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## « SOURCE OF LIFE, WHAT IS YOUR NAME? » (1)

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Since the Lenten season is an ideal time to reflect on our Christian faith, for the next few weeks I shall reflect on the contents of the family- and parish-based religious education which our children, parents and religious educators are experiencing. I hope that these reflections motivate you to undertake a similar exercise of discovery of the riches of our faith.

### DANNY AND CARRIE

Danny and Carrie represent the many children in religious education, and they are the ones who will help me discover the “Father’s secrets”, those secrets which God reveals only to those whose heart is humble and open enough to accept them. You remember the prayer of Jesus as reported by Saint Luke: “At that moment Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said: ‘I offer you praise, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because what you have hidden from the learned and the clever you have revealed to the merest children. Yes, Father, you have graciously willed it so’ Everything has been given over to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father and no one knows the Father except the Son – and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him” (Luke 10:21-23). By listening to what the children know about God I make this my own prayer, and I bless the Father for having shown himself to the children in our communities.

### THE WONDERS OF LIFE

With Danny and Carrie, I set off on an adventure. With them I marvel at the riches of life all around me, the life of plants, animals, and people. Winter and summer, spring and fall, life flows through all of us, perhaps less noticeably in winter but still – look closely! It is amazing what nature can do during these short, sunless days. Like springtime slumbers under the snow, renewal springs forth in the winter of humankind. Like the secret fire smoulders under the embers, living love sings its presence in the cold of the world. As the buds tremble in the frost, whatever God prunes bears fruit! Through these walks in the woods with Danny and Carrie, I discover footprints in the snow and on the ground, of large and small animals who wandered close to our homes and left their mark. I pause at the spring and notice that it continues to flow even in winter. What is its strength? Where does it get its energy? How can it stand the cold of winter and keep on running? Where does it come from? Who created it? And what about those beautiful snow flakes that shine like diamonds... where do they come from? Who put them there? Despite the cold, some birds have chosen to stay with us: how great it is to hear their song! Over two hundred bird species in our region... They follow us and jump from snowy branch to snowy branch. Some fly to the feeders set out for them. Everything written in the snow, all these tracks show me the life that runs in our brothers and sisters, the birds and other animals. I join all the believers of all times to sing of the grandeur of creation and the praise of the Creator. “Cold and chill, bless the Lord, dew and rain, bless the Lord, frost and chill, bless the Lord, ice and snow, bless the Lord! Let the earth bless the Lord, praise and exalt him above all forever! Everything growing from the earth, bless the Lord, you springs, bless the Lord; all you birds of the air, bless the Lord, all you beasts, wild and tame, bless the Lord, praise and exalt him above all forever!” (Dan. 3)

## TRACES OF GOD

At the beginning of his famous letter to the Romans, the Apostle Paul asserts some timeless truths regarding the pagans: "Since the creation of the world, invisible realities, God's eternal power and divinity, have become visible, recognized through the things he has made. Therefore these men are inexcusable. They certainly had knowledge of God, yet they did not glorify him as God or give him thanks; they stultified themselves through speculating to no purpose, and their senseless hearts were darkened. They claimed to be wise, but turned into fools instead; they exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images representing mortal man, birds, beasts, and snakes" (Rm. 1:20-23). If this "knowledge of God" is sometimes muted in adults, it is not always that way with children! I remember asking a child what we could say about beautiful sunshine, and the child spontaneously answered: "How great is your name, O Lord, our God, through all the earth!" I hope that in our walks and hikes we be able to discover these traces of God, intimations of the invisible God.

## TAKING CARE OF LIFE

By discovering more and more the One who is the origin of all life, it is good for us to wish one another to take good care of all this budding life. Living beings need to be cared for. By respecting plant life, bird life and animal life, we develop the habit of assuming more and more "responsibilities" towards life itself. The poet Saint-Exupéry's advice is still timely: "You are responsible for the rose! The time you give to your rose will make it even dearer to you." Taking care of living beings is one way of answering God's call in the Book of Genesis' account of the creation: "I gave you the earth for you to care for it." The care we give it is a sign of love of creation and – why not? – of the Creator.

## GESTURES OF LIFE

Danny and Carrie go happily on their search for life. Carrie suddenly sees a flower, a very sad-looking poinsettia abandoned in the room. "I'm thirsty! Give me water!" A talking flower! "Yes! Look after me!" Carrie runs to Danny with her story: living beings need to be cared for! Carrie and Danny start thinking about the needs of the living things they have come across: trees need sun and water, children need water, sun, attention and love... Filled of wonder, Carrie and Danny exclaim: "Living beings need us! What can we do?" To learn to take care of a living being and to develop a sense of wonder for budding life, why not decide to put a seed or two in a flower pot and care for it, during this Lenten season? To discover and to love life! To discover and to love the Creator! To marvel at life! That will be religious education in action!

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