarter Awareness Examen
- Action: the whole group goes to Sunday Mass/Worship to give God thanks.

# #1 Summer Review



## Scripture

When the LORD saw him coming over to look at it more closely, God called out to him from the bush, "Moses! Moses!" He answered, "Here I am." God said, "Come no nearer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground. I am the God of your fathers,....I have witnessed the affliction of my people in Egypt and have heard their cry .....Come, now! I will send you to Pharaoh to lead my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt." (Exodus 3:4-10)

*Jn 13:1-20* Peter asked Jesus, "Are you going to wash my feet?...."

*Isaiah 52:7* "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of those who bring glad tidings..."

**Note:** *This meeting is meant to be a first meeting after summer break.*

### Introduction & Welcome (1')

Welcome members back after the break and thank them for coming. If you have new members, welcome them and briefly go through introductions. Then, explain the purpose of the meeting: to review summer.

### I. Opening Prayer (5')

Grace: to find God in summer break.

Use the grace or a suggested scripture above to create your own prayer, or use the one below: After reading the scripture, say.... "Lord, we thank You for gathering us here. We believe You are here with us, for You promised to be present wherever two or three are gathered in Your name. We ask You to open our hearts to Your love and blessings. Help us to reflect upon our breaks and to find you in places we have been. Just as you told Moses to remove the sandals from his feet, for the place where he stands is holy ground, so help us to recognize that the places we have been were holy. Amen.

Note: encourage each member to take a turn in leading an opening prayer from now on. Assign a member to lead the next meeting.

### II. Short Check-In (5')

### III. Focus Exercise (40'): Feet-tracing activity

Materials Needed: CD player and the song "The Places You Find Love" by Quincy Jones (or a similar song), paper and pens, scissors and markers. (note: all supplies can be found in your CLC supply box. If not, come to the CLC office. All handouts are printed in the CLC journal booklets. If not, come to the CLC office)

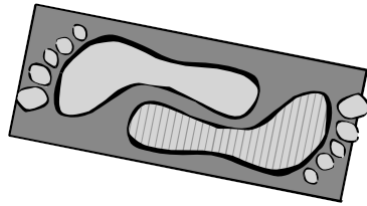
† **Introduction:**

1. If you use a song, invite members listen to the words of a song, such as Jones' "The Places You Find Love," on page...in their journal booklets. Ask the group to reflect on the words as they listen. Encourage them to mark key words or phrases for discussion. After the song, invite them to reflect on significant locations or places where they have found love.

2. Refer Jones' and Moses' experiences of holy places, where they encountered God and lead to the activity below

† **Exercise: Feet-tracing activity (15')**

1. Have them trace their feet (either left or right) on the provided pieces of paper.
2. On the soles of their feet, have them write the names of all the places they have been during the summer and circle 2 or 3 places that they consider as significant.
3. On the toes, have them write adjective words to describe their feelings about those places.
4. On the other side of the sheet, have them write what messages God wants to tell them through those places. (Give them about 5-7 minutes to pray and reflect)



† **Sharing:** Encourage everyone to share what they wrote on both sides

† **Listening deeper**

1. What has struck you as you have been listening to others share? Do you notice any patterns or commonalities?
2. How have you been feeling throughout the meeting? Comforted? Anxious? Curious?
3. Is there anything you would like to share after having heard another person share?

**IV. Moving Forward (5')**

† **Wrap-Up:** Thank members for their openness and participation. Emphasize that one hallmark of our CLC spirituality is to find God in all things: places, people, events, etc.

† **Action:** Notice where you tend to experience God on campus. Go back to the place and pray for the grace you need for this year. Here are two suggested questions to pray:

1. What do you hope to get out of CLC this school year?
2. Ask God, "What do you hope for me this school year?"

† **Announce:** Topic for next meeting and upcoming CLC events

Make sure to confirm that the group is still in agreement on the meeting day, time, and location for this year.

## V. Closing Prayer (5')

*As St. Teresa of Avila says,*

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

*Encourage each members to lift up their petitions and prayers out loud.*

### **Spiritual Exercises / General Principles & Norms**

*Members come together on a regular basis in a stable local community, to assure a deep sharing of their faith and human life, a true community atmosphere and a strong commitment to mission and service. (GP #11)*

*Our community is made up of Christians: men and women, youth and adults, of all social conditions. (GP #4)*

*Truly it is a retreat in everyday life. (SpEx 19)*

*A time for intimate contact between God and the retreatant. (SpEx 2)*

**The Places You Find Love**  
(by Quincy Jones)

It was raining when I met you. You were soaking wet,  
No time to be impressed, and I remember so much later  
On, I knew that you were someone I would not forget.  
Everybody's searching, hungry for the glamour, you  
Know too many hearts are in a rush. No matter how you  
Try to, you can't explain the places you find love.

I can't explain it, but I can feel it all around me. The  
need to find the place where the feeling can be Safe.  
It's not money that buys happiness. No, it's not The  
shine of silver that puts the heart to rest.  
Everybody's pushing, the clock is always running, and no  
One ever seems to have enough. And when you least expect  
Tt, you come upon the places you find love. Love, love,  
remember...

Chorus 1

In a flash, the feeling can hit you after all the times  
That it's missed you, reaching deep inside to find your  
Secret heart, yeah yeah. Look around, you'll notice  
You're flying, and for once, you're not even trying, city  
Lights below you like a million tiny stars, oh yeah.

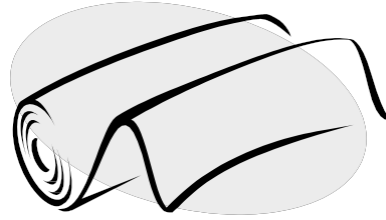
It's a river never stopping, winding in and out, but you  
Should never doubt. It will lead you to the ocean someday.  
There's no way to fight it, let it carry you away.  
Everybody's dreaming, waiting for the feeling, that moment  
When they finally rise above. But it's always in the giving  
That gets you to the place you find love. Love, remember...

Chorus 2

In the poorest part of town, where the sun never reaches the  
Ground, and seeing's not believing, the feeling stays alive,  
Yeah yeah. Little children laughing and playing 'cause they  
Haven't learned to start hating. Never give up, no, 'cause  
They still believe in love, sweet love.

Love. Love. Love. Love. Love, remember...

## #2 My Covenant with God



### Scripture

“The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah.... This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.” (Jer. 31:31-34)

*Deut. 30:15-19* “I have today set before you life and prosperity, death and doom.....Choose life, then, that you and your descendants may live...”

*In 10:10* “.....I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly”

### Introduction & Welcome (1’)

#### I. Opening Prayer (5’)

Grace: to get in touch with our hopes for the year and make covenant with God.

Use the grace or a suggested scripture above to create your own prayer or use the one below:  
After reading the scripture, say..... *“Lord, we thank you for gathering us here tonight. We ask you to help us get in touch with our hopes and desires for the year. We also ask for the grace of being open to make covenant with you. Just as you have promised to be the God of Israel and Judah and take care of them, please continue to be our God. Help us to continue choose you as our God for we belong to you as your people. Amen.”*

Note: ask for a volunteer to lead opening and closing prayers for the next meeting

#### II. Short Check-In (5’)

#### III. Focus Exercise (40’): Covenant with God

Materials Needed: CD player and the song “River of Hope” by Susan J. Paul or “Dreams I dream for you” by Avalon, CLC covenant cloth, large sheet of paper, or poster, Awareness Examen bookmarks, and CLC journal booklets (from CLC office)

- ✦ **Introduction:** tonight we are going to talk about our hopes for the year and then discuss the meeting topics.

✠ **Exercise 1: Our Covenant with God (15')**

1. Open your journal booklet on page....., "Our Covenant with God." Encourage members to pray and write down the answers. Give them about 5 minutes or so to pray. Play some instrumental music during prayer.
2. Put CLC Covenant cloth or poster in the middle of the circle.

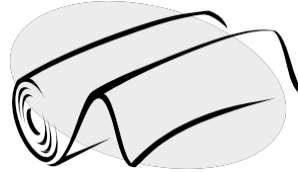
✠ **Sharing:**

1. Encourage everyone to share.
2. My hopes and commitments: After each person shared, have each member write his or her commitment in the back of the Awareness Examen bookmark. (note: if for some reason they don't have Examen bookmarks, you either give or encourage them to make one). Invite members to put the bookmark on their prayer centers at home, which you will discuss more about later.

3. Our hopes and commitments. Say, "In a few minutes, we are going to make a covenant with God. Before we do that, we need to come up with 2 or 3 common hopes and commitments that our group wants to commit to each other and God."

- Ask, "Do you hear any common hopes and commitments from what we've shared?" Allow time to discuss. Here are a few suggestions for the group to consider: attend weekly meetings, pray with Awareness Examen regularly, attend a Spiritual Retreat as a retreatant, do group service once per quarter, attend CLC event, etc.). Choose two or three common hopes and commitments.

- Write or draw images that capture the group's hopes or graces to pray for in the **center**; and the group's commitments **around** the CLC Covenant cloth. Feel free to decorate it. Once this is done, tell members that we are going to display it in our prayer center each meeting as a way to remind ourselves.



✠ **Exercise 2: Meeting Topics for the year (10')**

1. Members' input: Allow times to discuss the meeting topics. Encourage members to keep in mind their hopes of the year and the graces we pray for. Which meeting topics would be helpful for us to receive the graces we pray for?

2. Formation team's input: Share with members our formation team's research studies from these past few years. The results show that in Phase 2, members want to be challenged more. They want to have a stronger sense of belonging in CLC. They want to have opportunities to explore the questions of self-identity and of faith and justice. They want to know how to discern and choose activities and people that help them grow fully and get closer to God.

Thus, the team designed the meetings in Phase 2 with the members' desires in mind. They highly recommend us to follow the meetings and the spiritual movements. The main focus of this year is to explore **three important questions**: Who am I? Who is God for me? Where am I headed? If helpful, you can refer them to see the meeting topics under the Table of Contents on the first page of their journal booklets or just mention them out loud. (note: feel free to adjust meeting topics within the themes according to your group's needs)

### ‡ **Listening deeper**

1. What has struck you as you have been listening to others share? Do you notice any patterns or commonalities?
2. How have you been feeling throughout the meeting? Comforted? Anxious? Curious?
3. Is there anything you would like to share after having heard another person share?

## **IV. Moving Forward (5')**

‡ **Wrap-Up:** Thank members for their openness and participation.

‡ **Action:**

1. prayer center: encourage members to create a prayer center in their rooms and put their commitment bookmarks on it as a reminder of their own covenant with God. Choose one habit to work on until they receive the grace they pray for. (note: if helpful, explain that a prayer center is a “sacred space” to remind ourselves of the presence of God. It could be simply as a candle and a cloth, a sacred image, a Bible, a crucifix, etc.)

2. prayer partner: pray for each other during the week and get together once for cp time. If helpful, explain cp (*cura personalis*—*care for the whole person*)

‡ **Announce:** Topic for next meeting and upcoming CLC events.

- for our next meeting, bring your shoe boxes or any empty box if you have one. If not, we will provide you one. (Note: group leaders get boxes from the CLC office)

## **V. Closing Prayer (5')**

‡ Encourage everyone to pray for each other’s hopes for the year by praying for the person to their left. Member A prays for member B, who will then pray for C and so on.

(Coordinator should begin first) *I would like to pray in thanksgiving for .....*

### **Spiritual Exercises / General Principles & Norms**

*“The Three Divine Persons, contemplating the whole of humanity in so many sinful divisions, decide to give themselves completely to all men and women and liberate them from all their chains.” (GP#1)*

*It is good to remember that we are always in the context of prayer....(SpEx 3)*

## *Our Covenant with God*

Is there a difference between contract and covenant? We often use these two words interchangeably, but there is a huge difference in the Bible. A contract is defined as an agreement between two or more parties, especially one that is written and enforceable by law. When one party breaches the agreement, s/he will be fined according to the contract and/or the other is no longer obliged to keep it. A covenant, on the other hand, is often used in the Bible and it means a **promise**. God, not humans, initiates the covenant. When humans break the promise, God still keep His promises.

### *Suggested questions to pray and share:*

#### 1/ Your hopes for the year

- What do you hope to get out of CLC this year? Name one or two graces you would like to receive by the end of this year?
  
- In what concrete ways or actions are you going to commit yourself in living out your hopes? Any specific habits? (see the suggestion of CLC habits on the next page in your booklet)

#### 2/ Your hopes for our group

- What are your hopes for our CLC group this school year? Name one or two graces you would like our group to receive by the end of this year?
  
- In what concrete ways or actions are you going to commit yourself to our group?

3/ Our commitments: In what concrete ways do you think our group should commit to each other and God? Name one or two specific actions (e.g., attend weekly meeting, awareness examen, retreat, group service, CLC events, etc....)

4/ God's hopes: Imagine God is sitting in front of you. Ask God, "Do you have any hopes for me? For my CLC group?"

## CLC Habits: living out the CLC way of life

Choices → Actions → Habits → Character → Vocation → Mission →  
Communion with God

*How might God invite me to adopt & cultivate 1 or 2 suggested habits below?*

### **1/ Build stronger community:**

- attend all of my CLC group meetings
- be more vulnerable, honest, and real
- care and support one another with a love that
  - empowers – helps one another discover and develop our unique gifts
  - transforms – helps one another change positively
- participate in campus-wide CLC events at least once a month (BBQ, Bowling, Agape Latte, etc.)
- ask someone to serve as your accountability partner to encourage you to be
  - faithful with a habit you're working on
  - attentive and disciplined in an area of struggle or of growth

### **2/ Grow in my journey of faith:**

- pray regularly: daily Awareness Examen, quiet reflection, journaling, pray with the graces and prayer materials from CLC meetings, and other ways of praying such as Taize, eXaLT, etc.
- read the Bible or spiritual readings (10' everyday)
- participate in Sunday Worship or Mass every Sunday
- go to Confession during Advent and Lent
- attend a spiritual retreat as a retreatant once a year
- see a spiritual director
- get enough sleep and exercise regularly

### **3/ Become a person with and for others**

- serve the poor and marginalized regularly
- reach out to the lonely and forgotten in CLC and beyond
- raise greater awareness of justice issues locally, nationally, and globally
- keep up with my studies as a way to develop my gifts for furthering God's kingdom of peace and justice
- live simply so others simply live

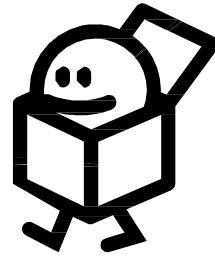
Daily habit: Actualize our greatest yet unused power--be the difference that makes the difference in a person's life/day!!!

*What kind of person do I want to become?*

*Who I am is God's gift to me*

*Who I become is my gift to God*

## #3 Who am I?



### Scripture

O Lord...what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them? Yet you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honor. You have given them dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under their feet.... (Ps 8:1, 4-6)

*Gen 1:26* Then God said, "Let us make human beings in our image, after our likeness."

### Introduction & Welcome (1')

#### I. Opening Prayer (5')

Grace: to grow in a greater awareness of how we see and define ourselves

Use the grace or a suggested scripture above to create your own prayer or use the one below: After reading the scripture, say..... *Lord, we thank you for gathering us here tonight. We gather here tonight to explore the question, "Who am I?" Help us to grow in a greater awareness of how we see and define ourselves because it affects how we live and relate to you and others. Amen.*

Note: ask for a volunteer to lead opening and closing prayers for the next meeting.

#### II. Short Check-In (5')

#### III. Focus Exercise (40'): My Self Box

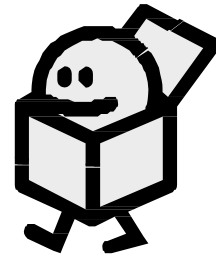
Materials Needed: the songs, "Who I am" by Jessica Andrews or "Who am I" by Casting Crowns; empty shoes boxes or any boxes (from CLC office); markers; journal booklets;

##### ✦ Introduction:

1. Feel free to use any song to set the tone.
2. In the next few weeks, we are going to begin our inner journey in exploring the question, "Who am I?" How we see and define ourselves affect how we live and relate with others and God.
3. Tonight, we are going to have an activity called, "My Self Box." Encourage them to do it prayerfully. Play some instrumental music during the activity.

## ‡ Exercise: My Self Box

1. Materials ready: make sure that you have all materials ready and everyone has a box.  
Imagine the box symbolizes everything about you.
2. Step 1: outside the box, write or draw images how others (family, friends, staff, etc) see you. Give them some suggested questions and ideas...
  - Write 2 or 3 words or phrases others would describe about you
  - Write 2 or 3 things others like about you
  - Write 2 or 3 things others might not like about you
  - Or whatever else come to your mindNote: wait until they are done with this step, then say the next step....
3. Step 2: inside the box, write or draw images how you see yourself.
  - Write 2 or 3 words or phrases you would describe about yourself
  - Write 2 or 3 things you like about yourself
  - Write 2 or 3 things you might not like about yourself
  - Or whatever else come to your mindNote: wait until they are done with this step before you mention the next step
4. Step 3: in the center of the box, write or draw images how God sees you.
  - Write 2 or 3 words or phrases God would describe about you
  - Write 2 or 3 things God likes about you
  - Write 2 or 3 things God might not like about you
  - Or whatever else come to your mindNote: wait until they are done with this step.
5. Step 4: once they are finished, invite members to pray with the box. If helpful, ask the following questions prayerfully
  - Are there any similarities and differences among the three (others, you, and God)?
  - Any surprises? Insights?
  - What do you think God is saying to you?



‡ **Sharing:** Encourage members to share. If helpful, refer to the same reflection questions above.

1. Are there any similarities and differences among the three (others, you, and God)?
2. Any surprises? Insights?
3. What do you think God is saying to you?

‡ **Listening deeper**

1. What has struck you as you have been listening to others share? Do you notice any patterns or commonalities?
2. How have you been feeling throughout the meeting? Comforted? Anxious? Curious?
3. Is there anything you would like to share after having heard another person share?

**IV. Moving Forward (5')**

‡ **Wrap-Up:** Thank members for their openness and participation.

‡ **Action:**

1. encourage members to place the “My Self Box” nearby the prayer center in your room and continue to pray with the box.
2. switch prayer partners.

‡ **Announce:** Topic for next meeting and upcoming CLC events.

**V. Closing Prayer (5')**

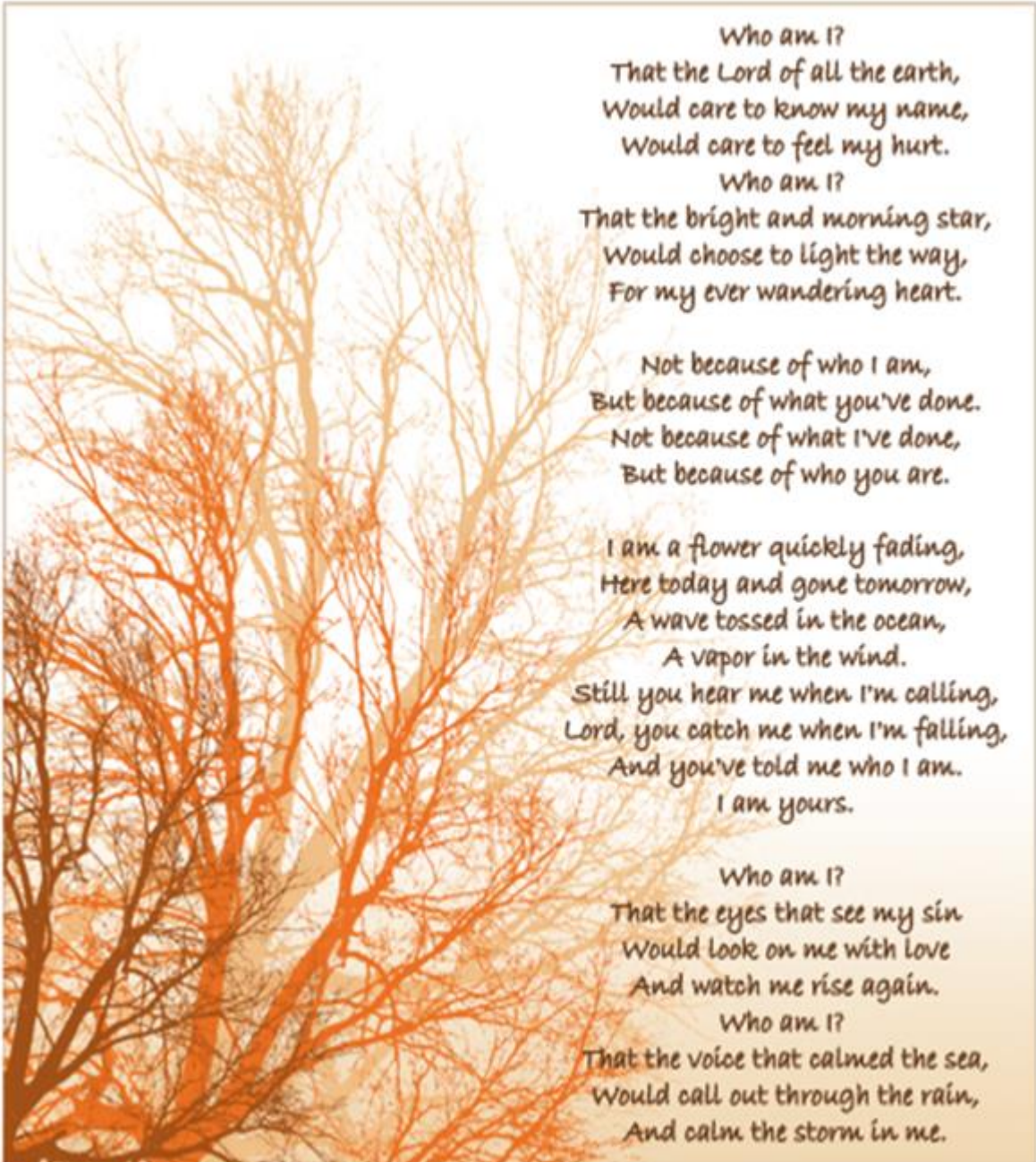
‡ Encourage everyone to pray for each other by praying for the person to their left.

(Coordinator should begin first) *I would like to pray in thanksgiving for .....*

## **Spiritual Exercises / General Principles & Norms**

....God creates me out of love and desires nothing more than a return of love on my part. So much does God love me that even though I turn away and make little response, this Giver of all good gifts continues to be my Savior and Redeemer (SpEx 234).

**Who Am I?**  
(by Casting Crowns)



Who am I?  
That the Lord of all the earth,  
Would care to know my name,  
Would care to feel my hurt.

Who am I?  
That the bright and morning star,  
Would choose to light the way,  
For my ever wandering heart.

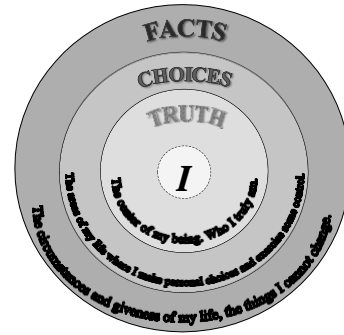
Not because of who I am,  
But because of what you've done.  
Not because of what I've done,  
But because of who you are.

I am a flower quickly fading,  
Here today and gone tomorrow,  
A wave tossed in the ocean,  
A vapor in the wind.  
Still you hear me when I'm calling,  
Lord, you catch me when I'm falling,  
And you've told me who I am.  
I am yours.

Who am I?  
That the eyes that see my sin  
Would look on me with love  
And watch me rise again.

Who am I?  
That the voice that calmed the sea,  
Would call out through the rain,  
And calm the storm in me.

# #4 My Inner Journey



## Scripture

It happened in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized in the Jordan by John. On coming up out of the water he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit, like a dove, descending upon him. And a voice came from the heavens, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."  
(Mk 1:10-11)

*Is 43:1-5* "I have called you by name: you are mine..."

*Is 49:15-16* "I will never forget you. See, I have carved you on the palm of my hand..."

## Introduction & Welcome (1')

### I. Opening Prayer (5')

Grace: To open ourselves to knowing and living that at our deepest, truest core, we are God's Beloved

#### "Just being (with God and myself)"

After prayerfully reading the following prompt (or something similar of your own), ask for the grace above and invite everyone to just "be" in *silence* for a few minutes.

"Prayer is an effective path to help us journey towards our truest selves. This journey is more about creating space for a 'deeper recognition of what is already there.' For something hidden to be awakened, to unfold. That 'something' is the hidden pearl of great price, our deepest desire, our true-self before God.

Prayer is letting God be God. When we enter prayer, we are entering a world that we have little or no control over. Prayer involves the willingness to be present with what is. We are invited to let-go, for we do not really know who we are, or what prayer is, or what will happen during prayer. When we pray, we are entering a 'cloud of unknowing,' the Mystery of God within. All we have to 'do' is show up and let whatever happens happen. God is already waiting...loving...inviting..."

### II. Short Check-In (5')

### III. Focus Exercise (40'): My Inner Journey

Materials Needed: journal booklets

Introduction: We will be looking deeper at the question “Who am I?” by considering how God fundamentally sees and identifies us. To help us begin, we’ll start by reading two passages from John. Then, we’ll use one model of answering the question “Who am I?” to explore our lives and who we are in God’s eyes.

#### ‡ **Exercise: My Inner Journey**

Invite two members to read both of the passages from John’s Gospel (see “*What are you looking for?*”... “*Whom are you looking for?*” in their journal booklets on page....), asking them to listen for the key questions Jesus asks in each.

Comment on the passages: Jesus’ first and last questions in John’s Gospel (“What are you looking for?” and “Whom are you looking for?”) uncover our fundamental quest. We are all on a spiritual journey: a journey to become more fully alive, the person we are meant to be; a pilgrimage of answering our callings in life, to fulfill our meaning and purpose. This is the journey within, from our head (who we think we should be) to our heart (who we truly are). Undertaking this journey, to the “**TRUTH**” of who we are, is like unwrapping a package with three layers: Facts, Choices, Truth.

Go over the “My Inner Journey” hand out with members together. Maybe ask them to take turns reading parts. Ask if they have any questions about what the handout is saying. Ask them how they feel about this way of understanding themselves. Do they like/dislike it? Why/why not? Invite them to fill out their own “inner journey” circle.

#### ‡ **Sharing:** Invite members to share what they included in their “inner journey” circle with the following questions.

(\*Note: If members have any strong objections to the circle model, explain that this is just an exercise. They do not have to agree with the model but are being asked to consider their life through this particular lens for the moment. If they still feel uncomfortable completing it, invite them to modify their circle however they would like.)

1. What are some of things you included in the “Facts” and “Choices” layers of your circle?
2. How did you feel naming these things as “facts” and “choices”? Was it easy? Difficult? Did you struggle with the idea that these things are “facts” or “choices” according to the handout’s description?
3. Have there been times in your life when you identified yourself by the “facts” and “choices” of your life (whether they be things you like or dislike about your life)? Explain.
4. How do you feel about the center of the circle, that the “Truth” of ourselves is ultimately that we are God’s beloved (that the “facts” and “choices” of our lives are a part of us...but NOT **who** we most truly are)?
5. How would you say you most fundamentally identify “you” right now according to this model? By your “facts”? “choices”? “truth”? A combination thereof?

‡ **Listening deeper**

1. What has struck you as you have been listening to others share? Do you notice any patterns or commonalities?
2. How have you been feeling throughout the meeting? Comforted? Anxious? Curious?
3. Is there anything you would like to share after having heard another person share?

**IV. Moving Forward (5')**

- ‡ **Wrap-Up:** Thank members for their openness and participation.
- ‡ **Action:** Spend a prayer period in silence, just allowing yourself to be with God. Ask God for the grace to see yourself as God sees you. Ask God to show you who you truly are.
- ‡ **Announce:** Topic for next meeting and upcoming CLC events. Ask members to BRING BACK their BOXES next time/next week.

**V. Closing Prayer (5')**

*A Blessing of Solitude*

*May you recognize in your life the presence, power, and light of your soul.*

*May you realize that you are never alone, that your soul in its brightness and belonging connects you intimately to the rhythm of the universe.*

*May you have respect for your individuality and difference.*

*May you realize that the shape of your soul is unique, that you have a special destiny here. That behind the façade of your life there is something beautiful, good, and eternal happening. May you learn to see yourself with the same delight, pride, and expectation with which God sees you in every moment.*

*-John O'Donohue*

## **Spiritual Exercises / General Principles & Norms**

*Our community is made up of Christians: men and women, adults and youth, of all social conditions who want to follow Jesus Christ more closely and work with Him for the building of the Kingdom ... (GP #4)*

*The Exercises are, above all, a time for intimate contact between God and the retreatant... (SpEx 19)*

**“What** are you looking for?”...

**“Whom** are you looking for?”

“The next day John was there again with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by, he said, "Behold, the Lamb of God." The two disciples heard what he said and followed Jesus. Jesus turned and saw them following him and said to them, "What are you looking for?" They said to him, "Rabbi" (which translated means Teacher), "where are you staying?" He said to them, "Come, and you will see." So they went and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day. It was about four in the afternoon.”

(John 1:35-39)

“But Mary stayed outside the tomb weeping. And as she wept, she bent over into the tomb and saw two angels in white sitting there, one at the head and one at the feet where the body of Jesus had been. And they said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken my Lord, and I don't know where they laid him." When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus there, but did not know it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" She thought it was the gardener and said to him, "Sir, if you carried him away, tell me where you laid him, and I will take him." Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni," which means Teacher.”

(John 20:11-16)

## The Inner Journey

Jesus' first and last questions in John's Gospel uncover our fundamental quest. We are all on a spiritual journey: a journey to become more fully alive, the person we are meant to be; a pilgrimage of answering our callings in life, to fulfill our meaning and purpose. This is the journey within, from our head (who we think we should be) to our heart (who we truly are). Undertaking this journey, to the "TRUTH" of who we are, is like unwrapping a package with three layers:

1. **"FACTS"** that make up who I am: this outermost layer of ourselves and our living consists of our circumstances: those things we cannot change, or not very easily: our family and culture, our state of health and level of education, our strengths and our weaknesses, our personal history. We spend most of our time and energy in this layer, on the outside edge of ourselves.
2. **"CHOICES"** that shape who I am: in this middle layer we can exercise some choice. We may not be able to change our circumstances (like the way others act, the way we feel...) but we have a choice about how we respond to them. We may have no choice about whom we get as a family member or work colleagues, but we can choose how we will relate to them. Every moment of my life I can choose to be truthful, my truest-self, loving, or otherwise. And these choices influence the people and world around me.
3. **"TRUTH"** of who I am: this deepest layer takes risk and the willingness to go beyond one's comfort and control. Thus, few people journey to this center. As I move inward toward the center of myself, I move closer to the person I most truly am before God. This is dangerous ground, for I cannot predict what I will encounter: I will discover my shame yet find my glory; I will confront my darkest fears yet embrace my deepest desires. Here, I encounter the LIVING GOD and my truest-self.

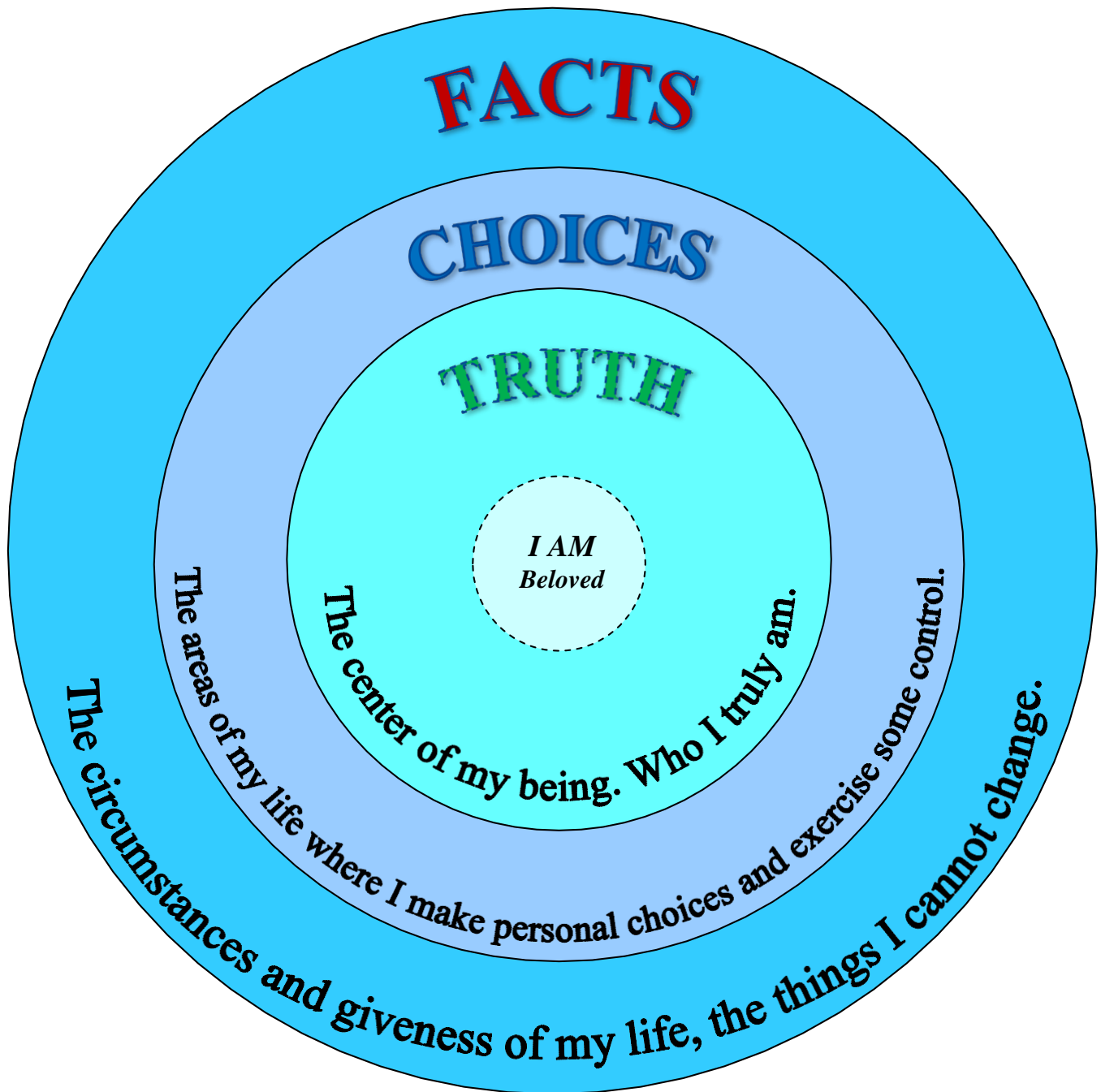
Prayer is an effective path to help us on this journey, which is more about creating space for "a deeper recognition of what is already there." For something hidden to be awakened, to unfold. That "something" is the hidden pearl of great price, our deepest desire, our true-self before God.

**Prayer is letting God be God.** When we enter prayer, we are entering a world we have little if no control. Prayer involves the willingness to be present with what is. are invited to let-go, for we do not really know who we are, or what prayer is, or what will happen during prayer. When we pray, we are entering a "cloud of unknowing," the Mystery of God within. All we have to "do" is show up and let whatever happens happen. God is already waiting ... loving ... inviting...

*"Both what you run away from - and yearn for - is within you."  
Anthony de Mello SJ*

(Adapted from Margaret Silf's *Inner Compass*)

My Inner Journey  
(Adapted from Margaret Silf's *Inner Compass*)



"Being the Beloved expresses  
the core truth of our existence." - Henri Nouwen

"Humility is accepting the truth about oneself."  
- St. Teresa of Avila

# #5 I am Special



## Scripture

Then Jesus said to his disciples: "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. Life is more than food, and the body more than clothes..." Consider how the lilies grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith! And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well. (Luke 12:22-23; 27-31)

*Romans 8:37-39* Nothing can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

*Isaiah 43:1* ....I have called you by name, you are mine. ...

## Introduction & Welcome (1')

### I. Opening Prayer (5')

Grace: To see myself through God's eyes, loved for my flaws and weaknesses as well as my gifts and strengths.

### II. Short Check-In (5')

### III. Focus Exercise (40'): *You Are Special* Story

#### Materials Needed:

1. Stars and dots sheets, markers and pens, etc.
2. the book *You are Special* by Max Lucado (come to CLC office for the book or <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Scj3A1cLVzY>)
3. a basket or a box to put all the dots and stars
4. My Self Boxes from previous meeting

#### ✠ **Introduction:** *Stars and Dots*

Have members cut out the Stars and Dots sheet. Let them collect the number of star and dot cutouts for themselves and it's up to them to decide how many stars and dots they want to have. On the dots, have them write out a few things about themselves that they are not proud of, their weaknesses and shortcomings. On the stars, have them write out their strengths and positive qualities.

#### ✠ **Exercise:** You Are Special

Read "You are Special": by Max Lucado or <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Scj3A1cLVzY>

## † Sharing

1. Discuss the story and characters: Punchinello, Lucia, Wemmick, Eli
  - What is your reaction to the story?
2. What are some of the stars and dots that others give you?
  - Have you allowed any those stars and dots to take control of your feelings towards yourself?
2. What are some of the stars and dots that you wrote down earlier? Describe
3. How you do see and feel about those stars and dots now that you have heard the story? Describe
4. Are there ways you can use your flaws and weaknesses, as well as your gifts and strengths, to better serve God?

## † Listening deeper

1. What has struck you as you have been listening to others share? Do you notice any patterns or commonalities?
2. How have you been feeling throughout the meeting? Comforted? Anxious? Curious?
3. Is there anything you would like to share after having heard another person share?

## IV. Moving Forward (5')

- † **Wrap-Up:** We have taken some time tonight to look at how we see ourselves and how we interpret the way others see us. Next week we will deepen this awareness of how God sees us.
- † **Action:** Try throughout the week to notice how you identify yourself with how others see you. How do you allow that to happen? And why?
- † **Announce:** The topic for next week is “Me and Myself”. Announce upcoming CLC events.

## V. Closing Prayer (5')

*Ask the members to place their stars and dots inside the My Self Box they created last week. With the boxes in front of you, pray together the Anthony De Mello poem “Don’t Change”.*

## Spiritual Exercises / General Principles & Norms

*God creates me out of love and desires nothing more than a return of love on my part. (SpEx 234)*

*God who loves us and creates us and wants to share life with us forever. Our love response takes shape in our praise and honor and service of the God of our life. (SpEx 23)*

## **You are Special**

By Max Lucado

The Wemmicks were small wooden people. All of the wooden people were carved by a woodmaker named Eli. His workshop sat on a hill overlooking their village. Each Wemmick was different, but all were made by the same carver and all lived in the village. And all day, every day, the Wemmicks did the same thing: they gave each other stickers. Each Wemmick had a box of golden star stickers and a box of gray dot stickers. Up and down the streets all over the city, people spent their days sticking stars and dots on one another. The pretty ones, those with the smooth wood and fine paint, always got stars. But if the wood was rough or the paint chipped, the Wemmicks gave dots. The talented ones got stars too. Some Wemmicks had stars all over them! Every time they got a star it made them feel so good! It made them want to do something else and get another star. Others though, could do little. They got dots.

Punchinello was one of these. He had so many dots that he didn't like going outside. He was afraid that he would do something dumb such as forget his hat or step in the water, and then people would give him another dot. In fact, he had so many gray dots that some people would come up and give him one for no reason at all. "He deserves lots of dots," the wooden people would agree with one another. "He is not a good wooden person." After a while Punchinello believed them. "I'm not a good Wemmick," he would say.

One day he met a Wemmick who was unlike any he'd ever met. She has no dots or stars. She was just wooden. Her name was Lucia. It wasn't that people didn't try to give her stickers; it's just that the stickers didn't stick. Some of the Wemmicks admired Lucia for having no dots, so they would run up to her and give her a star. But it would fall off. Others would look down on her for having no stars, so they would give her a dot. But it wouldn't stay either. That's the way I want to be, thought Punchinello. I don't want anyone's marks. So he asked the stickerless Wemmick how she did it.

"It's easy," Lucia replied. "Every day I go see Eli."

"Eli?"

"Yes, Eli. The woodcarver. I sit in the workshop with him."

"Why?"

"Why don't you find out for yourself? Go up the hill. He's there."

"But will he want to see me?" Punchinello cried out. Lucia didn't hear. So Punchinello went home. He sat near a window and watched the wooden people as they scurried around giving each other stars and dots. "It's not right," he muttered to himself. And he decided to go see Eli.

He walked up the narrow path to the top of the hill and stepped in the big shop.

"Punchinello?"

Punchinello stopped.

"Punchinello! How good to see you. Come and let me have a look at you."

"You know my name?"

"Of course I do. I made you."

Eli stooped down and picked him up and set him on the bench.

"Hmmm..." the maker spoke thoughtfully as he looked at the gray dots. "Looks like you've been given some bad marks."

"I didn't mean to, Eli. I really tried hard."

"Oh you don't have to defend yourself to me, child. I don't care what the other Wemmicks think. Who are they to give you stars or dots? They're Wemmicks just like you. What they think doesn't matter Punchinello. All that matters is what I think. And I think you are pretty special."

“Me, special? Why? I can’t walk fast. I can’t jump. My paint is peeling. Why do I matter to you?”

“Because you’re mine. That’s why you matter to me.”

Punchinello had never had anyone look at him like this- much less his maker. He didn’t know what to say.

“Every day I’ve been hoping you’d come,” Eli explained.

“I came because I met someone who had no marks,” said Punchinello.

“I know, she told me about you.”

“Why don’t the stickers stay on her?”

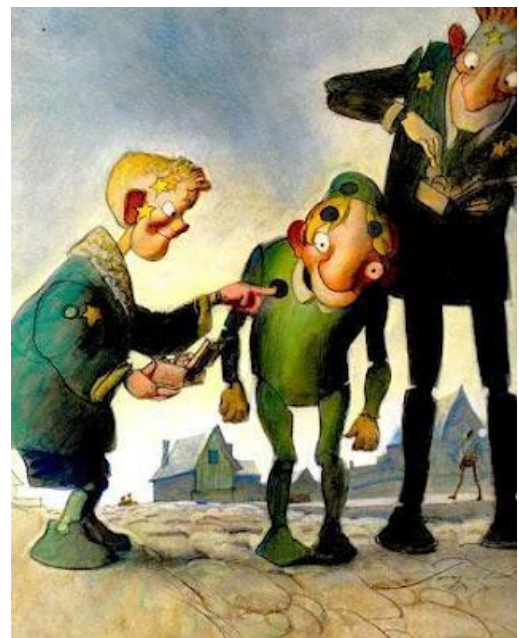
“Because she has decided that what I think is more important than what they think. The stickers only stick if you let them. The more you trust my love, the less you care about their stickers.”

“I’m not sure I understand.”

“You will, but it will take time. You’ve got a lot of marks. For now, just come to see me every day and let me remind you how much I care. Remember, you are special because I made you. And I don’t make mistakes.”

Punchinello didn’t stop as he made his way out the door. But in his heart he thought, “I think he really means it.”

And when he did, a dot fell to the ground.



## **Don't Change- (de Mello)**

I was neurotic for years. I was anxious and depressed and selfish. Everyone kept telling me to change.

*I resented them, and I agreed with them, and I wanted to change, but simply couldn't, no matter how hard I tried.*

*What hurt the most was that, like the others, my best friend kept insisting that I change. So I felt powerless and trapped.*

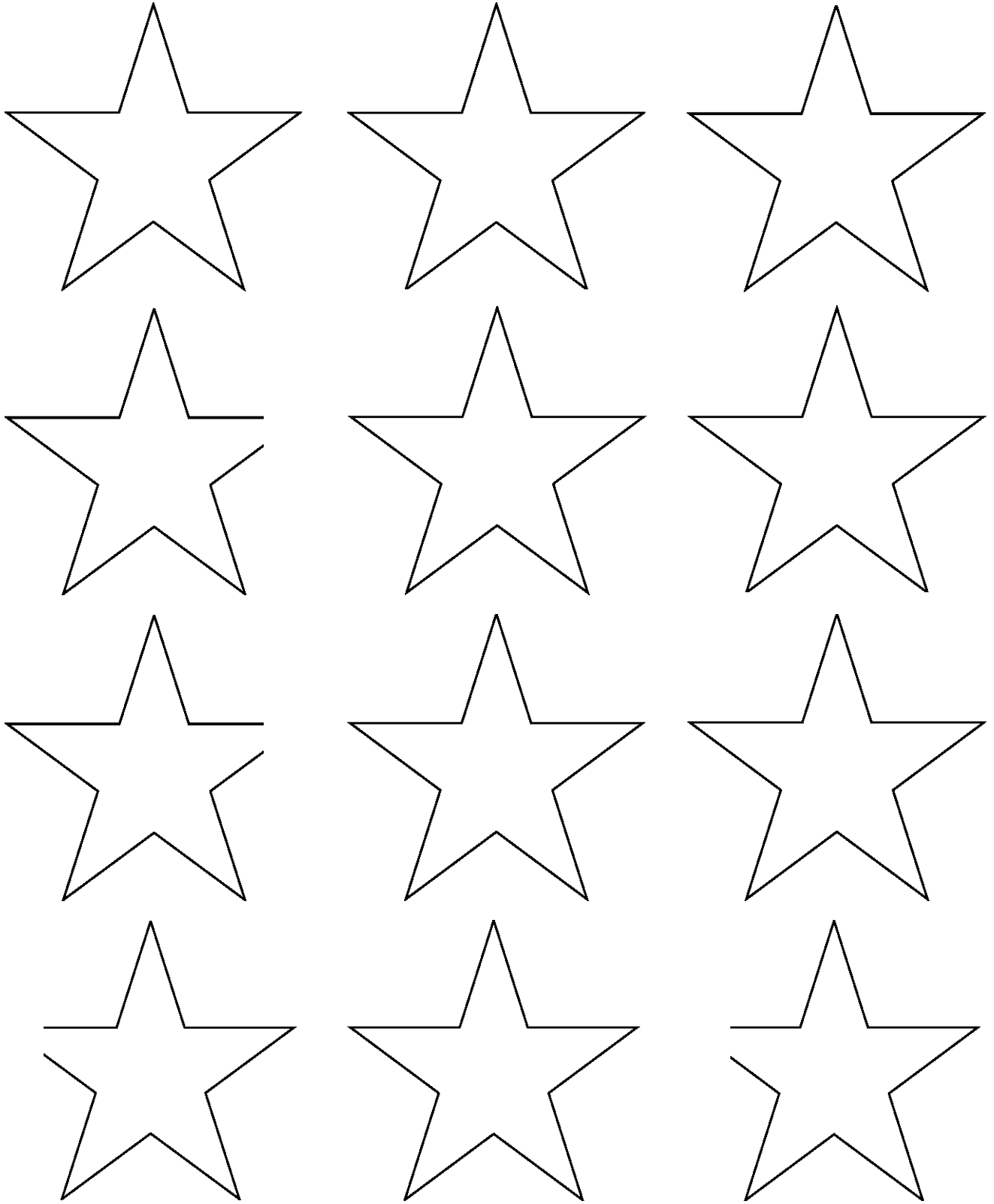
*Then, one day, he said to me, "Don't change. I love you just as you are."*

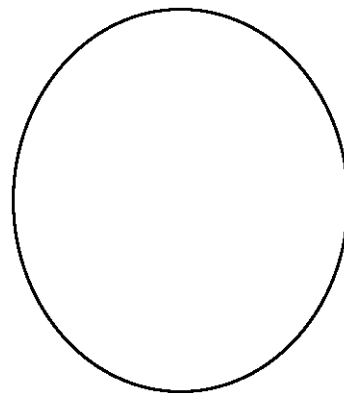
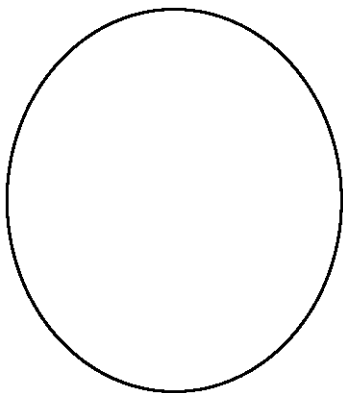
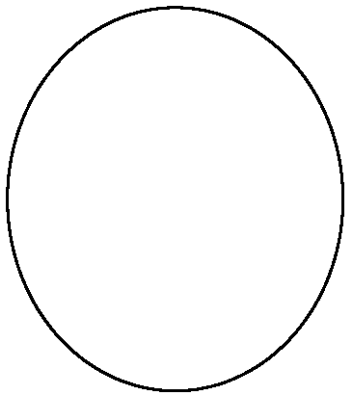
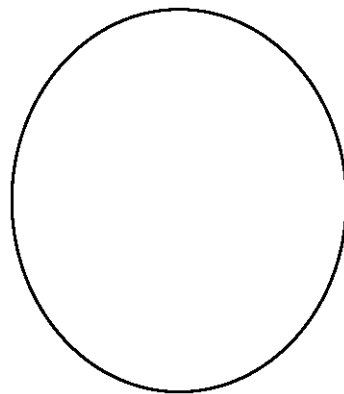
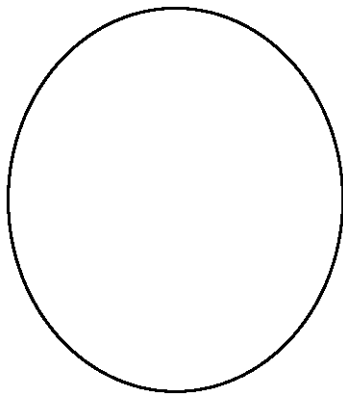
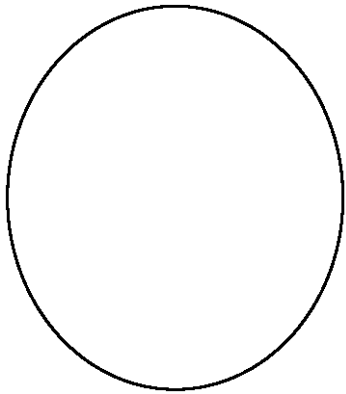
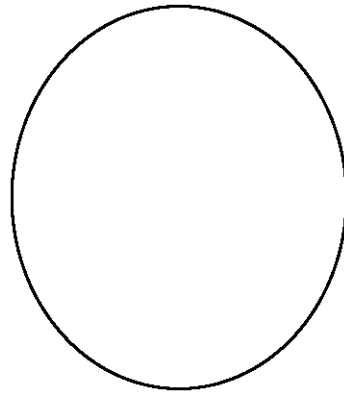
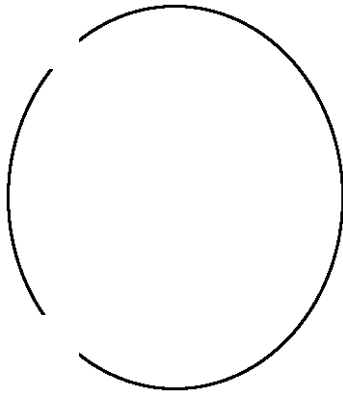
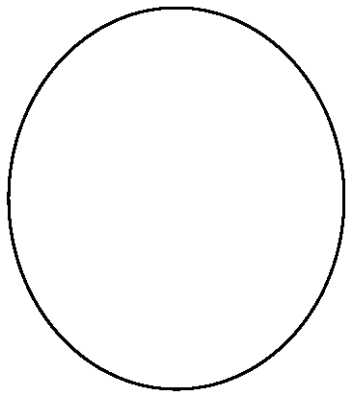
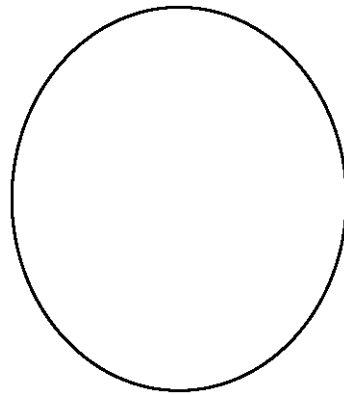
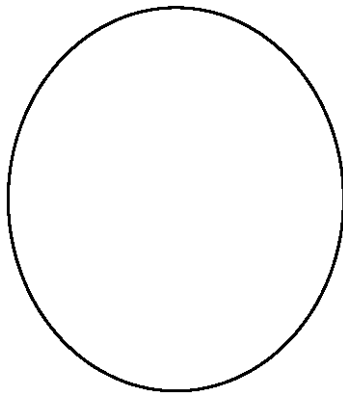
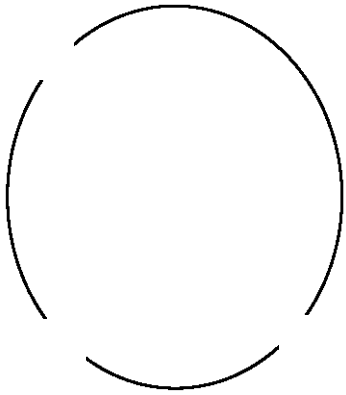
*These words were music to my ears: "Don't change. Don't change. Don't change...I love you just as you are."*

*I relaxed. I came alive. And suddenly I changed!*

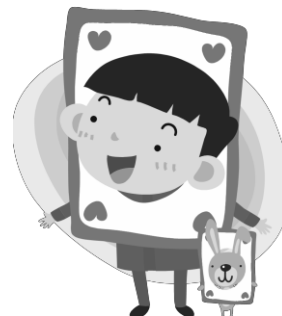
*Now I know that I couldn't really change until I found someone who would love me whether I changed or not.*

Is this how you love me, God?





## #6 Me and Myself



### Scripture

It happened in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized in the Jordan by John. On coming up out of the water he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit, like a dove, descending upon him. And a voice came from the heavens, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased. (Mk 1:9-11)

*Jn 8:31-32* "...the truth shall set you free...."

*Rom 12:1-10* "...Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by ....."

### Introduction & Welcome (1')

#### I. Opening Prayer (5')

Grace: to grow in a greater awareness of how we reject or embrace who God has created us to be.

Use the grace or a suggested scripture above to create your own prayer, or use the one below: After reading the scripture, say.... *"God of love, we thank you for gathering us here tonight. You once have called your son, "You are my beloved." We pray for the grace of a greater awareness of how we reject or embrace who you have created us to be. Help us to reject the loud voice saying to us, "You are no good," and embrace the gentle voice, "You are my beloved." Amen.*

Note: assign a new member to lead opening and closing prayers in the next meeting.

#### II. Short Check-In (5')

#### III. Focus Exercise (40'): True self vs False self

Materials Needed: the journal booklet, "True self vs. False self," optional songs, "Unfold" by Marie Digby or "Reflection" by Christina Aguilera

#### ✠ Introduction:

1. feel free to use any song to set a tone
2. Introduce the topic and preview the meeting

### ✠ **Exercise: True self vs. False self (15')**

Note: You have 2 options—either discuss the article, “Being the Beloved and Self-Rejection” or pray with “True self vs. False self.” Choose one only.

Option #1: Discuss the article, “Being the Beloved and Self-Rejection”  
Invite each member takes a turn to read a paragraph prayerfully out loud. Use the suggested questions to discuss them.

Option #2: Pray with “True self vs. False self”  
Explain to the group that for the next 10 minutes or so, they will be engaging a stream of consciousness writing exercise entitled “True self vs False self” on page .....in their journal booklets. Encourage members to allow themselves to be led by the spirit, not being preoccupied with punctuation or content. In other words, consider this writing exercise as a form of prayer.

- This is who I really am.....
- I have been true in living out my truest self in these ways....
- I have not been true in living out my truest self in these ways....
- Barriers that keep me from living truthfully to who I am....
- God, you see me as....
- God, I need a grace of .....

Repetition: invite members to take a couple of minutes to look over their writings and underline any parts that stand out to them or repeated themes.

✠ **Share:** Invite group members to share their writings or parts of it. In their sharing, the following questions may be helpful:

1. Was there anything that surprised you?
2. Anything that was challenging for you in the exercise?
3. How is God communicating to you through these words?
4. Which parts of yourself are you being called to embrace and which parts are you being invited to grow in?

### ✠ **Listening deeper**

1. What has struck you as you have been listening to others share? Do you notice any patterns or commonalities?
2. How have you been feeling throughout the meeting? Comforted? Anxious? Curious?
3. Is there anything you would like to share after having heard another person share?

## IV. Moving Forward (5')

✠ **Wrap-Up:** Thank members for their openness and participation.

### ✠ **Action:**

1. pray with Awareness Examen: invite members to pay attention to the moments that they live truthfully and the moments that they don't throughout the week. Record these moments in their journal booklets.
2. switch prayer partner

✠ **Announce:** Topic for next meeting and upcoming CLC events

## Being the Beloved and Self-Rejection

There is a voice that speaks from above and from within and that whispers softly or declares loudly: “You are my Beloved, on you my favor rests.” [Matthew 3:16-17; Mark 1:10-11; Luke 3:21-22]. It certainly is not easy to hear that voice in a world filled with voices that shout: “You are no good, you are ugly; you are worthless; you are despicable, you are nobody - unless you can demonstrate the opposite.”

These negative voices are so loud and so persistent that it is easy to believe them. That’s the great trap. It is the trap of self-rejection. Over the years, I have come to realize that the greatest trap in our life is not success, popularity, or power, but self-rejection. Success, popularity, and power can, indeed, present a great temptation, but their seductive quality often comes from the way they are part of the much larger temptation to self-rejection. When we have come to believe the voices that call us worthless and unlovable, then success, popularity, and power are easily perceived as attractive solutions. The real trap, however, is self-rejection. I am constantly surprised at how quickly I give in to this temptation. As soon as someone accuses me or criticizes me, as soon as I am rejected, left alone, or abandoned, I find myself thinking: “Well, that proves once again that I am a nobody.” Instead of taking a critical look at the circumstances or trying to understand my own and others’ limitations, I tend to blame myself - not just for what I did, but for who I am. My dark side says: “I am no good...I deserve to be pushed aside, forgotten, rejected, and abandoned.”

Being the Beloved expresses the core truth of our existence.

... Self-rejection is the greatest enemy of the spiritual life because it contradicts the sacred voice that calls us the “Beloved.” Being the Beloved expresses the core truth of our existence.

**Q/ For Nouwen, “The greatest trap in our life is not success, popularity, or power, but self-rejection.” Do you agree or disagree? Explain.**

I am putting this so directly and so simply because, though the experience of being the Beloved has never been completely absent from my life, I never claimed it as my core truth. I kept running around it in large or small circles, always looking for someone or something able to convince me of my Belovedness. It was as if I kept refusing to hear the voice that speaks from the very depth of my being and says: “You are my Beloved, on you my favor rests.” That voice has always been there, but it seems that I was much more eager to listen to the other, louder voices saying: “Prove that you are worth something; do something relevant, spectacular, or powerful, and then you will earn the love you so desire.” Meanwhile, the soft, gentle voice that speaks in the silence and solitude of my heart remained unheard or, at least, unconvincing.

Self-rejection is the greatest enemy of the spiritual life because it contradicts the sacred voice that calls us the “Beloved.”

**Q/ Have you ever felt that you have to be good or do something good in order for others to love you?**

That soft, gentle voice that calls me the Beloved has come to me in countless ways. My parents, friends, teachers, and students and the many strangers who crossed my path have all sounded that voice in different tones. I have been cared for by many people with much tenderness and gentleness. I have been taught and instructed with much patience and perseverance. I have been encouraged to keep going when I was ready to give up and was stimulated to try again when I failed. I have been encouraged to keep going when I was ready to give up and was stimulated to try again when I failed. I have been encouraged to keep going when I failed. I have been rewarded and praised for success...but, somehow, all of these signs of love were not sufficient to convince me that I was the Beloved. Beneath all my seemingly strong self-confidence there remained the question: "If all those who shower me with so much attention could see me in my innermost self, would they still love me?" That agonizing question, rooted in my inner most shadow, kept persecuting me and made me run away from the very place where that quiet voice calling me the Beloved could be heard.

**Q/ When was the last time you have experienced or heard a soft, gentle voice from someone who treats and calls you the Beloved? Describe.**

... We are the Beloved. We are intimately loved long before our parents, teachers, spouses, children and friends loved or wounded us. That's the truth of our lives. That's the truth I want you to claim for yourself. That's the truth of the voice that says, "You are my Beloved."

Listening to that voice with great inner attentiveness, I hear at my center words that say: "I have called you by name, from the very beginning. You are mine and I am yours. You are my Beloved, on you my favor rests. I have molded you in the depths of the earth and knitted you together in your mother's womb. I have carved you in the palms of my hands and hidden you in the shadow of my embrace. I look at you with infinite tenderness and care for you with a care more intimate than that of a mother for a child. I have counted every hair on your head and guided you at every step. Wherever you go, I go with you, and wherever you rest, I keep watch. I will give you food that will satisfy all your hunger and drink that will quench all your thirst. I will not hide my face from you. You know me as your own as I know you as my own. You belong to me. I am your father, your mother, your brother, your sister, your lover, and your spouse...yes, even your child...wherever you are I will be. Nothing will ever separate us. We are one."

To grow beyond self-rejection we must have the courage to listen to the voice calling us God's beloved sons and daughters, and the determination always to live our lives according to this truth.

Every time you listen with great attentiveness to the voice that calls you the Beloved, you will discover within yourself a desire to hear that voice longer and more deeply ...

(Henri Nouwen, *Life of the Beloved*, pp 26-31)

**Q/ Are there any obstacles or barriers that keep you from listening to the voice that calls you the Beloved?**



## V. Closing Prayer (5')

CONFUSION (By Donald Neary, SJ)

*Lord, I'm so mixed up;  
There seem to be so many aspects to my personality:  
With teachers and parents I am one person,  
With friends I am another.*

*I want to do good, to follow you;  
But at other times, I'm mean, I cheat, I use others for my own advantage.  
You see, I'm a rag-bag of things.  
Who am I, Lord, anyway?*

*I want to please my parents, Yet I want to be myself.  
I don't want to hurt my elders, Yet I want to be independent,  
I don't want to seem rebellious, Yet I want to be alive and spontaneous.  
Tell me, Lord, how to find my true self.*

*Help me, Lord, to grow in confidence,  
To conquer insecurity.  
I know you understand who I am:  
Help me to know myself, forgive myself, And value myself as you do.*

*Lord, give me patience  
With my growing-up.  
Give me confidence  
That within these different aspects of my personality  
I will discover a self that I can accept and love.  
As I discover myself, make me an instrument  
For the knowledge of your love  
And the spread of your Gospel. Amen*

Please feel free to voice your own intention out loud so that we can pray with you...

### **Spiritual Exercises / General Principles & Norms**

*The way in which we accept ourselves should reflect the way in which God accepts us.  
(GP Charism II:27)*

*It may be quite profitable to take stock of how my living out of a particular means which I have chosen is truly responding to the faithful call of God...At this time, I should deepen the attitudes and search out ways which will better enable me to live the Christ-life in my own surroundings and environment. (SpEx189)*

# #7 My Hands, God's Hands



## Scripture

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us. (1 Jn 4:7-12)

*1 Phil. 9:1-11* “And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless...”  
*Matt 25: 33-46* “For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink...”

## Introduction & Welcome (1’)

### I. Opening Prayer (5’)

Grace: For a deepened awareness of ourselves through service.

Use the grace or a suggested scripture above to create your own prayer.

### II. Short Check-In (5’)

### III. Focus Exercise (40’): “Our Hands, God’s Hands” Meditation

\*NOTE: This meeting is best done after the group has done some form of service recently, either as a group or as individuals.

Materials Needed: journal booklets, “Our Hands, God’s Hands” Meditation, instrumental music

✠ **Introduction:** This meeting will help us get more in-touch with our truest selves by reflecting on our service with and for others, as well as our other actions and activities. It is often said that, in serving, those who are offering some form of service find themselves having likewise been served (possibly even more than those they originally sought to help).

In serving, we may grow in unexpected ways or learn something about how we love or interact with others. Or we may find, for example, that we could lead simpler lives and even be happier and freer as a result of working with the materially poor. We can be reminded that we are part of one human family, interdependent upon each other and responsible for one another.

‡ **Exercise:** “Our Hands, God’s Hands” Meditation

Invite everyone to find a comfortable position (sitting-up), as you will be leading them through a guided meditation. Encourage them to be aware of their reactions—how they are feeling—throughout the meditation. Slowly and prayerfully read the meditation, pausing at ellipses (“...” or longer pauses for longer ellipses “.....”) to allow members to imagine and enter into what is being read. Softly play instrumental music in the background.

‡ **Sharing:** After guided meditation, invite everyone to open their eyes and reflect on their experience of the meditation in their journal booklets using the following questions. After sufficient time, encourage the group to share.

Part 1:

1. How did you feel during the meditation? What in the meditation prompted these feelings?
2. What phrases/words stood out to you? Sit with these words or phrases. Listen to what stirs within you as you meditate upon them.
3. What is God speaking to you at this moment? What is God revealing to you about who you are, how you have been shaped, how you relate to others, or ways you want to grow through service?

Part 2:

4. What experiences of service or other activities are life-giving and leading you to God right now in your life? Which experiences of service and other activities are not?
5. How might you more fully integrate service into your life?
6. How is your serving related to your relationship with God right now? Are they flowing from each other (connected and encouraging each other)? Unrelated? Something in-between?

‡ **Listening deeper**

1. What has struck you as you have been listening to others share? Do you notice any patterns or commonalities?
2. How have you been feeling throughout the meeting? Comforted? Anxious? Curious?
3. Is there anything you would like to share after having heard another person share?

#### IV. Moving Forward (5’)

‡ **Wrap-Up:** Thank members for their openness and participation.

‡ **Action:** Have an immersion experience with the poor or marginalized as a group or individually. Pay particular attention to how that experience is helping you to get more in-touch with how you view and relate to yourself, God, and others.

‡ **Announce:** Topic for next meeting and upcoming CLC events

## V. Closing Prayer (5')

Encourage members to pray for each other by name, specifically for a deeper awareness of themselves as they continue to go out and serve. To close, perhaps pray that the group can continue to serve each other in their journeys to discover and live out who they most truly are.



### **Spiritual Exercises / General Principles & Norms**

*Living with the poor and sharing their condition, Jesus invites all of us to give ourselves continuously to God and to bring about unity in our human family. (GP #1)*

*The Community urges us to proclaim the Word of God and to work for the reform of structures in society, participating in efforts to liberate the victims from all sorts of discrimination and especially to abolish differences between rich and poor... Our life finds its permanent inspiration in the Gospel of the poor and humble Christ. (GP #8c)*

## **“Our Hands, God’s Hands” Meditation**

(read slowly and prayerfully; play instrumental music in the background)

Sit straight up, feet flat on the ground, eyes closed, hands resting in your lap, palms up. Tune into your breathing...relax any parts of your body that feel tense. With each inhale feel the pressure build up in your chest...as you exhale feel the air sink into the depths of your stomach. Feel the tension move through your shoulders and arms, escaping through your fingertips.....Become aware of the air at your fingertips, between your fingers, on the palm of your hand. Wiggle your fingers and experience their energy, delicacy, and intricacy.....

Think of all the things that your hands have done in your lifetime. Beginning when you were a baby, your tiny perfect hands were the means by which you learned...learned to crawl and creep...then to walk and balance yourself...hold things for the first time, feed yourself, wash and dress yourself. At one time your greatest accomplishment was tying your own shoes.....

As you have grown older, what else have you learned to do? Think of the things you do every day—the essays you type, the basketball you dribble, the math problems you carefully work out...the food you cook, the notes you scribble in class...the hands you shake, the artwork you create...all the kinds of work they have done, the tiredness and aching they have known, cold and heat, soreness and bruises.....What else do you do that requires the use of your hands?...

How much hurt, anger and even violence have these hands expressed?...The fights they have gotten into...the doors they have shut...the phones slammed down... the drinks raised to your lips, to your already drunk body...the objectifying things done to others’ bodies or that weren’t prevented from being done to you .....the joint held or passed...the people you have overlooked and failed to help...With the awesome power of these hands, comes great responsibility. Do our hands consistently do good? When have they caused pain, either to ourselves or to others?.....

Our hands are not just for ourselves, but for others. Remember the tears they have wiped away, our own or another's, the blood they have bled, the healing they have experienced...Think of the loving embrace that forgives, the pat on the back of encouragement, the “high fives” and secret handshakes of solidarity. When have your own hands offered help to another, amongst your friends or in the greater community? Building a house or doing construction work in Mexico or in a poor neighborhood... offering food to those that are hungry... bringing a card to a sick neighbor...

What hands have helped you along the way...reached out and caught you when you were about the fall...picked you up after you have hit the ground? When in a busy crowd a friend reached out and grabbed your hand to make sure you did not lose your way or get separated from your group? Take a moment to reflect in gratitude for these people and experiences.....

Our hands are from God and ultimately for God. How often have your hands been folded in prayer, both a sign of their powerlessness and of their power?... We come to these states of prayer in our times of gratitude and thanksgiving, as well as in our weakness and desperation. To make the sign of the cross, strike our breast, receive Communion, hold our head in our hands... hands opened in meditation, drawing in the power and strength of our Creator, and sending it forth into the world...

Raise your right hand slowly and gently place it over your heart. Press more firmly until your hand picks up the beat of your heart, a rhythm learned in the womb from the heartbeat of your mother...Press more firmly for a moment and then release your hand and lower it into your lap very carefully as if it were carrying your heart. When you extend your hand to another, it is not just bone and skin, it is your heart.

Think of all the hands that have left their imprint on you—prints that can never be erased. Think of all the places that carry your hand prints and all the people who bear your heart prints...They are indelible and will last forever. It is in this sharing of gifts and communion of hearts that we are united with one another and transformed.

Without opening your eyes, extend your hands on either side and find another hand. Do not simply hold it but try to convey a message of friendship, concern. Let your hand speak to it and let it listen to the other...Try to express your gratitude for this hand stretched out to you in the dark...and then bring your hand back again to your lap. Experience the presence of that hand lingering upon your hand. The afterglow will fade, but the print is there forever...Whose hand was that? It could have been any hand; it could have been Christ's hand. In a sense, it was. Christ's hands through human vessels. (Pause briefly, then read "*St. Teresa of Ávila once said...*")

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

# #8 Me and God



## Scripture

“As the deer longs for streams of water, so my soul longs for you, O God. My being thirsts for God, the living God. When can I go and see the face of God? My tears have been my food day and night, as they ask daily, “Where is your God?” Those times I recall as I pour out my soul, When I went in procession with the crowd, I went with them to the house of God, Amid loud cries of thanksgiving, with the multitude keeping festival. Why are you downcast, my soul; why do you groan within me? Wait for God, whom I shall praise again, my savior and my God. My soul is downcast within me; therefore I will remember you From the land of the Jordan and Hermon, from the land of Mount Mizar. Here deep calls to deep in the roar of your torrents. All your waves and breakers sweep over me. At dawn may the LORD bestow faithful love that I may sing praise through the night, praise to the God of my life. I say to God, “My rock, why do you forget me? Why must I go about mourning with the enemy oppressing me?” It shatters my bones, when my adversaries reproach me. They say to me daily: “Where is your God?” Why are you downcast, my soul, why do you groan within me? Wait for God, whom I shall praise again, my savior and my God.” (Psalm 42)

*Psalm 63*      “O God, you are my God—for you I long! For you my body yearns; for you my soul thirsts, like a land parched, lifeless, and without water.

*John 14:27*    “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid.”

## Introduction & Welcome (1’)

### I. Opening Prayer (5’)

Grace: For greater awareness of the emptiness or restlessness in each of our hearts and what can ultimately bring our hearts greater peace.

Use the grace or a suggested scripture above to create your own prayer.

### II. Short Check-In (5’)

### III. Focus Exercise (40’): “Inner Thoughts of a College Student”

Materials Needed: journal booklets

Introduction: Provide a few comments about what the group has been exploring thus far, gaining greater awareness and insight into who we really are and our feelings about our identities. Explain that tonight, we are going to go a bit deeper into perhaps some of the unanswered questions about ourselves. We are hopefully going to explore where our hearts are right now, how we handle our hearts, and the place God has in our hearts.

‡ **Exercise:** “Inner Thoughts of a College Student” Reading

Have everyone take turns reading. Consider taking pauses briefly after an important idea has been presented to allow the group to absorb it. After reading, present the following questions and give everyone time in silence or with meditative music to journal or reflect on their answers. Then encourage everyone to share openly.

1. What were you feeling during the reading? Did anything particularly resonate with you or not sit well with you?
2. Where in your heart do you feel at peace, full, or fulfilled right now? Where do you feel restless, empty, or lonely?
3. What do you do about your restlessness or loneliness? Are these things working? (Do they leave you deeply content and at peace?)
4. *What, if anything, do you think is the answer or solution to your restlessness, emptiness, or loneliness? St. Augustine wrote...*

“We are one of your creatures. Lord, and our instinct is to praise you. The thought of you stirs in us so deeply that we cannot be content unless we praise you, because you made us for yourself and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.”

Adapted from St. Augustine’s *The Confessions*

*...Do you believe that God is the answer or solution? Why/why not?*

‡ **Listening deeper**

1. What has struck you as you have been listening to others share? Do you notice any patterns or commonalities?
2. How have you been feeling throughout the meeting? Comforted? Anxious? Curious?
3. Is there anything you would like to share after having heard another person share?

#### IV. Moving Forward (5’)

‡ **Wrap-Up:** Thank members for their openness and participation.

‡ **Action:** Suggest that as members pray the **Awareness Examen** this coming week, they ask *for the grace to be aware of what they are filling their heart with*, what they are doing to address their restlessness or loneliness. In addition, encourage them to pray to see *how they are or are not allowing God* into the restlessness and loneliness of their hearts.

‡ **Announce:** Topic for next meeting and upcoming CLC events

## Inner Thoughts from a College Student

I finally have a moment of rest in the midst of a busy week. I can put aside the worries and stresses of the day, the paper that was due today, the draining meeting from yesterday, the people I need to call, the work that still needs to get done, the friends that want to hang-out. I can hear myself think. I sit in a chair and look out the window...and realize that the ache somewhere in the bottom of me is still there. I pause as the thought takes shape in my mind, "I'm *lonely*..." These aren't words I've often spoken to myself or to others. It's a feeling that perhaps I haven't even until now really been very aware of in myself. Lately, though, I've been increasingly more aware of it. And yet...somehow I know that it's been with me for a long time. Why should I feel lonely? I'm not technically "alone." My roommates are in the apartment. My friends down the hall want to hang-out later. I spent a good part of the day with people I care about and an organization I'm passionate about. In fact, I more often find myself dying for quiet moments like these...when I can hear myself think and take-in all the events of the day.

And yet...I feel alone. It's like an ache. At times, it's dull and buried beneath the heavy load of being a busy student, a friend, a leader or mentor, a reliable member of the family. But at times like these, the dull ache becomes a sharper sting that leaves me confused. I'm a good student. I have friends and a fairly supportive family. I'm involved on and off campus. I'm even spiritual and religious. I go to church, believe in God and meaning in life. I'm trying my best to live my best and be "a person with and for others." It's not like my life is boring or confined either, really. I have fun, in moderation. I get out. I've had a serious relationship...

Maybe that's what I feel is missing. I am single right now, after all. Some of the best times of my life so far were when I was in that relationship. Maybe I made a mistake. Maybe I should try to work things out again. Or maybe it's just time to try being with someone new. I definitely miss the physical intimacy...Maybe I'm just feeling "lonely" in that sense. There's something just really comforting about being in someone else's arms or them being in yours...I miss those times...

Maybe it *is* my friends. My friends and I have been growing apart more and more since they were abroad last quarter. I mean, we still talked while they were gone. But we went through different things. We're different people now. I've been feeling like they don't understand me as much as they used to. Or maybe we just weren't that close to begin with...Either way, I kind of wish that I had friends I have more in common with...who understand me more and who I just enjoy being around more. When I was in that relationship I felt more understood, felt like I was being more myself. Maybe it's just the people I'm around right now...

Looking at my life, I know that I've done a lot of the "right things." I look at some of the other people I know and wonder why I still feel this way. I see the fraternity guys next door drunk every other weekend. I see the girl in my program on her fifth boyfriend in the past three years. I see my peers who only care about getting the highest paying job they can after graduation. I see friends spending all their time trying to solve the world's problems but forgetting to take care of themselves and burning-out in the process.

I can tell myself that I know they're not really happy. Not *really*. Deep down they probably feel the way I do, too...It just feels like I'm the only one a lot of the time. But maybe they *do* know something I don't. Maybe they *have* figured out something I haven't...

For all my efforts, though, I'm still sitting in this chair, staring out the window...*lonely*. It's like this itch I can't scratch. A restlessness. A question that's always in the back of my mind... "What's missing? What else is there?" Sometimes I just ignore it. I know a lot of the things I need and want to do can act as "distractions"—school, work, involvements, friends, relationships, career ambitions and money, TV, exercise and looks, service...No matter what I do, though, it seems it's never enough. I'm never fully "satisfied." When I finally slow down, the emptiness is still there...

Sometimes it feels like a fire. It's more of a burning ache. Those are the times when I feel alive, like I am really living this life and getting it "right." But I want more of that and can't seem to get enough. It's a zeal...but a dangerous one, one that demands more and more to be satisfied (if it can ever be satisfied). It can be good motivation...but also exhausting. At times, it's a hopelessness. A feeling that no matter how hard I try, nothing in this life will ever really make me permanently happy. And that can be a depressing thought. What's the point of trying, then?

My roommate walks in and asks if I want to go to dinner with everyone. I say yes, glad for the chance to take my mind off all this. Still, I know these thoughts will be with me as I go, waiting for me when I stop and slow down again. I shake off the thoughts for the moment and get out of my chair, telling myself that I'm just over-thinking things. Maybe I just need to have a relaxing night out and get some sleep...

## V. Closing Prayer (5')

### *Let Your God Love You*

(Edwina Gateley)

Be silent.

Be still.

Alone. Empty.

Before your God.

Say nothing.

Ask nothing.

Be silent.

Be still.

Let your God

Look upon you.

That is all.

He knows.

He understands.

He loves you with

An enormous love.

He only wants to

Look upon you

With His Love.

Quiet.

Still.

Be.

### **Spiritual Exercises / General Principles & Norms**

*I ask for the gift of being able to recognize the false lights of Lucifer...and for the help not to be led astray; I also ask for what I desire: a graced knowledge of true human living exemplified in Jesus Christ, my Lord and my God, and the grace to live my life in his way (SpEx 139)*

# #9 Quarter Review



## Scripture

Thus says the LORD, who created you, ....called you by name: you are mine. When you pass through the water, I will be with you; in the rivers you shall not drown. When you walk through fire, you shall not be burned; the flames shall not consume you. For I am the LORD, your God, .....you are precious in my eyes and glorious, and ....I love you, ....(Isaiah 43:1-4)

*Mk 1:9-11* .... “You are my beloved; with you I am well pleased.”

*Thess. 5:16-18* “In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus.”

## Introduction & Welcome (1’)

### I. Opening Prayer (5’)

Grace: to identify the graces of the quarter and come up with a response in living out those graces

Use the grace or a suggested scripture above to create your own prayer, or use the one below: After reading the suggested scripture, say, “*Lord, we thank You for gathering us here. As the quarter comes to an end, our hearts are full of different emotions...excitement about Christmas break, anxiety about final exams, looking forward to going home...Help us not to forget to be grateful for all of your blessings in the quarter. Tonight, we pray for the grace of being aware of your graces and blessings for us and helping us to live out those graces. Amen.*”

### II. Short Check-In (5’)

### III. Focus Exercise (40’): Quarter Awareness Examen

Materials Needed: Journal booklets, member’s Examen bookmark (the one with your hopes and commitments), and Evaluation form

#### ✠ Introduction:

Tonight we are going to reflect upon our quarter together to see how God works in our lives. We have learned the skill of the Awareness Examen last year and hopefully we have used this tool to pray regularly. As you know the purpose of the examen is to grow in awareness of how God works throughout the day. The same method can be applied to our quarter reflection. Please turn to page.....in your journal booklet.

† **Exercise:** Quarter Awareness Examen

† **Sharing:** invite everyone to share

† **Listening deeper**

1. What has struck you as you have been listening to others share? Do you notice any patterns or commonalities?
2. How have you been feeling throughout the meeting? Comforted? Anxious? Curious?
3. Is there anything you would like to share after having heard another person share?

#### IV. Moving Forward (5')

† **Wrap-Up:** Thank members for their openness and participation. Discuss the following:

1. How can you live out the graces that you have received during Christmas break?
2. How can we continue support one another during Christmas break?
3. Complete the “Mid-year and Year-end Evaluation” and discuss it.

† **Action:**

1. pray with his/her mantra
2. the whole group goes to Sunday Mass/ worship to give God thanks for the graces we have received

† **Announce:** Topic for next meeting and upcoming CLC events

- agree on a group meeting time and place for next quarter

#### V. Closing Prayer (5')

Pray for each other. Concretely, have each person pray for the person on his/her left. Begin by reading the following prayer...

*Happy moments, praise God  
Difficult moments, seek God  
Quiet moments, worship God  
Painful moments, trust God  
Every moment, thank God.*

### **Spiritual Exercises / General Principles & Norms**

*Love is shown more in deeds than in words (SpEx #230).*

*I beg for the gift of an intimate knowledge of all the goods which God shares with me. Filled with gratitude. I want to be empowered to respond just as totally in my love and service. (SpEx #233).*

*Our vocation calls us to live this spirituality, which opens and disposes us to whatever God wishes in each concrete situation of our daily life (GP #5).*

## Quarter Awareness Examen

### *Who am I?*

#### 1. Presence of God:

I take some time to relax, breathe regularly, and place myself in God's presence. I ask for the gift of gratitude and sensitivity to the Spirit, so that I may more deeply understand and appreciate how God has been working and inviting me these "retreat" days.

#### 2. Reflect:

I read over my journal entries as a way to recall what took place within me. *I underline key words, phrases, or insights, especially those which reoccur or form a pattern of meaning.*

#### 3. God's graces: What key graces (gifts) have I received during these days? Did God grant me the graces I pray for or something else?

Perhaps deeper awareness of my belovedness or being chosen by God, deeper self-awareness and acceptance of my sinfulness, inner healing, greater self-acceptance, embracing and letting go of the past, sense of freedom, union, direction, learning more about myself...

#### 4. My response: How do I live out these graces?

Guided by God's Spirit, I might compose a short prayer (1-2 sentences) that I might pray, as a mantra, following the quarter. This is not a list of resolutions; but rather, a way that helps me to persevere and rediscover my experiences of God in the days and months ahead.

*Looking at what I underlined in my journal, I listen for a word, phrase, or image that seems to represent how God is inviting me to concretely live out the graces that I have received. I put this mantra word or image on my Examen bookmark or Journal booklet.*

My Prayer Mantra:

*Sample: Lord, help me listen to your voice, "You are my beloved."*

#### 5. Closing prayer

As with every prayer, I spend time to listen, talk, or convey to God whatever is in my heart. I end with an Our Father or some prayer of gratitude.

