

## **SIGNS**

(15 minutes. Written exercise and summary sharing. This talk is given by an outside team member.)

Please limit your talk to the time allowed for this talk. In order to successfully complete the program, every effort must be made to be on schedule. Time is of the essence and your cooperation is extremely important. If you are witnessing, please do it within the theme and within the outline of this talk.

Open with a short prayer.

Purpose: To prepare the men for the celebration of the Eucharist and the reception of the sacrament. Giving different examples, in the first 1/3 of your talk you will briefly describe the meaning behind every day secular signs. Using the same format you will explain the concept of sacrament. In the last 2/3 of your talk you will explain the sacrament of Eucharist and the mass. Keep in mind that this is the first mass we celebrate together, but for some of the men this may be their first mass in a long time or may be the first one ever.

### Points to cover in your talk:

Introduction (5 minutes): Signs are part of everyday life. They are simple things that represent more complex concepts. Signs are symbolic representation of an idea. Secular signs have a conventional meaning and are used instead of words. Signs serve to indicate the presence or existence of something. For instance, we don't see the skull and bones in a label as a representation of parts of the human body but as a warning: poison, dangerous.

There are many kinds of signs: traffic signs ( a red octagon), sport signs, visual signs (a red light), audible signs (telephone tone), etc. Signs are not always easy to understand, if you can't read printed words are meaningless.

Sacraments are signs of God's love, they indicate the presence of God in our lives. Enumerate (do not describe or explain) the 7 sacraments. The Eucharist is the most important of these signs (the sacraments). Understanding the sacrament of Eucharist helps us recognize God's love. The purpose of this talk is to help us "decode" this sign.

The Eucharist (10 minutes): 1. Historical background -- The Last Supper: Jewish ceremony of Passover. Passover Lamb: a sign of deliverance from slavery. Jesus gave us a new Passover: deliverance from sin. 2. Meaning of communion -- we celebrate the union we share with Jesus, and consequently, with one another. Being in union with Jesus makes God our Father; hence we all are brother/sisters. The outside team is here as a sign we recognize you as brothers and that we love you. Palanca letters are signs that others are united with us in prayer and love. 3. Relate Eucharist to the death and resurrection of Christ (Paschal Mystery) -- In the Eucharist we see a speeded up version of the process of dying and rising. The bread is a sign of our lives. When we invoke the Holy Spirit over our lives, we are changed, too. 4. Meaning of "amen" -- a sign that we are in agreement, not just with the doctrine of the Eucharist, but with Jesus Christ. A sign that we want to be changed so we can be like Christ. 5. Instructional mass -- explain the mass step by step. Tell what we are doing, why are we doing it and what it means. Why vestments? Significance of colors. Significance of candles and entrance song. Sign of the cross; penitential rite, Liturgy of the Word: how God speaks to us; etc.

NOTE: At the end of this talk the Lay Director will indicate that instead of table discussion there will

be a written exercise at each table. The table leader(s) will conduct the exercise. The Lay Director will have provided copy of the exercise sheet to the table leaders during the team formation meetings. At these meetings the Lay Director will explain and practice the Signs Exercise right after the critique of the Signs talk. Each table leader should know how to conduct this exercise before the retreat.

### Signs Exercise

- I. The purpose of this exercise is to make us more aware of the presence of God's signs in our day-to-day existence.

The signs are there; it's up to us become conscious of them. It's like taking time to look at the flowers as we walk through a garden.

- II. Our life can be precious--growing, wondering, searching, discovering, making friends, finding answers, making things happen. This is our life in His spirit.

The sunrise, the spring breezes, the surge of the ocean, our eyesight -- all are parts of God's gift to us. They're signs of His presence in the world, in our lives and in the lives of those around us.

At this time, we would like to look at how God's signs are real and present in our lives -- in ourselves and in one another.

- III. Fill in 2 or 3 of the following (you can use the back of the sheet).

- One of the happiest times in my life was:
- A time I was patient when I didn't want to be was:
- A time I held back from criticizing or speaking angry words was:
- A time I was gentle with a friend was:
- One time I really trusted someone was:

- IV. If you would like to, share what you have written with those at your table.

- V. How do you think that the things we have shared are signs of God's spirit being with us? Why or why not? Are these just 'ordinary' things? Do we usually expect God's gifts to be more 'extraordinary'?

What kinds of signs do you see present in this group? How do they affect you?

Prepare a brief summary of the signs which were mentioned in sharing at each table. Mention how they affect you, and how they affect those around you. Choose one or two people from your table to present your summary.