COMMUNITY SPIRITUALITY
(Background and Summary)
(Given by a Spiritual Director)

Background:

Each of us has been created by God to experience His love and to respond to that love through spiritual growth. Only in community in the Lord Jesus can I fully respond to god’s love. Christian community is the family of God’s children, sharing with and revealing to one another those truths which our heavenly Father so desires.

One of the greatest dangers in the life of a Christian is being isolated and alone in a hostile environment; this can be demoralizing, oppressive, stagnating, and undermining of those qualities needed for growth in the Lord. It is essential to have Christian community: a network of personal relationships that are fully Christian, that are dedicated to the love of God above all things, and that desire to bring others into this community so that they also can live a life dedicated to God in Christ. We are called to pour into the Church, and through the Church into the world, a new life in grace; and this is meant to be borne by the individual Christians who live it together (Community Support for faith) and spread it together (Evangelization and Community Spirituality).

The previous talk said: We need the community to keep us going! This talk addresses the question: What keeps the community going? Our answer is community spirituality in the Lord Jesus. The core of this presentation is the value and necessity of shared religious experience and prayer in the life of the Christian.

By this stage of the weekend, the candidates usually are very open to “shared spirituality”. They really want to share their relationship with the Lord with a spouse, their family, friends, neighborhood, etc. However, they need specific, ordinary suggestions how to begin. A simple explanation and personal examples often are most effective doing this. All the ways of imaging God within the community are a sharing of the Church’s role as image of God, continuing Christ’s own mission.

Scriptural Context:

Two excellent Scripture texts to serve as a basis for this talk are Ephesians 4:2-7 and II Cor. 12:14-31. We, as Christians, ARE the Body of Christ, united in and through the Spirit. Our one faith and one baptism bond us together so integrally that our spiritual lives are intertwined. Just as in the communal Reconciliation service we witnessed to the fact that our sinfulness is not isolated but affects the whole Body of Christ, so now in the Community Spirituality talk we attest to the manner in which our spiritual growth as individuals builds up the entire Christian Church.

Shared Spirituality

It is our “vocation” to create and be Christian community: talking about Christ, sharing experiences of Christian living, sharing experiences of Christian living, forming attitudes and values centered in Christ, challenging and supporting each other in areas for new growth, helping one another be more fully Christian. Entering Christian Community really means that
we commit ourselves not only to the Lord, but also to one another. We promise one another: “I will not stand by and let you die spiritually or as a person. I will nourish your spiritual life and help you live.”

The parish sacramental life offers many opportunities to share Christian spirituality. Truly celebrating the Sacraments with fellow parishioners: Baptism, Confirmation, first Holy Communions, Eucharistic liturgies, Reconciliation, weddings, anointings of the sick and elderly ... we rejoice in the spiritual bond that joins us together and is strengthened with each Sacrament. Within a family, the spirituality exemplified by the parented often leaves a deep impression on the children. Shared prayer, for and with one another, weather in small or large groups, makes real our unity as brothers and sisters in the Lord. Like the disciples on the road to Emmaus (Lk. 24), we journey through life and together discover the Lord’s presence in our midst.

Since this is the last presentation of the CEW, a review and summary of the various talks ought to be made. It is important for the candidates to see the whole picture of the weekend; to put and keep topics in perspective. It is suggested to give a handout or overlay listing all the talks and their context. This talk should also stress how essential it is that each candidate maintain some form of follow-up as an active member of the Christian community. The growth begun on this weekend will stagnate and die unless it is continually nourished. The candidate is introduced to several established sharing communities which already exist; he/she is encouraged to become involved as much as interest and life situations permit.

Length: 30 minutes can be given to this talk.
COMMUNITY SPIRITUALITY
(Outline)

A. Overview of talks given on the CEW weekend (may use handout)

1. Personal growth in the Christian life:
   -- Self-Knowledge
   -- Ideals
   -- Grace
   -- Formation

2. Christian growth in relation to God and others:
   -- Layperson in the Church
   -- Sacraments
   -- Holiness

3. Sharing with others in the Christian community:
   -- Evangelization
   -- Community Support for Faith
   -- Community Spirituality

B. Introduction to Community Spirituality

1. The Ideal
   a. All ideals: “Ideals are like the stars; we don’t always reach them, but we chart our course by them.”
   b. The Christian Ideal: Col. 1:22-23

2. The Continuing Struggle
   a. It’s a rare person who can “go it alone.”
   b. Where do we go from here (after the Weekend)?

C. The Christian Experience

1. Jesus ... to Apostles ... to Pentecost ... to Body of Christ

2. Early Christians (Acts 4:31-35) (can paraphrase, adapting to present CEW experiences)

3. We are the BODY: of Christ: the People of God (2 Cor. 12:14-31)
   a. We pool our individual gifts to create something better: Church
   b. We are ONE BODY: called to Be Church for one another.
      -- doesn’t matter what you do, but who you are.
      -- our spiritual lives are intertwined
      -- our commitment to one another’s spiritual growth
4. Our road to Emmaus: (Luke 24) together discovering the presence of our Lord in our midst.
   - in family: sharing and witnessing as Christians
   - in parish: “celebrating the Sacraments” - we stand on “Holy ground”
   - in other informal ways (spiritual director, prayer groups, social circles, neighborhood, etc.)

5. Some questions to ask ourselves:
   - When is the last time I told someone I would pray for them?
   - When is the last time I asked someone to pray for me?
   - Who would I be willing to lay down my life for, as Jesus did for us?
   - When I need spiritual support, who do I go to? Who comes to me??
   - What person(s) do I have a spiritual sharing and challenging relationship with?
   - What other people KNOW I care about their spiritual life and growth?

D. Established Sharing communities

1. Summary of the Cursillo background in the Dubuque diocese and how CEW evolved from it. (included in this manual)
   Encourage those present to consider making a Cursillo.

2. Established CEW support communities

   - Large group - “Monthly Reunion” ... second Sunday of each month, usually. (Monthly newsletter publicizes this. Brief explanation of the format.)
   - Small groups - a few people in an area form their own group that meet weekly, or whenever members decide.
   - CEW special events

3. Other possibilities

   A. For Marrieds:
      1) Marriage Encounter
      2) Marriage Retorno
      3) Marriage and Family enrichment days and weekends
      4) Family Encounter

   B. For Singles:
      1) Singles Encounter
      2) Retreats
      3) Antioch, Core
      4) Dominic Club
      5) Engaged Encounter

   C. For divorced, separated, and widowed:
      1) Beginning Experience weekend
      2) Local support groups
4. Opportunities to GIVE support

   A. Future CEW’s
   B. TEC (Teens Encounter Christ)
   C. Church or Family (lay) Mission
   D. Spiritual Renewal days for youth and adults
   E. Monthly CEW Reunion: Witness talks

E. Closing remarks

   1. PATIENCE in our on spiritual growth (Zorbe and the butterfly)

   2. Christian life is built on COMMITMENT TO CHRIST, not just on emotions.

   3. Our challenge: we are anointed and sent! (Eph. 4:1-6)