



## Spirituality Support Nights Images of God

If our community life is to be more than an experience of "boarding" together, and if our work with God's people is to be carried out in a Christian context, then we must learn to share that which is deepest within us: our faith.

We take it for granted that every JV has "faith" and a "spirituality." But all those are different and sometimes it is challenging to bring ourselves both to be able to share openly and to receive others in their differences from ourselves.

1) Opening Prayer: Sit in quiet for a few minutes. Concentrate on your breathing to bring yourself to a sense of interior peacefulness. Be attentive to those around you.

*Creator God! In Your infinite outpouring of love, You have created each person in the world a unique individual. Each one of us in this room is bearer of Your image in our body, heart and mind. As we gather today as a community in Your name, be with us and unite us in peace with one another. Open our hearts to know Your place in our lives, and inspire us to share a part of our story of salvation with one another. Amen.*

2) Check In

3) Introduction

Previously, we have shared some of who we are with one another. Faith sharing is a similar way to become more acquainted with our community. The emphasis, of course, is our search for God in our lives. This place of spirituality is much more intimate to each of us than other places within us. Therefore, it is more challenging to share with other people. We must respect our own and others' reticence and at the same time allow ourselves to begin to open up this part of ourselves to those whom we have joined in community.

This meeting should be seen as a first step in an ongoing process of sharing that is important to us. Someone should read the first question, and then everyone should spend a few minutes in silent reflection to formulate the basis of what you want to say. After everyone has answered this question, continue the process with the other three questions. Remember that what you share with others, and they with you, is really a sacred moment and gift. Receive it with reverence and thanks.

4) Quiet Reflection Time

Supply paper and markers, and if volunteers wish they can bring their journals.

1) What have been my images of God throughout my life? How have these images changed?

- 2) Which God images appeal to me? (Jesus, the teacher, healer, shepherd, friend of the outcast, in nature, as light, as mother, father. Spirit of wisdom, courage, knowledge, etc.)
- 3) What image allows me to feel close to God?
- 4) What has been a moving and memorable experience of the divine in my life, a time you felt God's presence in your life?
- 5) How does your faith connect with simplicity, community, and social justice?
- 6) Have you had a relationship with a worship community (church)? Why or why not?
- 7) How do you recognize God in your life? (prayer, meditation, church, faith sharing groups, etc.)

5) Allow time for sharing some of their reflections, using any created props or written reflections.

Encourage the volunteers to refer back to this conversation to help with brainstorming spirituality night content.

6) Check Out

7) Closing Prayer

Reading: Adapted from Thomas Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation*

We must learn to realize that the love of God seeks us in every situation, and seeks our good ... For it is God's love that warms me in the sun and feeds me the bread I eat. It is the love of God that sends the rainy days when I am cold and sick and the hot months when I labor and my clothes are full of sweat. It is God's love that speaks to me in the birds and streams; and also behind the clamor of the city.

... And how am I to know God's will? The very nature of each situation usually bears written into itself some indication of God's will. Unnatural, frantic, anxious work, work done under pressure of greed or fear or any other inordinate passion, cannot properly speaking be dedicated to God, because God never wills such work directly...

... God does not ask me to conform to some abstract, arbitrary law. Rather, God enables me to share in the care for my sisters and brothers -- in compassion and therefore from the heart of God.

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