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OFFICE OF
THE BISHOP

February 9, 2001

Mr. William J. Cork, D. Min
Director of Young Adult and Campus Ministry
2403 Holcombe Blvd.
Houston, TX 77021-2098

Dear Mr. Cork,

Thank you for your letter of January 25, 2001.

Yes, we began the "Awakening Retreat" at McNeese University in the early 1970's. As our staff looked at how to best reach college and college-age young adults, we felt we had to first provide them with a "conversion" experience before a "catechesis" experience. We modeled it after the Cursillo and the Search retreat, which the team was familiar with. We saw it as an evangelization moment, not a catechesis one. We would follow up the Awakening with a Growth weekend, twice a year for those who wanted to grow in their new walk with Christ. These were more catechesis in nature.

From the beginning, we realized that what was important was not primarily the content of the talks but the experience of God's personal love, shown throughout the weekend by the witness and sharing of the staff. Thus, in asking someone to give the Faith talk, for example, we asked the person to reflect how they experienced the growth of their faith-relationship with Jesus. What is faith to them personally, not so much what the formal teaching on faith is. It was our experience that a week after the talk, the retreatants, for the most part, didn't remember the content of the talk, but they did remember the experience the speaker shared of his/her life in that area of our Christian life. Thus, we would not critique talks and perfect talks, only asked that they speak out of the context of their own life, their prayer time with Jesus and let the Spirit of God speak through them. Yes, they had to prepare something, but not to be slavish to a piece of paper, while sticking to the time frame given.

We found that the sincerity of the team, their love and commitment, their laying down of their lives for the weekend, their attitude of journeying along with the retreatants, their joy and service, etc, spoke volumes to those present. We wanted them to experience the joy of the Christian life.

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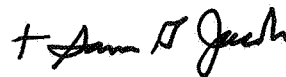
For a long time we resisted writing outlines for talks. We had the schedule and the details which needed to be taken care of throughout the weekend. The first written form of the "Awakening" came from LSU. That was the original "manual" which began to spread around. It was our weekend in written form.

My main suggestion would be free the team to be fully open to the Holy Spirit's movement; don't be too hung up on imparting the full truth of the Gospel this one weekend (stay within the truth and teach the truth), but let the focus be the experience of God's love for them.

I hope this helps. May the Lord bless your efforts.

With personal good wishes, I remain

Sincerely yours in the Lord,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sam G. Jacobs". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend Sam G. Jacobs
Bishop of Alexandria

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