

The Eucharistic Letter: A Companion Text

Vision and essence of the Little Design

1. I have something wonderful to share with you. God in his abundant goodness has revealed to me these insights regarding the Little Design communities. I see now how all the elements of a Little Design community's lifestyle are perfectly exemplified in the Eucharist. Where else could we find such a Great Love?

2. My dear brothers and sisters, I wonder if we could be as attentive to the ongoing process of creating these Little Design communities just as urgently as Jesus in the Eucharist longs to be totally self-emptied for us. Yes, let us dare to say it! Our Little Design communities are a movement of the Spirit. As such, they live and breathe and move in freedom having no need for canonical structures or public recognition. Allow that to be so. They will in truth, be emptied of all that the ego strives for and yet, they will be filled with God's pure love. The initiative is God's throughout.

3. This may shock you. But it seems to me that I see these Little Design communities composed of contemplative persons, who will appear to be 'nothing' in the eyes of the world. They will be found in a great number of places, scattered throughout the world. These Little Design communities will need no fanfare. They will simply and quietly emerge and be leaven in their own neighbourhoods, showing up here and there... wherever the Spirit blows... always creating triangles of loving relationships. God give the blessing of Little Design to the Church and world.

4. The Little Design communities will be very little and hidden within the world just as Jesus in the Eucharist accepts being a tiny fragment of bread and a sip of wine. Such an awesome mystery for a living Triune God! As I see it, the same mystery will be embodied in you. With God's help, all this will be accomplished in these Little Design communities as your voices and actions and presence are making a difference in a small, quiet, yes, almost invisible manner, by the very quality and depth of your interior, spiritual lives.

5. O God, how wonderful it will be if these Little Design communities maintain this spirit of littleness, humility, hiddenness and self-emptying detachment. It's the real secret of genuine happiness! I encourage you to just keep moving always towards 'the more' but a little more, day by day. Live in openness and receptivity to whatever future God wills for this Little Design.

A real nothingness

6. These Little Design communities will have no visible father, mother, founder, foundress or motherhouse of its own. This being stripped of everything that one might be able to see and touch and boast about in the visible world is a radically new idea. It may be quite counter-cultural for many to grasp. But I am telling you that we actually have something more here; we have something worthy of divine awe, of humble gratitude. It is truly marvellous!

7. For all of you in Little Design communities, Jesus and Mary, will be your spiritual father and spiritual mother. Constantly receptive to the will of God, like Jesus and Mary, you too will thrive and be generative in many fruitful ministries. Under Spirit inspiration you will birth a family of believers in every generation who will draw forth more and more persons into the fullness of

abundant life in God. Is this not the ‘something greater’ being given us?

8. Be mindful, brothers and sisters, that we can become a hindrance to God’s work within this Little Design when we go ahead of grace. It takes disciplined discernment to act only upon God’s inspiration and timing.

9. Just as Jesus in the Eucharist is completely stripped of everything, so likewise, you must be willing to be stripped of everything that is not your true self. The Eucharist is pure, whole and entire Triune God, whether the “adornments” are present or not. They do not change the essence. So too, you must not think about what you need to have externally in order to be Little Design communities. The essence is simply a union of all persons living in the Heart of God.

10. Such marvellous goodness that in God’s creative plan we are needed to fulfill the dream of manifesting God’s Little Design. Just as God needs a priest to make Jesus present in the Eucharist, so God needs us to be instruments in communicating pure love to others. How good our God is to use us for this ‘little plan’ of spreading, communicating and multiplying Love in the world. Do the parallels between our real nothingness and Jesus’ self-emptying in the Eucharist seem clearer to you now?

Living the evangelical counsels

11. And now there is an even larger vision and understanding of these evangelical counsels that goes beyond canonical norms and expression. I see in the Eucharist the expansiveness and all-inclusiveness of Great Love. For those called to live in the way of

Little Design, these virtues/energies of poverty, chastity and obedience will be channelled and used for the enhancement of life for all humanity.

12. Could there be anything so poor in the world as the Body of Christ truly present in a piece of bread?

13. Meditate often upon Jesus in the Eucharist and ponder his detachment from things. He lives from a larger consciousness that all is lavish gift received and lavish gift shared. He remains equally content whether the things given him for his use are elaborate or simple, whether they are lent or given him, whether they are given him for a long time or a short time. Jesus voluntarily puts his abundance into the circle of love.

14. In the same manner, my dear brothers and sisters, the Little Design communities will live from a contemplative consciousness that we own nothing, not even our own lives, which always at every moment, come to us as Gift. For sure, this is radical dependence upon God and radical freedom for the soul. Living in this interiority will shape your attitudes and choices in daily life. Then you shall always be equally content, whether you “have much or have little or have nothing at all” and you can live in gratitude for everything. This is the pure freedom and detachment of our poverty in the Little Design communities.

15. The chastity and purity embodied in the mystery of the Eucharist invites us to enter more deeply into a contemplative awareness of God’s deep loving preference for us. We see how God uses the senses to relate to us in the bread and wine elements that we take and eat and drink and our hearts become enflamed. This

chastity awakens Great Love within us. With eyes of faith, we behold the Beloved beholding us.

16. How happy we will be if the same is true of us! The chastity of the Little Design is an embodied spirituality that invites all the members to live consciously as temples of the living God. We allow God's love to flow through all our senses into healthy and wholesome lifestyles. Chastity is a celebration of the senses not a negation. We are called to be happy and healthy, not mortified and repressed in the experience of living in our bodies. With God's help, this is what the chastity of the Little Design will bring about in all of us.

17. And now, we marvel at the holy obedience of the dear Saviour. It is truly miraculous! The obedience as lived by the members of the Little Design is modelled by Jesus' pure and constant listening to God. Just as he experiences no need for refusal or resistance in coming into our hearts, so too will we, in this experience of God's unconditional love and total availability, have no resistance in offering a reciprocal response in loving obedience to whatever God asks us to be or to do.

18. May it please the Divine Goodness that we who belong to the Little Design may have an obedience like Jesus. My dear sisters and brothers, do not let your tensions and fears overwhelm you but rather place yourself with a "nurturing tender mother who knows all your needs and is bound to care for the children nestled at her breast." Relax inwardly and you will fall into a confident trust that obeys easily. When your obedience becomes so one with God's desires, you will start to act more disposed to the fluidity of God's life and God's work flowing through you. You become almost

invisible – “a shadow” – and God becomes tangible and visible in and through you. Such an awesome mystery of union!

The total double union

19. And if we desire, dear brothers and sisters, to have a model of our love of God and charity towards the neighbour, where will it be found any better than in the Eucharist. This mystery is called the love of loves. Embrace Eucharist as a mystical supper and as a participation in oneness with all the members of the Mystical Body of Christ. There you will encounter the Source of all your holy loving ... of self, of one another, of God. “Effect in me a miracle of love.”

20. Here is the heart of our mystical vocation as Little Designers. It will be God’s grace inflowing each member that animates our capacity for loving. Each member contributes to the quality of loving within the whole Body. The communal container, the Little Design community, professes to be one of the most pure and perfect love. The individual members uniting *mystically* around the world as a collective group, manifest this divine Love-in-action. This new relationship of neighbour - with neighbour - with God is a continual Divine round dance that has an energy and enthusiasm that makes people get moving beyond existing boundaries and borders. In time, it takes on “the length, breadth, height and depth of God’s love.”

21. My dear sisters and brothers, the Eucharist makes Christ present in a relational dynamic that unites us to the Triune God. Eucharist invites us to make ourselves present to Christ, to one another and to the world. This *communion* is accomplished by God. As Little Designers living in this Divine communion, we become instruments of unity. This quality of unity is a gift of God and

challenges us in connecting with the energy of our inter-relatedness. Jesus Himself cries out to his Father to call forth a gathering of persons to share with them the very same mission of unity. “May they all be one, as you are in me and I am in you, may they all be one” (Jn.21).

22. The single end of a totally selfless Little Design community will be a group of persons striving to live in ‘total double union’:

of ourselves and every dear neighbour with God
of ourselves with every neighbour, whoever they may be,
and of every dear neighbour among themselves and with us,
but all in Jesus and in God his Father.

Our thrust towards this “total double union” must be deeply personal, radically relational and profoundly human, as was that of Jesus. Know too, that we do not accomplish this union. It is of divine origin ... a mystery ... a beholding that leaves us weak instruments in awe of God, that Higher Power, who works through us in our human relationships in the here and now. God’s love keeps taking on flesh and language and gestures that incarnate Love today.

23. It is humanly impossible to achieve this noble end, yet we were born for this mystic work, for this excellent dignity, for this magnanimous privilege of partnering God in the realization of this dream. I pray that Divine Goodness will reveal to you the wisdom to understand your calling. Over time, the grace and energy and capacity to accomplish this “total double union” will come from God and will flow through us. Becoming “fit instruments” would seem to happen as a fruitfulness that comes with years of faithful practice of this mantra: “Empty me and fill me with your Great Love.”

24. You will note that I am calling this double union a ‘total’ double union. You will only be able to live in this reality and practice of total double union by undergoing a process of self-emptying. Be willing and ready to move always towards “the more”. This ‘total’ double union calls for great humility and openness to allow the ego-self to be diminished and at the same time, to be filled with Great Love. Once you desire and come to understand your right place in the order of things, you will more easily detach from your own plans and see the wisdom and timing of the bigger plans of God. “For nothing is impossible for God.”

25. May God grant to all our Little Design communities, the grace to be able to contribute to the building up of the Body of Christ in the world and bring many souls into the Trinitarian life of Love. As a “fit instrument”, I challenge you to do all this in little, hidden ways, in the daily ordinariness of life. Keep it simple and inspiring.

The virtues, activities and nature of the Little Design communities.

26. I shall say by way of summary, that this movement of the Little Design calls forth a spiritual interiority and intention. In time, often after some radical self-emptying and receptivity and cooperation with grace, the Spirit may draw you to profess, cherish and choose Little Design as a definitive way of life for you to live out the charism of ‘May we all be one.’ Humility will be its foundation. All the other virtues - modesty, gentleness candour and simplicity - are the overflowing manifestation of spiritually alive persons.

27. Only the Divine Goodness will help you to understand how the interior Trinitarian life will totally fill you and all your activities.

For this to be realized, you must undergo a Paschal Mystery cycle. For every dying, there will be a rising to new life. With awe, I marvel that you, brothers and sisters, “the souls and body of a mere nothing” will tangibly experience the touch of the Infinite God vivifying you and causing you to live by the very holiness of God.

28. Now my dear brothers and sisters, Jesus in the Eucharist models beautifully the virtues of a Little Design community. Like Jesus, are you “modest, mild and gentle, simple and candid, full of God and empty of everything else”? It is from this Divine life flowing within us that we draw the potential for transformation and are motivated and inspired to work for the transformation of others and encourage them along in the mystical Way. It is divine Love’s active and co-creating power that urges us on in spreading the good news of this Little Design movement throughout the world.

29. My dear sisters and brothers, it is here in the Eucharist that we will find the model of all the virtues of a Little Design community.

30. And it seems to me that we also find all aspects of the Little Design community’s life and activities integrated, united and flowing from the Eucharist. Make this your prayer: *“O Jesus! In this miracle of mysteries effect in me a miracle of love. Grant that when I have the happiness of partaking in this sacrament, your grace will change my life into your life!”*

31. The birthing of these communities of Little Design are modelled on the Trinity. Let them be “secret associations of three persons” who feel called to live this way of life. By ‘secret’ I mean these small faith communities will live from their own deep interior reality and have no need for a public ceremony or civil recognition

in order to exist. These small groupings of men and women will be ecclesial, yet without institutional structures; they live in their own homes. They share a unity in their baptismal consecration and a commitment to serve others.

32. For it seems to me that out of the littleness and mystical ‘nothingness’ of the persons who compose these communities of Little Design there will be a great thrust towards the transformation of a great number of souls worldwide. When this way of being and way of living is sustained over the years, there will be a fruitfulness of Spirit that just manifests. There will be an overflow into some apostolic efficacy. There can be no rules or boundaries to where this Divine Love will take you, send you, move you. Simply, “Love Love and let Love love through you.”

33. My dear sisters and brothers, I use “secret intimacy” and “secret consecration” to describe the unity of love in the three Divine Persons. I see the same unity of love in all the Little Design communities. Just as Jesus offered himself and consecrated himself to the Father for all humankind, so also are we called to enter into the mystery of God’s saving power working through us to advance the transformation of humanity.

The growth and spread of Little Design communities.

34. Now our little community must communicate itself. The spirit of the dispersion, growth and spread of the Little Design vision will be modelled on the charismatic energy of the early Church. Just as the Gospel message spread person-to-person, so will every member in Little Design be a mystic-missionary. Each member is given responsibility to discern and welcome three more persons into the Little Design way of life. It will always be a slow and gradual gathering up of mystic persons finding each other and then becoming another Little Design community. To do this, you must

attract others by the way you live your lives; instruct others with the truth of your own lived experience; and lead others to gather and share hearts in small faith-based communities.

35. Just as the apostles, deacons and disciples were needed for the distribution of Eucharist among the faithful, so you will likewise be involved in the apostolic mission of the Church. The manner in which the Eucharist is distributed is in an intimate, personal way. Similarly, this will be your style of communicating the Little Design vision.

The food, homes, activities, summary

36. With God's help, in the Little Design communities, the food and clothing will be simple. These very practical matters of living on 'just enough' must be embraced within the interiority and intentionality of the persons living and embracing this way of life. However, the food and clothing can be distinctive and diverse according to the various groups and different circumstances of each. There is a unity within this kind of diversity that allows for maximum freedom of the Spirit.

37. Just as the Eucharist is celebrated with hosts made from varying flours according to what's available in different countries, so will the Little Designers, wherever they live, express their lifestyle in a manner that is suitable to their age, culture and circumstances. They will be adaptable, free, without uniformity, simple – as the great mystery of the Eucharist is throughout the world.

38. Your houses should be like tabernacles. Imagine that you can create and care for your own homes as sacred spaces. This will ensure your interior, contemplative lifestyle and honour the Presence within. Your movement out into the neighbourhood or

workplace is through an obedient listening to God's promoting you to go forth to perform some service for another and then return home. This coming in and going out is a flow of contemplation and action. It is all one ministry of Love.

39. The interior life of union with God of its own nature just flows into some ministry or service. It is all the one Love and one Life. This manner of a contemplative lifestyle is in itself, a ministry that inspires and educates others so that they, in turn, can live deep and meaningful spiritual lives in the world, whatever their particular vocation. With God's help all of this might be realized.

40. To "serve in spirit and in truth" requires an ongoing discernment for each Little Designer to live faithfully the interior call of God and to do one's own authentic ministry. The various services will respect and be in harmony with the humanness and giftedness of each person. The apostolic mandate of each Little Designer will be perfectly tailored to his/her uniqueness.

41. The apostolic goal of "serving in spirit and in truth" is most clearly seen in the way Jesus in the Eucharist effects an interior union. In his zeal, he communicates himself to all others so that the whole Mystical Body can also "live in spirit and in truth."

42. In summary, the essence of our whole Little Design spirituality is to be, like Jesus in the Eucharist, "nothing for self, all for God and the dear neighbour." May God accomplish his marvels in us according to the measure of his good pleasure. Yours is a mystical vocation. It is about the God of Love living in you and working through you accomplishing God's dream for all humanity.

Blessed be God. Amen.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is a Little Design Community?

This is possibly the most challenging question to respond to. We have come to experience it as almost too mysterious and elusive to describe. We just know from experience that our small faith-share communities are animated by the Spirit of God. We desire to share 'the little plan' of how monthly gatherings with a few spiritual friends in our own homes – or by Skype and email - can become not only a deepening faith experience but a unique grace in one's journey.

2. Who initiated this idea of small Little Design communities? Who is the founder?

The Holy Spirit revealed the Little Design vision and plan to a Jesuit priest, Jean-Pierre Médaille some 350+ years ago. He coined the phrase 'the little design' in his inspired text The Eucharistic Letter that is the core document of all Little Design Communities. Within the original text of this Eucharistic Letter, he states: "Now what I find marvellous in this new design is that it is without a visible father or mother, founder of foundress, without a house of its own. In a word, I see it stripped of everything." This is one of the key characteristics that distinguish these Little Design Communities from other canonically-based religious congregations. These Little Design Communities need to live and breathe and move within this detachment and freedom as a contemplative/mystical expression of the Gospel following of Christ.

3. Why have I not heard of these Little Design Communities before now?

The Sisters of St. Joseph just found The Eucharistic Letter - post Vatican II era - at the same time as the universal call to holiness was raised into awareness among the People of God. The Eucharistic Letter speaks of “perhaps in time” there will be a congregation without a congregation, a religious order without a religious order and a body without being a body.” We have come to see that these little communities that are starting to manifest now are pointing us to - this is the time. ‘Now’ is the time for the rebirth of these Little Design Communities. May they appear here and there in every country and throughout the whole church.

4. What are the distinguishing characteristics of a Little Design community?

Its littleness, hiddenness and self-emptying are clearly the most distinguishing qualities found in all these Little Design communities. How beautiful and refreshing when these interior and exterior virtues are manifested within the members of Little Design communities. Over time and with frequent pondering on the entire Eucharistic Letter one comes to realize ‘the pure gift’ in this nothingness! This ‘nothingness’ in its externals: there is no motherhouse, no houses in common, no shared bank accounts, no corporations, no canonical affiliations. Little Design Communities are emptied of all these manifestations of ‘a body’ yet - its interior life among the members is rich and full and seems totally animated by God’s love. The services that each one does are hidden and ordinary and it is simply and purely a mission of Love. We receive and live in the Beams of God’s unconditional Love and share the ‘lavish grace’ of this Love with the neighbor in front of us.

5. What meaning do these Little Design communities have for our time?

A 'gift' needed for our time. Could this be a 'something new' that wants in ... wants to be spoken about ... wants to be revealed to more and more spiritual seekers... Not everyone will 'see' the Little Design as a new wineskin that holds and celebrates and animates the charism in a uniquely mystical manner. As we see it now, this new way of living in oneness/unity with God, with each other and with all creation requires a 'shift in consciousness' and with that grace happening... some of us have come to see how the Gospel way of Love can be embraced within the ecclesial yet not require any structured, canonical form at all. This Little Design community is a 'congregation without being a congregation, a religious order without being a religious order, a body without a body' ...and this seems to suit those more contemplative/mystical souls that are gathering together today.

6. Who is attracted to these Little Design Communities?

Little Design is attracting lay men and women who are seriously committed to the spiritual life and desirous of growing in a more conscious and intimate union with God, all others and creation. Today, we are more aware of all persons being called by God, consecrated to God and committed to a way of holiness in the world based on the Gospel. Our charism of active and inclusive love hopes that married and single persons will start forming their own 'small faith communities' that will support and encourage their 'moving always towards the more!' No elaborate formation or introduction is required. The beginnings can be as simple as: Discern - gather a few folks - study The Eucharistic Letter - share your heart story - break bread.

7. How do I discern if I am being called to form/join a Little Design Community?

After you view the Little Design Communities website at www.theupperroomhomeofprayer.org and read the original text of The Eucharistic Letter, you will begin to experience an interior attraction that stirs you with interest, longing, desire and peace. If the Spirit within you continues to nudge you to act on this desire... then after prayer and possibly speaking about it with your spiritual director or a good friend, act on the direction. If you do not resonate with the text or the material presented on these web pages, then, you are most likely not being called at this time to join or form a Little Design Community. If you are already comfortable with the vision and essence of The Eucharistic Letter, then possibly, God is calling you to reach out now and invite others - lay or religious - to form a small Little Design community in your own neighbourhood.

8. How many people should belong in any one of these Little Design Communities?

We have learned that trust and heart-to-heart sharing is deeper and more authentic when it is just a small community of like-minded spiritual companions. We suggest three to six persons in each Little Design community. Choose persons with whom you already feel some 'spiritual attraction'. Over time, gathering together with these same few spiritual friends in your own homes, or by regular email and Skype visits, can become a time of 'holy sabbath' that nourishes and renews your whole life. It is so wonderful to feel belonging, to be loved and listened to, to be challenged and championed.

9. What do we do at a Little Design Community gathering?

Firstly, we would like to remind you, that there is no one ‘right way’ to do a Little Design community gathering. At our website, you can download for free the Year One gatherings that are included in the 100 page complete document. These commentaries on the 42 paragraphs of The Eucharistic Letter will guide you with the basic formation, so to speak. We know that solid ‘foundational’ material strengthens the base from which can grow a healthy communal experience. The Spirit present in your living rooms will guide you in ways that might surprise and comfort you. As we have lovingly come to say about what we do at our Little Design gatherings: “We eat, we pray, we love one another.”

10. What is this sharing of hearts?

This we acknowledge is the heart-and-soul-essence of our Little Design Community gatherings. After some time of casual conversation, prayer and reflective study, we encourage every gathering, or Skype visit, to include this sharing heart-to-heart. It has often been called in spiritual language, the ‘manifestation of the heart’. We encourage everyone to do this with all gentleness, ease and candour. In a small group, where trust and bonding are happening, it is safe and healing to share the interior struggles we are undergoing and our gratitude for the graces received. The spiritual life is both a purifying and transforming experience and when we can offer each other this quality of listening - almost like group spiritual direction - we can celebrate the growth and maturity as each one reflects more and more “becoming the person they were meant to be, in nature, grace and glory” M.P. 10:6.

11. Are there any formal ceremonies or commitments if I join one of these Little Design communities?

No. In keeping with the pristine essence, spirit, feeling and understanding of the 'Little Design' as used in The Eucharistic Letter, there will be no public ceremonies or commitments. They will remain 'hidden and invisible' yet as Fr. Médaille prays: "God grant that it may they be established throughout the whole church" (E.L. par.3). We created this Little Design Communities website because we are becoming increasingly conscious that the internet can be an instrument to help us illuminate the kingdom of God already in our midst. We feel blessed to have 'found' each other and know a joy and support as we journey forward ...each of us ... in our own little corner of this wonderful world. We hope you will want to connect online and commune with each other from time to time.

12. How do we spread the news about these Little Design Communities?

This too has a remarkable simple little formula: it sounds so familiar to the charismatic beginnings of early church times! In the diaspora - the spreading out of the Good News - the disciple shared his/her experience of meeting the Risen Christ in a one-on-one conversation. In The Eucharistic Letter - paragraphs 34 and 35 - each member is encouraged "to attract, instruct and lead three souls to the practice of deep holiness." Once again, simple, nothing is burdensome, and all is a response to being moved in the Spirit. Since these Little Design communities are more attractive to contemplative souls, take your time in your discernment and seek to be guided by the Spirit in your invitations to 'come and see'. We

totally accept that not everyone is ready or can ‘feel at home’ in these small faith sharing communities.

13. The Eucharistic Letter is the core document. How can I relate to it today?

Such a good question and we too marvel that something ‘so ancient’ comes now into our awareness as ‘ever new’. It was written in 1660 - as you will learn from the History section of the website. Here we are in 2017 and beyond – opening the pages afresh and ‘seeing the beginning’ as if for the first time and finding ourselves in a home-space that we can easily settle down in and be at peace. Our sincere hope is that many of you will celebrate this ‘rebirthing’ of the Little Design way of life and like us, wait and see ... what God does ... with God’s own little plan... for us, for the world, for the church.

14. What is our prayerful response in the now moment?

I quote from Judy Cannato: “Stay awake. It is together that we move forward, listening to the incomprehensible holy MYSTERY who is inviting us to live a new story, to embrace new powers and to manifest a morphogenetic/energy field that will change the course of human history.” - *Judy Canato, Field of Compassion, p. 191*

With the Beams of Love (*Mary Southard, artwork*) now holding the deep desire of our hearts, we, the 60+ members of our Ottawa Little Design communities, offer you our new Little Design Communities website along with some printed materials. We send them forth into the world ... with one huge embrace of Love.

For more copies, please contact:

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