

The Essentials of the Via de Cristo



A Manual for the Training of Leaders
in the Via de Cristo Method of Renewal

A Publication of
The National Lutheran Secretariat
for
Via de Cristo

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Preface

Just what is that universal quality that makes one Via de Cristo or Cursillo® weekend like any other weekend, even though every weekend is unique?

They are the same because the essentials of a Via de Cristo weekend are the same as the essentials of the Cursillo® weekends that spawned the Lutheran Via de Cristo movement. They are unique because every team is unique, and each team member relates the message of the weekend in her or his own way.

What are those essentials that are basic to a weekend and what are the “extras” that are woven around those essentials making weekends in Florida have a different flavor than weekends in South Dakota?

This book attempts to clarify that which is essential to a weekend, whether it takes place in Minnesota or in Arizona, and also identify that which is adiaphorous, but gives the weekend its local “flavor.”

A companion book, *NLS Team Formation Manual* is being developed to assist leaders in training teams for weekends. Together these publications are similar to the Roman Catholic Leader’s Manual.

Our thanks to Mr. Luther Piel, Rev. Paul Schmidlin, Rev. Carroll Lang and countless others for their efforts in compiling this book, but a special thanks to all who by their faithful teamwork have developed the Via de Cristo while preserving the Cursillo® method. It is this accumulation of knowledge and expertise that has been woven into this book.

Via de Cristo endorses non-sexist language. However, in an effort to keep this manual clear, consistent, and easy to read we favor the masculine when referring to God, and the feminine when referring to members of the Church, Christ’s bride, as well as to leaders and participants.

Introduction

Any attempt to speak of what “Lutherans” believe is risky. Historically, Lutherans would have preferred never to be known as anything other than *The Church* and would likely say with pride, “If it’s Christian — it’s Lutheran.” For more clarification they would likely point you to the confessions found in the *Book of Concord*. However, to accomplish the ecumenical spirit of *Via de Cristo* we must be a bit more pragmatic. So we will say that there are at least some key thoughts to which virtually all Lutherans would agree.

Lutherans emphasize good doctrine that has been revealed by God (*I Corinthians 1:19-21*). In several of Martin Luther’s writings he highlights the theme “all men are sinners.” Further, there is a story that, at Luther’s death, he had placed a paper in his pocket that read simply, “It is true, we are all beggars.” If it is true, that all people are sinners and beggars, then Christians must look behind any person’s behavior, before any person’s ideas, and beyond any person’s opinion. People so easily deceive themselves that the ideas and opinions of God’s people will stray from God’s true revelation if not carefully grounded. Lutheran Christians emphasize that no human can use magic or logic to discover and know God. Even if a person shows great personal ability, intelligence, and devotion, when it comes to knowing about God, that person is still completely dependent. We are all beggars seeking the revelation of God’s Word. The hope for purity and the watchword for health lies in consistent good doctrine derived from revealed truth and only revealed truth. Martin Luther said it well, “Word alone! Grace alone! Faith alone!”

Having said this, do we wish to imply that other church writings are inferior? May the Lord keep us from arrogance; we are all beggars! Our churches have both strengths and flaws. Think of a diamond, a stone with many cut facets. In their development each church has chosen to emphasize particular facets of Christianity, and as a result there developed a sparkling diversity within Christendom. Lutheran Christians emphasize some specific facets that reflect brightly in this diamond. In addition to good doctrine, Lutherans emphasize the clear expression of Law and Gospel. Law is that which condemns. Gospel is that which frees. Law is that which humanity attempts. Gospel is that which God accomplished. Law brings us to repentance. Gospel sets us free to live in grace. Death from Law! Life from Gospel! Both must be proclaimed.

“By grace through faith” (*Ephesians 2:8*) represents a third facet for Lutherans to see. We bristle at any hint of personal freedom to approach God. This is fundamental in any Lutheran work; salvation is *all* in God’s hands! It is *all* God’s work! We Lutherans are so sensitive that, rather than chance a misrepresentation, we will pass by a good theme, a good song, and even question a good movement if it appears to give humans authority. We were all dead in sin. God saved us. Lutherans do allow that Scripture reveals freedom of will over those things placed under mankind’s dominion (*Genesis 1:38*). But without the grace, help, and activity of the Holy Spirit we are incapable of making ourselves acceptable to God (Augsburg Confession XVIII,2). While on one level it may appear that people have freedom to accept Christ, on a deeper level we know any true encounter with God comes by the Holy Spirit. Such is the power and majesty of God.

However, in the legitimate concern that people understand humanity’s total dependence on Christ, other essentials get neglected. Most obvious of those is: We were created by God to do good works (*Matthew 5:16, Ephesians 2:10*). Tragically, too many Lutheran congregations are known for neither great evangelism, nor inspiring social concern. *Via de Cristo* is one method that carefully walks the line, respecting clear doctrine and Christian action.

There is power in an idea. When an idea becomes an ideal, there is power to direct a life. In the 1940’s, on the island of Majorca, Spain, some very powerful ideas were developed by

Christian men. By grace these ideas, based on God's revealed Word, became the Cursillo® focused in the Christian Ideal of a life filled and directed by God's grace. These men were inspired by grace to change their world for their brother, Jesus Christ.

This "Essentials of the Via de Cristo" manual, adapted from the Cursillo® method, contains Lutheran Christian doctrine, with appropriate focus on specific "facets." It uses the understanding and methods of the Cursillo® founders. People who do not immediately identify with Lutherans are still welcomed and encouraged to use this manual because we know that "Lutheran" is at best an adjective and not a noun to stand alone. In Via de Cristo we are certain the day is coming when the "Christ Diamond" will sparkle for all of us and every Christian will enjoy the beauty of every facet.

Two thoughts we ask you to keep in mind: first, it is difficult to describe and impossible to prescribe the work of the Holy Spirit; He moves when and where he wills (*John 3:8*). As you use this manual, "Do not put out the Spirit's fire" (*I Thessalonians 5:18-21*). Good doctrine and this manual are intended only to build the framework and to "test the spirits" (*I John 4:1*). Never resubmit to law, even if it comes in the guise of doctrine (*Galatians 3:15*). Second, do not think that by studying this manual any person can truly understand the Via de Cristo. Via de Cristo must be lived — on the weekend, in the 4th day, with face-to-face encounters. No one can explain what only the experience can impart.

God loves you and so do we!

Chapter 1

A Brief History of the Via de Cristo Movement

Via de Cristo (a Spanish term meaning “Way of Christ”) is an ecumenical movement bathed in Lutheran theology. Its seminal roots stretch all the way to the Roman Catholic Church, the island of Majorca, Spain, the 1940’s, and the Cursillo[®] Movement.

The Spanish Civil War had ended in 1939 and the church, like the nation, was bloodied and divided. Catholic Action for Young Men, the organized apostolate, wanted to bring healing to both church and nation. They began to organize a pilgrimage to the shrine of St. James, located in Compostela, Spain. The shrine had been a great pilgrimage center during the Middle Ages and these committed Christians anticipated their pilgrimage would be a stirring effort against “lukewarm” religiosity and an encouragement to true community. All pilgrims would strive together to be fully devoted to Jesus Christ. They could change their world through his grace.

In order to prepare leaders for this pilgrimage, Catholic Action offered what was called “Little Courses for Pilgrim Leaders.” Unfortunately the aftermath of the Civil War and the havoc of World War II repeatedly delayed their pilgrimage. It was 1948 before the dream of pilgrimage became reality. However, the long period of preparation did yield a gracious benefit, the birth of the Cursillo[®] Movement. The literal translation of the word Cursillo[®] is “little course.” The Cursillo[®] community celebrates August 1944 as its start. It was January 1949, after the pilgrimage, when the first “Cursillo[®]” weekend was held at the monastery of St. Honorato in Majorca.

To its founders the Cursillo[®] Movement was not an accident of fate, nor was it a clever human product. First a group of faithful Christian men dedicated themselves to introducing the younger men of their city to Jesus Christ. They prayed, studied and talked together as a team. In the light of God’s Word, they discussed the state of the world and the effectiveness of their efforts to bring the light of Christ to it. By grace, over time, God revealed to them a method that has proven effective and fruitful. Many years of effort within the Christian community and diligent prayer by the renewal movements within the church accompanied its birth. Because of this, the first three day weekend was surprisingly similar to the present-day Cursillo[®] weekends. At the beginning, the weekend was only offered to the young Spanish men of Catholic Action. However, the courses were so effective that later it was decided to offer the Cursillo[®] to other young men without requiring a commitment to Catholic Action.

In 1950 Eduardo Bonnin resigned from Catholic Action to become the chairman of Cursillo[®]. Supported by his bishop, Juan Hervas, they worked together to clarify its method and defend the movement from its critics. Through God’s grace even the opposition assisted the founders by forcing clarity of thought and the avoidance of variations. These leaders felt Jesus Christ close to them, affirming them and inspiring their efforts for his Kingdom.

In the early years the Cursillo[®] Movement remained largely a local effort on Majorca. The original leaders had remained there working together, praying together and hammering out the basic understandings of Cursillo[®]. Group reunions, three day weekends, ultreyas, leader’s group and team meetings, each evolved in a systematic way. In 1955 Bishop Hervas was transferred from Majorca, and he took the idea of the Cursillo[®] Movement with him. Other leaders, some as

early as 1953, helped spread the method as they were called away from Majorca. The whole movement grew through sharing. One person would tell another who in turn would tell someone else. It soon included women. Eduardo Bonin has told a delightful story (see Bibliography) of a lady in Barcelona, Spain who, after her husband was transformed on a weekend, demanded that the Bishop (a family friend) provide a weekend for women. She could no longer understand his behavior and if she was not allowed the experience she was sure they would end in divorce. The method has touched many without regard to age, sex, or national origin.

Today the Cursillo® Movement is worldwide. From Spain it moved to Latin America. By 1983 there were centers in nearly all South and Central American countries; also in Canada, Mexico, Portugal, Puerto Rico, Great Britain, Ireland, France, Germany, Austria, Italy, Yugoslavia, Australia, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, and several African countries.

Father Gabriel Hernandez had experienced the Cursillo® in Spain under two founders of the movement, Eduardo Bonnin and Father Juan Capo. He later moved to Waco, Texas. In 1957 two Spanish airmen, Bernardo Vadell and Augustin Palomino, were in training with the United States Air Force. Together the priest and airmen formed a team and conducted the first United States weekend in May of 1957. They continued to assist groups, holding weekends across Texas. In 1959 the Movement expanded into Arizona and in 1960 into the East at New York City and Lorain, Ohio. It quickly spread to many other states. The first English speaking weekend was held in San Angelo, Texas in 1961. The National Catholic Secretariat was organized at a 1965 meeting in Kansas City, and by 1981 most of the Roman Catholic dioceses had introduced the Cursillo® Movement.

The Catholic Cursillo® community assisted other church bodies in holding similar weekends. Each new movement reflects its own traditions yet maintains the integrity of the original method. The Episcopalians use the name “Cursillo®,” the United Methodists use the name “Walk to Emmaus,” and the Lutherans use the name “Via de Cristo.” There are some inter-church efforts, “Tres Dias,” for example, and a prison effort called “Kairos.”

Two Lutheran movements began in 1972, each unknown to the other. Florida began with Spiritual Director Pastor Edward Simonsen and held its weekends in Miami. Iowa began with Spiritual Directors, Pastor Gene Hermeier for the men’s weekend, and Pastor Allen Hermeier for the women’s weekend, and held its weekends in Atlantic. Each group adapted the Cursillo® method with modifications for Lutheran use; and with assistance from Catholic and Episcopal leaders, each began to grow. The groups discovered one another “by chance” at a national church convention and combined their efforts to host a weekend in Chicago in 1976. By 1979 there were several Lutheran movements expressing interest in a national body for the Lutherans. Invitations were sent to all known Lutheran movements to meet in January 1981. The leaders came together at Cross and Crown Lutheran Church in Atlanta, Georgia. Assisted by Bishop David Wolber of the newly-formed Southeastern District of The American Lutheran Church, the group documented their desires and wrote the first draft of the National Lutheran Secretariat Constitution.

It is fundamental to the Cursillo® Movement that all movements maintain a close affiliation with the Church. In the 1980’s, because of the extensive spread of the movement and the many variations springing up, the Roman Catholic National Secretariat began attempts to enforce this church affiliation, requiring any movement that wished to use the not-as-yet registered name, Cursillo, to hold weekends for same-faith participants only. In 1983, during a meeting in Coral Gables, Florida, the President of the National Secretariat of the Cursillo® Movement, Gerry Hughes, came to the National Lutheran Secretariat (NLS) meeting. If NLS would agree to hold weekends for Lutherans only they would be licensed to use the name Cursillo®. Through its next

four meetings the NLS deliberated in great agony on the decision. Finally in February 1986, at a winter meeting held at St. Michael Lutheran Church in Ottawa Lake, Michigan, the NLS decided that its commitment to ecumenism outweighed its attachment to the name Cursillo[®] and adopted the name Via de Cristo. Although the NLS does not require local movements to change their names in order to affiliate with them, they do suggest “Via de Cristo.” Most affiliated movements have adopted it. By 1992, only twenty years after the first Lutheran weekends began, twenty-eight secretariats serving in twenty-one states were affiliated with NLS.

Chapter 2

Mission Statement and Purpose

The Mission Statement of Via de Cristo:

By grace, with the Holy Spirit, we challenge leaders to discover and achieve their personal calling, assisting them to influence their environments with the Gospel.

The Purpose of Via de Cristo is, above all, to see the world reconciled to Jesus Christ (*Colossians 1:20*). We believe that Jesus, in the great commission, has challenged every Christian to “go into all the world and make disciples” (*Matthew 28:18-20*). By the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, Via de Cristo is an effective method through which He reaffirms His original charge to us. It is one of several methods available to the church today to renew and increase a faith that is already a gift to believers. While we would never promote it as superior to other methods, we confidently declare that Christ has used the method for many different individuals, in a host of environments, on several continents.

Via de Cristo is both a movement and a method. It is essential to make clear that Via de Cristo considers itself to be a movement within the Church of Jesus Christ. We can in no way function independent of the Church. We encourage each Christian to remain loyal to a home congregation and to serve that congregation as an exemplary servant of Jesus Christ. Lay persons are encouraged to strengthen their partnership with their pastors; to use their personal calling to extend the work of the Church. It would be tragic for any person, inside or outside the movement, to view us as competing with the Church or attempting to break the loyalty to anyone’s Christian heritage. Via de Cristo should not be considered an entity, like an organization or building. It must be viewed as an active communal reality; a living community, and this only because the people who participate in a Three-Day Weekend adopt the mentality and the fundamental principles of Via de Cristo. The thing that unites anyone in the Via de Cristo movement is the desire to be active in its movement and to exercise its method. We have chosen the name *participant* for those active within the Via de Cristo. We will use this name throughout the manual.

In keeping with its purpose, the Via de Cristo method assists individual Christians to actively be the Church; to do what is normal for the Church. We operate within the Church to overcome any law mentality in favor of grace mentality. Law mentality is any orientation whereby people strive to fulfill specified obligations using their own will and effort. (Do not confuse law mentality with “The Law”; Law condemns us all as sinners.) By grace mentality we mean an understanding whereby the power to live out any law or perform any good work is a gift from God. In the Via de Cristo method, individuals are increasingly equipped with God’s grace (*Ephesians 1:19*) and empowered to be truly effective servants in the body of Christ.

Via de Cristo presents a method for renewal of the Christian life, a strategy to affect daily living. It uses careful selection of participants, an inspirational weekend, and friendship/accountability groups as outward tools. However, it only becomes effective through the work and power of the Holy Spirit. We know that we cannot by our own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, or come to him. The Holy Spirit calls us by the Gospel, enlightens us with his gifts and sanctifies and keeps us in true faith (*Luther’s Explanation of the Third Article*).

Among the many observations of human behavior a person might make, one of the simplest is that people tend to separate themselves into one of two groups; leaders and followers. By definition followers follow leaders; so, an effective leader will often influence many followers. Via de Cristo purposes to reach out to natural leaders in existing environments (when we refer to “environment” we are speaking of the specific settings in which Christians find themselves: at home, on the job, at leisure, in the Church), and introduce them to Jesus. These natural leaders will then influence others for Christ. This is done through a planned and systematic approach. Often, when people fail to plan, they deny the Holy Spirit lordship over their efforts and lean in favor of chance, or worse, fall into laziness. The effectiveness of the Via de Cristo method seems directly related to careful preparation and planning.

During an inspirational weekend Via de Cristo encourages carefully selected Christian leaders in two ways. First, we help individuals learn and live what is fundamental to being a Christian. Second, we help individuals recognize that God has called them to be Christian in their existing environments (*I Corinthians 7:20ff*). By strengthening and renewing the faith of Christian leaders, the gospel radiates through them to their family, work environment and congregation. Through these leaders, the gospel influences all the environments in which these people live, work and play.

Learn and Live What is Fundamental

At rock bottom, the fundamental aspect of being Christian is Christ alive in the Christian (*Galatians 2:20*). This happens as a gift of grace from God (*Ephesians 2:8*). It is expressed in love for God and love for neighbor (*Matthew 22:38-39*).

When people operate from any other position they become like a fireworks display, a flashy show but without substance. The show will satisfy only those who believe that because people execute certain actions, they fulfill all obligations. In every society we have those who seem to be Christian because of their action, those who deliberately act in order to appear Christian, and those who act because they truly are Christian. Unfortunately, there are people in churches who get so excited about what people can put into religion; they forget that our relationship with God is true religion. Within Via de Cristo we encourage only authentic action in response to Jesus Christ.

In Via de Cristo we believe any deep theological development is best pursued within a person’s own church body, home congregation, and working with one’s own pastor. We make no attempt to convey a systematic theology, nor do we teach anything but the basic themes of Christianity. We emphasize the broad realities of God that satisfy the deepest needs in humanity. We are very aware of how common it is for some people to place too much emphasis on partial aspects of Christianity and thereby develop a distorted image of God. Many other people lose the Biblical understanding of humanity and the world. In Via de Cristo we seek to overcome this by presenting the Gospel in a clear, connected, and understandable form.

Here are the four basic themes we hold to:

- 1) God encounters us, and it is he who brings us into a true encounter with ourselves
- 2) Christ develops and maintains a friendship with us that lasts through all eternity
- 3) We take our place in a community of brothers and sisters in Christ
- 4) We appropriate responsibility for sharing Jesus Christ with the world

We know that in baptism the Father assured our place in him. We are then enabled to respond with all that we are to the call of Christ. We grow to recognize that full devotion to Christ is normal and we gladly begin managing our spiritual and material gifts, adapting them to his plan. Christ’s plan is actualized through us as we reach out to the world.

When Christ is alive in Christians, then community is fundamental. In Christianity we hold two truths that at first may appear to contradict. We are each unique, specially created individuals, and we must struggle to maintain this uniqueness. No other person, in this world or in all of time, is just like us. We believe that God intends this great diversity; our God is such a creative God! At the same time not one of us can stand long independently. God created each of us to be dependent upon others. We must live in and be a part of community. We must have the gifts of others to complement and at times counter balance our own unique gifts.

We are never to allow the pressure of the group to destroy our uniqueness. Yet, we are never to allow our uniqueness to pull us away from community. To be a Christian is to work for community, always — a community of faith, hope, and love. If Christianity is not lived in community it is not truly lived. Jesus sees the love we hold for one another as vital (*John 13:35*). “No believer ever lives alone or dies alone, but is protected and born by the communion of saints” (*Luther, 20 July, 1520*). Via de Cristo helps the leaders find their personal calling and then be built into community!

We encourage individuals to live out their faith through a system of friendship/accountability groups, where each member is challenged to maintain the disciplines of Piety, Study and Action. We say friendship *and* accountability groups because they perform this dual work through good loving friends keeping us accountable to our Christ-inspired goals. Friendship alone, without the accountability, is unacceptable.

To Be Christians in Existing Environments

It is essential that Christians reach out into their own individual environments (*I Corinthians 7:20ff*). In Via de Cristo, people are inspired occasionally to enter the pastoral ministry; but, that is never our goal. Our goal is to send participants back into their original environments as leavening agents. As a little yeast leavens the whole loaf (*Matthew 13:33*), so we become the yeast for Christ. For Christ we are salt to the world. For Christ we are the light on the hill (*Matthew 5:13*). Jesus used many parables to express his intention to use us to carry the Gospel into the world for him. We truly believe this is the work of the entire Christian Church, not professional evangelists.

Far too often Christians withdraw into carefully selected circles of like-thinking individuals. They no longer take occasion to talk with anyone outside these circles. They avoid spending time with the lost. Many believers, when away from their selected circles, are careful to avoid religious talk; often out of fear, maybe out of misdirected respect. Sadly, Christ-followers can go to work and no one recognizes any difference between them and non-Christians. Within Via de Cristo we share tools that enable people to honor their Lord and share their friendship with Jesus in any environment.

Jesus will make a difference in every environment; in our homes, in our work places, with our families and in our churches. We use the structure and tools given to us through Via de Cristo to submit to the Holy Spirit’s work. Once, an old pastor wisely said to a young farmer, “I’m impressed with your work! I remember this farm before God brought you in as his partner!” The farmer contributes nothing to the productivity of the farm except his willingness to gain knowledge, remove obstacles, give to seeds the best environment possible, and a personal commitment to diligent good work.

In summary, Via de Cristo is both a movement and a method. The purpose of the movement is to form within the Church small groups of committed leaders that will evangelize their environments with the Gospel. Via de Cristo purposes to provide a workable structure that helps leaders live what is fundamental to being a Christian by committing themselves to the means of

grace in Word and Sacrament, to small group dynamics and to personal growth through Piety, Study and Apostolic Action.

In Via de Cristo we have found that a person will:

- 1) experience more joy, happiness, and satisfaction from their Christian faith
- 2) experience a closer walk with Jesus Christ
- 3) develop a more joyous fellowship with brother and sister Christians
- 4) find sharing faith with others easier and more enjoyable

Chapter 3

Strategy of the Movement

The purpose *and* the strategy of Via de Cristo must be understood in order to appreciate the full scope of the Via de Cristo movement. Where in Chapter 2 we described the Movement from the perspective of its purpose, in this chapter we will examine it from the perspective of strategy.

When describing what the Via de Cristo strategy is, it is helpful to begin with what the strategy is not. Via de Cristo is not a religion, a denomination, a cult, or even a separate entity existing apart from the Church. As we expressed in Chapter 2, the word we have chosen to describe us is *movement*. Just as wind does not exist independent of air, and wave does not exist independent of ocean, the Via de Cristo does not exist independent of Christ's Church. It moves within the Church and is dependent upon the Church for all that it is. At all times it is consistent with the mission of the Church, focusing on the outward evangelistic effort of the Church. Any doctrine taught is fundamental to all Christianity. All Communion is offered in accord with the teaching of the Church. The presence of Christ in word and sacrament is always respected. We appreciate that the Church is present wherever the Gospel is preached in its purity and the sacraments are administered rightly (*Augsburg Confession VII,2*).

Via de Cristo is not a human effort, neither is it a cosmic accident. We know that the method was inspired by the Holy Spirit and that the many changed lives within the movement are the result of an encounter with Jesus Christ. When we look to the natural world, the world Christ created and commended to our care, it becomes clear that careful planning and execution produce superior results to what can be gained by chance. In the case of the farmer referred to in Chapter 2, he produced more because of a carefully planned and executed strategy. Surely, Christ expects of us an even more careful effort as we plan the work of the Church (*Proverbs 16:3*). Christ inspires us in using the method of Via de Cristo. Truly, excellence honors God and inspires people.

Via de Cristo is not simply a method alone. The world has many methods; kitchens have cookbooks, kits have directions, sports have rule books, machines have manuals. Each method is based on physical and repeatable laws with clear directions. We do have a method within Via de Cristo using physical laws and clear directions, but, we then move beyond these, into a Spiritual relationship. In Via de Cristo, as in the Church, we welcome the living Christ. We do all that we can to make it easy for people to meet Christ face to face. In interpersonal relationships, even in good counseling relationships, we do not, indeed we cannot, force people to like one another. Ultimately, nothing we do can guarantee that our approach will be effective. In the Via de Cristo method, it is the power of the Holy Spirit that touches people and reveals the truth. This revelation by the Holy Spirit takes the focus and the pressure off people. Participants are responsible for being truthful, for being loving and accepting, and for working the method. It is never their job to change anyone. Change is the Holy Spirit's work. Therefore Participants need never have reason for egoism, getting tense, or forced relationships.

Via de Cristo is not to be identified with the Charismatic Movement. The expressed use of the gifts of the Spirit or the active seeking of such gifts especially during a weekend is strongly discouraged. We respect all spiritual gifts and gladly encourage their expression at the proper place and time. The Via de Cristo always honors whatever method Christ chooses to renew his

Church. However, the Via de Cristo method uses a progressive introduction of spirituality from Thursday night through Sunday and respects the sensitivity of Christians who have no understanding of what the Charismatic Movement recognizes as spiritual gifts. The use of gifts in the wrong way at the wrong time can inhibit rather than enhance edification (*I Corinthians 14:6-12*). We believe the Holy Spirit will introduce participants to their gifts in his time.

A Via de Cristo weekend is not intended for the unbaptized. Individuals who already know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior are its primary focus. It is assumed that there is already a desire on the part of the participants on a weekend to grow in their faith and to become more intimately involved in a relationship with Jesus Christ. It is true that the faith of many participants has been vitally renewed or awakened. But it is not the intention of Via de Cristo to seek to convert participants. Rather, through the use of this method, participants are encouraged to persevere in their Christian faith and to become effective channels of God's grace to others. The participant then uses the tools gained to reach out to the unbaptized.

Because of his promise we can know that Christ is truly present in this movement (*Matthew 18:20*). We know Via de Cristo is one sure way of the many ways God uses to call people into action in the Church. We know that if we are honestly available and praying, we can relax, trusting in the Holy Spirit.

By grace, with the Holy Spirit, we challenge leaders to discover and achieve their personal calling, assisting them to influence their environments with the Gospel.

Let us now unbundle the mission statement in light of strategy. In Via de Cristo the emphasis is always on God's grace. Without the grace of God we are helpless. Grace is the cornerstone that makes any human effort possible. Grace is a gift of God based on nothing we do. The Holy Spirit goes with us when we begin any effort for Christ. The Holy Spirit, the Counselor (*John 14:16*), is our constant companion and the one who teaches us to pray (*Romans 8:26*).

As we plan and execute our strategy it is bathed in prayer. The most characteristic mark of the Via de Cristo method is prayer. We take seriously the promise of Jesus to all disciples "you may ask me anything in my name" (*John 14:14*), and again, "Ask and it will be given to you, seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened to you" (*Matthew 7:7*). When we approach any activity for Via de Cristo we begin, act and end in prayer. We use many of the spiritual disciplines with prayer. These include simple living, personal sacrifice, fasting, giving, spiritual direction, worship, and others. The word we use to describe this type of prayer is Palanca. The proper understanding of Palanca is deep, intentional, selfless prayer, in a word — "sacrificial" prayer. Palanca grows from an authentic individual and communal way of life. Without prayer, the Via de Cristo method will never achieve its purpose.

We challenge leaders to discover and achieve their personal calling. A valuable key in changing any environment is to persuade the leaders in the environment to change. If leaders discover Jesus, followers will likely discover Jesus. Whenever people discover that God, the Almighty Creator, loves them; and come to know that in truth "He calls me through the Gospel, and enlightens me with his gifts" (*Luther's Explanation of the Third Article*); there is a profound personal change. God, in his mercy, calls people to give themselves to him, and calls them to work in the kingdom (*Romans 12*).

Christians grow in faith, responding to a personal calling. Powerful growth within people happens when they own Christ's truth. The Via de Cristo movement is never satisfied with just a personal statement of conversion without an equal commitment to living works. People are charged to move out into the world and change it by submitting themselves to the work of the Spirit. There are three parts or foci in the Via de Cristo strategy: The Pre-Weekend or

Preparation, the Three Days or Weekend, and the Post-Weekend or Fourth Day. Each part will be described more fully in its own chapter later in this manual.

The Pre-Weekend

Next to prayer, Pre-Weekend is the most crucial part of the method because what goes in affects all that comes out. For example, most new participants are enamored with the weekend. They want everyone they know and love to experience the weekend. They rush and invite these special people to “make the weekend.” These friends and family have a great weekend as well, but too often do not maintain the enthusiasm. The participant pushes them to join a group reunion hoping to keep the excitement alive. Unless the original participant is a strong leader the others will drift away, holding only a pleasant memory. They are not the “movers and shakers” of their own environments, and other forces easily pull them back.

A similar situation often occurs in developing new Via de Cristo movements. At the beginning it seems natural for all to focus on the weekend; it does take real effort to put on a weekend. Then, when Participants don't seem to be getting involved and there is a decline in new participants, the secretariat's emphasis moves to the importance of Group Reunion. Finally, the movement matures, and realizes the critical need for careful preparation and pre-weekend selection.

The key to the Via de Cristo strategy is to select natural leaders within an environment and introduce them to Christ. By “environment” we are speaking of the many settings in which Christians find themselves: at home, on the job, at leisure, in the Church. We wish to only enter environments at the direction of Jesus Christ (*Acts 16:6-7*). So, before we go into any environment, we must talk to God first, before we talk to persons. We sincerely ask him to select the environment, then enter into that environment with us, and direct us to the natural leaders he is preparing. We can now follow his lead to make a friend of those leaders, to be a true friend to them, and ultimately to introduce them to our best friend, Jesus.

All environments are first studied in prayer. The natural leader or leaders of that environment are sought out. Careful prayer is made for and about those leaders before approaching any of them. Usually it is best to pick two and preferably three leaders from the environment so they may attend a weekend together. Then, like logs on a fire, they keep each other inspired in a natural group reunion. They more effectively own the method as a habit for life, and they, through their mutual support, have a significant influence on the environment when they return.

The Three Day Via de Cristo Weekend

A Via de Cristo weekend is a pragmatic three day course to review Christian fundamentals, discuss ways to live them actively, and learn some practical tools to keep them vital. By the grace of God the three day Via de Cristo will illuminate all of life with the light of the gospel. We do not light just a part of life, with the whole gospel. Nor do we light all of life, with just a part of the gospel. We wish to light all of life with the light of the whole gospel. It is much too characteristic of religious people to do something at the right time, in the rite way, and then to leave that activity behind as they charge on with the business of daily living. During the three day weekend, we discover that Jesus intends to be our friend in all of life and that he will change not only our understanding of the church, but also our understanding of our family, work, and neighborhood.

During the three days the gospel is experienced in the same way that Jesus proclaimed it: the word is living (*John 1:14*). Jesus Christ is the word incarnate and the word proclaimed. During the weekend, by grace with the Holy Spirit, the participant becomes a witness to the living word. In the table discussion, and in the community life of the weekend, Jesus is alive. The power for a

participant to make a commitment; indeed, the very character of Via de Cristo and all the Cursillo[®] movements, is the witnessing proclamation of a living experience of the word. We begin slowly, trying to meet the participants where they are, and then carefully, lovingly build to a new spiritual awakening.

During the three day weekend tools are shared that will encourage the participants to maintain a Christian walk. They will learn many ways that the Spirit inspires people to good works and will be encouraged to choose those that are effective for them. The weekend will give methods that will serve as a backbone to their daily life in the world. People leave the weekend with a clearer understanding of Christianity, a powerful experience in Christian community, and a desire to be in group reunion as a means to live and keep faith active.

The Post-Weekend or Fourth Day

An effective Fourth Day is the fulfillment of the Via de Cristo method. It is the tree that produces the fruit. It is the structured expression of Christian lifestyle. The trained and empowered participant becomes a witness that penetrates the environment from which she was called. Martin Luther said, “Even if your job is a dishwasher or stable boy, yours is a divinely appointed vocation, as sacred as that of any pastor or church official.” The participant is called by Jesus, inspired on the weekend, empowered with effective tools, and now is called to return to her individual environment and live an authentic Christian life. Jesus will use this renewed witness of his to influence those environments.

“To attribute greater importance to the three days than to the Post-Cursillo would be to prefer the solemn to the decisive, the ‘extraordinary’ to the authentic. It is important, indeed, to have souls encounter God, but it is even more important to motivate them to follow him” (*Structure of Ideas*, p.67). Yes, it is vital, to have individuals meet God during the three days, but these encounters become truly significant for the world if the participants are motivated to follow him in their daily lives.

The Via de Cristo method offers a means of perseverance in the Lord through the establishment of permanent friendship/accountability groups in society. The participants are surrounded and encouraged so the life of Christ may overflow into their surroundings. During Fourth Day living, the participants use the service sheet to make themselves responsible for maintaining close fellowship with Jesus and availing themselves of the means of grace. The group reunion provides regular accountability, and serves as a resource when personal difficulty strikes. The ultreya provides the excitement of gathering a larger body for praise and worship. It provides educational opportunities, the stimulation of renewed friendships, and allows the sharing of other individual experiences. It becomes a group reunion of group reunions.

In summary, the Via de Cristo has a purpose: to see the world changed; to remake the world in Jesus; to restore all things to Christ. We accomplish this by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and at his direction. The Via de Cristo has a strategy, the strategy of structuring Christian life and providing a backbone for Christian living in every environment. We **F**ind, **E**vangelize, **E**nlighten, and **L**ink a person so they **FEEL** Christianity.

Chapter 4

New Movement Start-Up

Introduction

A new movement is usually started by an existing secretariat. Historically it has occurred when, in neighboring geographic locations, the number of participants who have attended a weekend has grown to the point that the areas can begin to function independently and there is a desire on the part of the growing group of participants to begin a new movement in their area.

It is noteworthy that nationally the Via de Cristo Community is united in mission, similar in local secretariat structure, yet rather diverse in the details of running weekends. In this chapter, the National Lutheran Secretariat (NLS) seeks to offer some general guidelines for the creation of a new community and describe what is available at the national level (such as printed materials). Whenever possible, the NLS will also act as a clearinghouse to put new movement organizers in touch with contacts for additional assistance.

Establishment of a New Community

The first consideration will always be prayerful seeking of God's will concerning the endeavor. Start-up involves much patience, because the process cannot happen overnight.

It will help to follow these steps:

1. Start a group reunion. This group would not necessarily be participants. The purpose of this group is to start the prayer and share process. It is strongly suggested that a pastor be part of this group.
2. Send group reunion members to nearby weekends. Form additional group reunions as new participants return.
3. Begin the ultreya process. This should be considered after more than three group reunions have been well established.
4. Establish a secretariat to begin a process to create the new community.
5. Seek the assistance of a sponsoring secretariat. Obtain the name and address of the nearest secretariat by writing the National Lutheran Secretariat, PO Box 36181, Minneapolis, MN 55435. You may also call the NLS Vice President of Outreach whose name, address and phone numbers appear in the latest edition of *Conexiones*, the NLS official newsletter.

Secretariat Organization

Initially, a minimum of four members is needed with these suggested titles: Lay Director, Spiritual Director, Secretary, and Treasurer (the job descriptions are in Chapter 5)

As the Secretariat grows, additional positions may be added as needed, these may include (again, job descriptions are in Chapter 5): Communications/Publicity Coordinator, Pre-weekend Coordinator, Weekend Coordinator, Property Coordinator, Post-Weekend Coordinator, Palanca Coordinator, Leaders Coordinator, National Lutheran Secretariat Representative, Music Coordinator

Ultimately it is desirable to develop committees and/or group reunions to work with each of the above coordinators.

Suggestions for selecting the “Core Group” (i.e., those who will attend weekends in preparation to form a new secretariat):

1. Christians, committed and mature in their faith
2. Christians who have the desire and time to spend getting the new movement started
3. Christians who are already leaders in their churches and environments

Suggested Weekend Materials Needed

This list is offered only to stimulate your thought about some of the things that may be necessary for a weekend. The necessity of these items will depend on when and where you hold a weekend, the amount of outside help available, and equipment available at the facility chosen.

Facility	Podium	Round Tables
Chairs	Storage containers	Communion ware
PA system	Music books	Chapel programs
Movie projector	Overhead projector	Food
Kitchen Utensils	Coffee pots	Bibles
Transportation	Candles	Postage
NLS Start-up Packet*	Crosses*	Pens/pencils
Music	Envelopes	Notebooks
Mattresses	Poster board/Markers	Banners

**These items can be obtained by writing the National Lutheran Secretariat, P.O. Box 36181, Minneapolis MN 55435*

Also suggested: How to apply for a nonprofit tax exempt incorporation (501-C-3).

SA model constitution and bylaws and a sample articles of incorporation are included in the Appendix.

Chapter 5

Secretariat Leadership and Organization

Secretariat is the name given to the local body charged with the life and direction of the movement. It accepts responsibility to guard the identity of Via de Cristo. The members are selected from the Via de Cristo community and commissioned to direct, coordinate, inspire, and serve the movement so they can in turn serve the life and ministry of the Church.

When building a new movement, the secretariat is the final structure formed. First, a strong community is developed, one actively using both group reunions and ultreyas. This community must include developed Via de Cristo leaders (see Chapter 6) who are experienced and knowledgeable in the full purpose and strategy of Via de Cristo. Keep in mind that Via de Cristo must be experienced to be understood. Think, too, Via de Cristo is not, and never will be, an independent organization. We are a movement of the Church. Even when we of necessity form a guiding body (incorporated or not) we never forget that we are dependent on the local church as Christ's body especially for word and sacrament. All our work focuses on evangelizing local environments in order to direct people into the Church. Constant effort is taken to avoid any division or confusion between Via de Cristo and the Church.

All leaders in the secretariat should have demonstrated, through their service to their church, their commitment to Jesus Christ. Their natural and spiritual gifts need to be apparent to the movement. They must be humble (focused only on Christ and service), authentic, and feel a clear call to serve Christ within Via de Cristo. The secretariat should include men and women, clergy and laity. It should be small enough to constitute a group reunion (i.e. 14, preferably less). The lay director should always be a layperson, competent in administration, organization, and methodology. The spiritual director/advisor is to be an ordained clergyperson. The guiding power of the secretariat is the same power that Jesus uses to develop and guide the Church, the power to serve faithfully and selflessly (*Ephesians 1:19*). The secretariat serves the community by the grace provided through the Holy Spirit.

The whole secretariat should make every effort to be accountable to the bishops or presidents of all participating churches. Certainly we are tied to no ecclesiastical hierarchy with these churches, but bishops or presidents should be informed of all activities, and every effort should be made to involve them; they have been chosen by and are responsible to the Church. This manual, *The Essentials of Via de Cristo*, should be in the hands of every bishop. We seek to achieve the same status in their minds as any other inter-Lutheran organization, such as, for example, Lutheran Social Services. Just as LSS reaches out with specialized skill to meet physical needs, we reach out with specialized skill to meet evangelism and leadership needs.

The needs, possibilities, and concrete circumstances of time and place determine how a secretariat will be organized and structured. The actual membership will be determined by the tasks to be fulfilled. The secretariat members are responsible for all aspects of the movement's activities. By responsible we do not mean they perform every task. They delegate tasks to leaders in various communities and oversee their effectiveness. The secretariat should take the lead in pre-weekend activity, and follow up regularly on what environments are being evangelized. They can help focus the efforts of several groups in bringing Christ into the selected environments. They need to establish weekend dates and locations, and supervise team selection and training. They should review the ultreyas and their effectiveness. They take responsibility for keeping the

community excited about evangelization and changing environments for Christ, promoting unity, love, and trust among members of the movement. They will establish policies and procedures as necessary. They work diligently to see that new leaders are developed and trained in the Via de Cristo method.

The secretariat should make an annual report to the bishops or presidents and to the National Lutheran Secretariat as to its status, achievements and plans. The secretariat should establish and maintain contact with other movements, especially in exchanging palanca.

Secretariat Organization

A minimum of four members, with these suggested titles and job descriptions:

A. Lay Director

1. Responsible for the leadership of the secretariat
2. Sets the time, place and agenda of meetings
3. Sets the time and place for weekends
4. The initial contact with, and representation to, the NLS and other Via de Cristo movements
5. Responsible for all activities of the secretariat
 - a) appoint persons to fill un-expired terms
 - b) train secretariat members and assign duties
 - c) prepare reports to the NLS and bishops
 - d) prepares articles and reports for the newsletters
 - e) works with pre-weekend and spiritual director on selections
 - f) assists in rector selection
 - g) attends NLS meetings

B. Spiritual Director

1. Responsible for providing leadership on matters of faith and spirituality
 - a) select spiritual directors for the weekends
 - b) select spiritual directors for the ultreyas
 - c) attends the NLS
 - d) prepares reports and articles for the newsletter
 - e) assists in rector and team selection
2. Continually places before the secretariat the ultimate goals we share as God's messengers and tools for bringing others into a growing relationship with God and God's people

C. Secretary

1. Responsible for taking minutes at each secretariat meeting
2. Maintains secretariat records & archives
3. Performs other duties requested by the secretariat
4. Prepares reports and articles for the newsletter (i.e. meeting notes)

D. Treasurer

1. Responsible for the finances of the secretariat
 - a) arrange and maintain 501-C-3 status
 - b) authorize any disbursement of funds
 - c) may authorize lay director as second signer on accounts for emergency situations
 - d) makes periodic accounting to the community
2. Keep records consistent with good bookkeeping practices
3. Prepare newsletter articles

These or similar positions may be added as the need arises:

A. Communications/Publicity Coordinator

1. Develops publicity materials and programs
2. Prepares and mails (or coordinates) a monthly newsletter to the community, NLS, and other movements

B. Pre-weekend Coordinator

1. Receives and processes participant applications
2. Functions as “registrar” for the weekend
3. Conducts “send-off” where used
4. Works with lay and spiritual directors for outreach
5. Provides participants list to rectors, communications/publicity coordinator and leaders coordinator
(including home address, congregation, etc.)
6. Assists publicity coordinator in developing materials

C. Weekend Coordinator

1. Selects, arranges for, prepares and provides set-up and clean-up for the weekend site
2. Provides for maintenance and emergency services

D. Property Coordinator

1. Purchases property and materials needed for the weekend
2. Provides for property maintenance and storage (food purchases should be the responsibility of the head cook)

E. Post-Weekend Coordinator

1. Arranges for follow-up/Fourth Day activities, reunion groups, ultreyas
2. Prepares newsletter article

F. Palanca Coordinator

1. Coordinates and communicates with the NLS and other movements on matters relating to palanca
2. Receives and sends palanca gifts and letters
3. Assists weekend palanca cha
4. Prepares newsletter articles re: palanca

G. Leaders Coordinator

1. Develops and maintains team training materials and team experience information rosters
2. Conducts leaders training schools and assists in team selections

Chapter 6

Leaders Training

In the Via de Cristo method we seek out leaders who will return from their weekend to change their environments. Among these leaders there will be certain ones whom Christ will select for special service within the Via de Cristo Movement. These are the individuals who serve on weekend teams. They are the members of the secretariat. They are the ones who sponsor and lead the ultreyas. They are the ones responsible for establishing new movements. They represent the individual movements to the National Lutheran Secretariat, perhaps serving as an officer of the NLS.

Not everyone who attends a weekend should be expected or be expecting to become a leader in Via de Cristo (although through Christ no one is excluded). We have no desire to propagate fun weekends and small fellowship groups for ourselves. Our true mission is to send participants back to the environments from which they were called so they can minister on the “front lines.” But in Via de Cristo, just as in the Church, some are called to serve the workers. In this chapter we will discuss the method for calling these servants, training them, and the consequent effects for the movement.

All leaders within the Via de Cristo movement must gain a deep understanding of the full purpose, method and strategy of the movement. Without a clear overall picture it is much too easy to be smitten by one area of the method (the weekend or exercises of piety, for example). Any time we hear of individuals raising a ruckus at home, soliciting places on the next team, playing “smoke out the next rector,” or complaining that they have not been called, we can be sure we have a poorly trained individual. Equally suspect is the person who says, “I’ve worked too hard, and my effort is not appreciated. It’s time for someone else to take over.”

This manual is to be made available to all future leaders. To be effective we apply all the wisdom provided by Christ to the Via de Cristo community. We strongly encourage all potential leaders to “mark, learn and inwardly digest” chapters 1, 2, 3, 9, 7 & 8 in that order. We feel it is essential for each secretariat to offer, on a timely basis, “Leaders Training” where the information in these six chapters is discussed extensively. We recognize that distance may require some creative thinking on the part of the secretariat, but there needs to be plenty of simple, clear discussion of what the movement is and is not. A participant needs a fully developed picture of all three parts of the Via de Cristo strategy and active involvement in the method before serving the community as a leader.

We might suggest at least 10 topics for discussion:

- 1) The History of Via de Cristo & Its Place in the Church
- 2) The Via de Cristo Leader as a Part of Christian Community
- 3) The Via de Cristo Mission & Purpose
- 4) The Via de Cristo Method & Strategy
- 5) The Essentials of the Three Day Weekend vs the Adiaphorous
- 6) Theme and Talks of the First Day
- 7) Theme and Talks of the Second Day
- 8) Theme and Talks of the Third Day
- 9) Incorporating the Talks into the Fourth Day — The Service Sheet
- 10) The Make-up and Role of the Secretariat

During this training the Spirit will make clear to both the present leaders and the students that they have been called to leadership within Via de Cristo. It will first become clear by the gifts the individuals demonstrate. Next, it will be clear by their happy serving, singing, and participating at this training and at ultreyas. Also, the new leaders will confirm their commitment to the Lord by consistent and happy service in their churches and by their dedication to the method. It is living, vital Christians who make up Via de Cristo, they are prepared to work and sacrifice to see others delivered into the kingdom of God. Without any pretense they own a grace mentality.

Sometimes this calling is clear to the new participant. "Oh, this is such a powerful movement, I want to help any way I can." At other times it is clear to an existing leader, "Wow, that person has a natural ability with people, I think she would really be good on the next team." Sometimes the leader will simply be praying for direction and another participant "just happens" to call. We do believe that Jesus Christ uses his Holy Spirit to develop each part of the Via de Cristo method.

A Via de Cristo leader must have a servant's heart. By this we mean that she understands Jesus' teaching: "If anyone wants to be first he must be very last and the servant of all," *Mark 9:35*. Power in the kingdom of God is not given to dominate anyone; it is given to train and release others for service. Leadership is shared among those who have the gifts and no Via de Cristo leader would take it upon herself to usurp another's authority. If there is ever a place in God's community where leadership can be shared, it is with the leader teams of this movement. Each Participant genuinely turns to Jesus Christ for direction! She knows each problem is an undeniable and irresistible call to prayer. Jesus did not get caught up with titles; he simply said to Peter, "Feed my sheep." In scripture we see that while the disciples were still in training there were power struggles (*Mark 9:34*); but after Pentecost they found incredible power and a wondrous ability to work together (*Acts 2*). The Holy Spirit was the key for them; the Holy Spirit is key for us! Each Via de Cristo leader is lovingly active; she will "go ahead, and show the way."

This chapter is not an education manual, but we do heartily recommend the following. First, Good primary leader/teachers are the best trainers to develop good leaders. They have a knack for making even the poorest material good. Second, it is God, working within community, who really does the training. We are pleased to assist God by providing a good environment. Third, classroom training can be informational, but it can not be formational. This means personal and relational spiritual skills are best learned in safe, affirming, supportive, and accountable group situations. Good leaders need to be formed and reformed in the context of group reunion, preferably with other good leaders. A final caution: good leaders are committed disciples first and Via de Cristo leaders second.

Chapter 7

Pre-Weekend or Preparation

We shared in Chapter 3 that the Via de Cristo strategy consists of three parts: The Pre-Weekend or Preparation, The Three Days or Weekend, and the Post-Weekend or Fourth Day. Each part of the method plays a vital role and if any part of the strategy does not function, or is weak, then the whole movement suffers. Next to prayer, the pre-weekend or the preparation phase is the most consequential part of the method. It is the critical beginning of the process. When we take a trip by air, we know that every part of the flight is important and any weakness could be disastrous. Yet, without the fuel (prayer) and takeoff (pre-weekend) our flight is non-existent. Heroic measures can be taken, but any results, when viewed in light of our mission, will be disappointing. The very key to our strategy is the search for and the selection of leaders in chosen environments so we might introduce them to Jesus Christ and help them discover their personal calling.

This has been a hard lesson for many Via de Cristo movements to learn. Because it is so inspiring, it seems only natural to focus our attention on the weekend. This does appear to work well in the beginning, like a match on first striking, but many people who love the weekend do not get involved in the 4th Day. The apparent solution seems to be more emphasis on group reunions. When this does not produce the desired results and the number of good participants begins to dwindle (principally because all the family and friends of participants have now attended) the community finally realizes the crucial need for good pre-weekend selection of environments and careful preparation of participants.

Participant Selection

Haphazard and/or random selection of participants is neither desirable nor wise. In our churches are those who feel that planning, systems, and structures oppose the “free flow of the Spirit.” In Via de Cristo, we find it more often true that to fail to plan is to deny the Spirit’s lordship in critical areas. We place a heavy emphasis on prayer-filled planning. No event of the three day weekend is left simply to chance. Instead, we humbly ask the Spirit for wisdom as we carefully and lovingly develop plans. Likewise, in Pre-Weekend, we wish participant selection to be conscious and deliberate. We have no doubt that carefully laid plans increase the long term effectiveness of the Via de Cristo method.

The first planned step is to ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any particular environments in which God wishes us to work (*Acts 16:7-10*). When we refer to “environments” we are speaking of the many specific settings in which Christians find themselves: at home, on the job, at leisure, in the Church, and maybe even a specific geographical setting. We then study each environment prayerfully, systematically and intentionally. Where will we have the most significant impact on the largest number of people? What systems have the greatest power to influence the lives of the most people? Have the churches and/or bishops selected any specific area for evangelism? Are there already significant Christian leaders available and how well are they mobilized?

After selecting a specific environment, we begin to seek out natural leaders. In every environment there are 1) people, 2) their relationship with each other, and 3) an atmosphere that being together generates. We begin by looking for the positive atmosphere (3). Where is it that people seem happy, giving, or generous? What is the true relationship between the people in the

positive atmosphere? What binds them together? Is it money? Power? Genuine respect? Now, among those with positive binding forces, who are the leaders? These will likely be the first people to approach.

Here are some more questions we can ask while seeking out natural leaders. Who is the “go to” person? Who is it that everyone likes to spend time with? Who is it that people most want to hear out before they make a decision? Who seems to alter the atmosphere most quickly when arriving? It is very often not the person who has a titled position in the organization.

Having decided upon specific leaders we can begin to approach them. Go make a friend. The Cursillo[®] literature developed in Spain often uses the terminology of a bullfight. This same terminology may be helpful to us as we describe some specifics of an approach. The first term is “sounding.” This is simply finding out about this person who will be our new friend. We want to answer all the natural questions about the person, and at the same time, we want to know about her relationship to Jesus. This is done carefully, never violating the bounds of propriety. Our showing respect for the identity and worth of people is founded on the inviolable dignity of each person (*Genesis 1:26*). We can simply add to our discussion about weather, sports, and children a gentle religious inquiry. We accept people exactly where they are. We sound them out to get to know them and evaluate how we can effectively begin “stabbing.”

In the bullring the term “stabbing” denotes the pricking of the bull with a lance to get him to charge the matador. In *Via de Cristo* we use it to describe the carefully chosen, and Spirit inspired, questions that will challenge our friend to a new level of growth. We use questions that encourage our friend to consider Christ in ways that may not have occurred to her before. When the timing is right we will be allowed to share a personal witness of what Jesus means to us. Our ultimate goal is to be able to pray with our friend in such a way that she meets our best friend, Jesus. Much of this technique may appear to be just common sense, but used by grace with the Holy Spirit it is a powerful tool. Too many participants fail to try. Remember “Christ and I are an overwhelming majority.”

This pre-weekend planning and activity must take place on three levels: the secretariat, the group reunion and with the individual. The secretariat may look at a number of environmental possibilities, i.e., communities, churches, businesses, and even political arenas. Is there a significant area in which a secretariat ministers that has no group reunions and is now prime? Is there a penetrating need or crisis the state or nation is experiencing? What if a short Bible study was started over lunch in a large company’s cafeteria? Or what might happen if the mayor of the city or the state senator was converted to Christianity? Next, each group reunion will have, as a part of its action plans, some specific environments in mind; action that the members have been working on together or new target environments they may be considering. Is there an emerging leader that together can be lifted up? Is there a church down the road that may be ready to get involved? Is the Boy Scout leader open to making a weekend? Individuals will be thinking carefully about family, friends, work associates, their clubs, etc.

Steady encouragement for developing plans must permeate through each level of the movement. The secretariat will use the newsletter and ultreyas to inform the participants of their current mission areas. Ultreyas will challenge the group reunions to maintain true apostolic action. Individuals will be participating at every level. They will be especially open to any person standing next to them, wherever they happen to go, whenever it happens to be.

Since this process often takes time, beware of expectations that can lead to discouragement. Never begin the process without prayer. Always rest in God’s grace with the Holy Spirit. We are merely the servants. A founder of the Cursillo[®] said wisely, “We do not have group reunion and ultreyas in order to have persons make a Cursillo[®]. Rather we hold weekends to have persons to make group reunions.” It is in the Group Reunion that we build one another up. We pray for

strength and guidance. We challenge one another to learn each day to act as our brother Jesus would. We study environments carefully. Then, and only then, do we approach people. Keep in mind this phrase, “Talk to God about people before you talk to people about God.” We will be changing the world for Christ by influencing our environment through the natural leaders we have reached.

To summarize, it should be obvious that haphazard distribution of weekend applications completely misses the point of Via de Cristo. We sincerely ask the Holy Spirit to enter into each environment with us and there to direct us to the natural leaders within that environment; those that he has pre-selected for us. We follow his lead to make a friend of those leaders, and be a true friend to them. Through grace we ultimately introduce them to our best friend, Jesus.

All environments are first studied in prayer and the natural leader or leaders of that environment are found. Careful prayer is made for and about those leaders before approaching any of them. Often it is best to pick two and preferably three leaders from an environment so they may attend a weekend together.

Candidate Preparation

Pray for clear guidance as to which of your new friends to invite to a weekend. We always help each friend understand the gifts she has received from Christ in her baptism. We take time to help her understand her citizenship in the body of Christ. We help her to understand the special problems and possibilities within the environments to which she belongs. We present Christianity as a valid answer to the specific dilemmas new circumstances are forcing on people. And when we are confident of Christ’s direction, we may then invite her to a fuller understanding of these things through the action of Christian community on a Three-Day Weekend.

In doing this we always remember that Via de Cristo is not for everyone. Yes, Jesus Christ is for everyone; and, indeed, everyone will someday acknowledge him (*Philippians 2:10*). But not every Christian should make the weekend. Remember, Via de Cristo is just one way of many ways to serve Christ. The information we have just shared about selecting leaders within the chosen environment, and the personal effort to introduce them to Jesus is simply good Fourth Day effort. When this is done environments are already changing. People will respond to these natural Christian leaders. If these leaders never participate in a weekend, Christ is still changing the world through them.

The participant for the weekend is a baptized Christian, reasonably stable and mature, with a desire for God’s love and a longing to be set on fire with a zeal to do God’s work in the Church and in the world. Before we ever sponsor a person to a weekend we take a prayerful look at her Christian life. Do you see Christ in this person? Is this person able to see Christ in others? Will the person grow from the experience? The weekend is not the time or place to bring someone for a conversion experience. It is for people who already have a committed faith and are looking to renew and grow in that commitment. They may doubt it, but you see them as leaders.

Experience helps when identifying a good participant. We are looking for the one who will derive the greatest benefit from Via de Cristo and at the same time produce the best fruit because of it. There is no place in Via de Cristo for discrimination (*Galatians 3:28*). People of any social class will be welcome. People who are dissatisfied with the way things are in the world and people who have a natural aptitude for living in community will make great participants. People who have depth to their personality, an ability to make decisions, a healthy independence and a natural affinity for giving love will be excellent participants. Wisdom and Charity ask that we not bring those who cannot benefit from the weekend, or have problems beyond the weekend’s

designs (those with deep psychological disturbances, or those living in an irregular state of life that cannot be presently rectified).

When we explain the weekend, we can assure persons that they may ask and be told anything they want to know about it. We make it clear that the weekend is not theoretical but a pragmatic, lived experience that is oriented to the Church and to community life. Again, patience is the key. Prayer, love, trust, and more prayer are necessary.

It is best, whenever possible, to pick two and preferably three leaders from an environment so they may attend a weekend together. Then, like logs on a fire they keep each other inspired in a natural group reunion. They more effectively own the method as a habit for life, and they, through their mutual support, have a significant influence on the environment when they return.

The preparation of participants is done by the sponsors. It is wonderful when a community or group reunion is the sponsor, but when that is not possible an individual can do it, provided she will complete all the necessary work. It is expected that any sponsor will understand the purpose of Via de Cristo, the environments that have been selected as priorities for evangelization, and the basic criteria of who should, and who should not make a weekend. We expect the sponsors to know participants through close personal contact, and that they have prepared the participants for the weekend, encouraging openness to inquiry, to friendship and to change. All sponsors must be prepared in every way to assist the participant's assimilation into the fourth day; i.e., a group reunion, ultreyas, and additional training: whatever it takes!

Palanca

We have stated that prayer is the heart and life of Via de Cristo. There really is no Via de Cristo movement without prayer. It is the first and most basic step underlying all our human efforts. When we say prayer, we are not speaking of a superficial or rote reading. We are describing deep, intentional, selfless conversation with God. It is imperative to know that without God we are nothing, we are worth nothing, and we can do nothing. Dependence upon God is real, and for our part needs to be a sincere and permanent understanding both individually and communally. We cannot affirm strongly enough that in Via de Cristo prayer is primary.

Through prayer God changes things! We say this as a fundamental truth of Christianity. In prayer we avail ourselves of the means of grace, that is, we are open to the changes God's grace will make within us. Prayer in its simplest form is the awareness of God. Awareness of God can be as simple as hearing from another that God listens. Out of this awareness we can speak; we can listen; we can praise; we can thank; we can make intercession; we can simply enjoy. This can be done as a large group, a small group, or as an individual. We often enjoy prayer before the altar, but there is no limit to where or when.

Do we hear someone asking how? And why? Many will not be satisfied with this answer: "Jesus says to pray! He says it in Matthew 7:7, John 14:14, and in many other texts." The Scriptures are full of examples of prayer, calls to prayer and references to the results of prayer. We have no intention here to give a theology of prayer. We will only say:

God says to do it.

We have done it and continue to do it.

We have been blessed by God far more than we ever hoped or imagined.

Jesus says in Matthew 6:6 - "But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you." It is this personal interior and power-filled prayer life that enables community prayer to take on such significance. At the same time it is the community encouragement that challenges individuals to enter into their personal prayer life.

We challenge the very heart of secular humanism by our faith in the power of prayer. We know there is no substitute for prayer. All that we need is given when we ask. Before, during, and after the Via de Cristo weekend the Christian community prays earnestly. From the time they are selected, the weekend team members apply themselves to prayer. Each day of the weekend begins with community morning prayers, offering to the Lord all that the day will bring. Beginning after the Piety rollo we start making altar visits. Saturday afternoon we take time to explain personal prayer and to make an altar visit where everyone is invited to pray. By the end of the weekend, every participant will have had numerous times for corporate and individual prayer.

There are a number of disciplines that individuals use in connection with prayer. These may include, but are certainly not limited to:

Fasting - deliberately going without food, water, or both for a set period of time. This demonstrates your commitment to your prayers - each urge of hunger or thirst becomes a renewal call to prayer.

Personal sacrifice - fasting is one form of sacrifice but there are many others, for example: arising early or getting up in the middle of the night to pray, choosing to walk rather than drive the car (give the saved gasoline expense to charity), taking a difficult posture for prayer (like arms outstretched), abstaining from a pleasurable activity for a time. Each wave of desire is a reminder to pray (the additional self-discipline doesn't hurt either).

Giving - the Bible speaks of both tithes and offerings. Your tithe should go to your home congregation, but additional offerings to special situations show your commitment and genuine "God first" attitude.

Spiritual Direction - this will often involve sacrificing other activities in order to grow in faith. There is the time spent in visiting the Spiritual Director and the time spent in following the many suggestions. Each will be a call to prayer.

Worship - In divine service God pours forth his grace so that we might respond. Our genuine praise is our privileged response (Psalm 147:1).

Simple living - our society is the wealthiest the world has known and we squander most of it.

Many other disciplines have developed through the years. Whatever discipline might be used, please remember that the special effort is always a response to the gospel and never a means itself. If it ever takes on the character of being "works righteousness" or a theology of glory, it must be stopped immediately. All palanca must grow out of an inner call by the Holy Spirit who is preparing us for a more difficult work or enabling a demonstration of personal love for God and his people.

We will write to participants telling them of our efforts on their behalf so they may be inspired. The Holy Spirit often uses this in "stabbing" a participant on the weekend.

Weekend Preparation

In Pre-Weekend we prepare for the weekends; coordinating the spiritual, personal and material components involved, so that the selected participants are effectively prepared for Fourth Day living.

This includes the following:

- 1) Specific plans are discussed and prepared by the secretariat. This includes:
 - a) Selecting of rector, spiritual director (SD) and team
 - b) Training of the weekend team
 - c) Informing the sponsors of the local secretariat's guidelines
 - d) Receiving participant applications for the weekend

- 2) Materials and procedures are developed and printed. The NLS has a wealth of material prepared or, if desired, local brochures can be created. If this is done, please remember “the more you know about Via de Cristo, the less you are inclined to change it.” This material should include participant applications, sponsor responsibilities, community surveys for Via de Cristo leaders, etc.
- 3) Leadership training will be accomplished. The secretariat will see that plans and schedules are developed for community and team. There needs to be detailed training materials for rectors, weekends, and teams. This training will be general, long range (See Chapter 6), and specific team preparation (see Chapter 8).

The pre-weekend coordinator receives, acknowledges, and processes participant applications, functions as “registrar” for the weekend, provides participant lists to rectors, communications/publicity coordinator and leaders coordinator (including home address, congregation, etc.). She conducts the sendoff (in movements where used). This usually would involve checking in the participants upon their arrival, giving the prayer and role call, and arranging for an altar visit after the send off.

The pre-weekend coordinator in most movements is assigned to conduct outreach in coordination with the spiritual and the lay directors of the secretariat. We cannot overstate the importance of this effort. She will develop teams to work in special speaking situations (i.e. churches, conventions, synod gatherings, etc.). She will make every effort to communicate with the community the specific goals the secretariat and the pre-weekend committee have developed. She assists the publicity coordinator in developing materials and articles for the newsletter.

Chapter 8

The Three Days or The Weekend

A Via de Cristo Three Days is a pragmatic three-day course to review Christian fundamentals, discuss ways to actively live them, and learn some practical tools to keep them vital.

Introduction and General Principles

The three day weekend is our pivotal evangelistic and educational effort. We say pivotal, because if it is effective, the participant is prepared to begin effective 4th Day living. If it is not effective, we may have encouraged another child of God, but without advancing the ultimate purpose of Via de Cristo. We say evangelistic, because during the weekend the participant will experience the good news, and be encouraged to good works (*Hebrews 10:24*). We say educational, because during the weekend, we approach the sessions as a course of study. We review the rudiments of the Christian life and, by grace, proclaim them with clarity people may not have mastered before.

The technique or method for the weekend is simply expressed “prepare the way of the Lord” (*Malachi 3:1*). We create a climate that facilitates a personal encounter with the Lord. We pull participants out of their world and place them in a carefully prepared, specifically Christian, environment. During the three days, the gospel is proclaimed the same way that Jesus proclaimed it: *the word is alive*. Jesus is alive in all the community life of the weekend. The participants become *witnesses* to the living word. We know that people do not become Christian by intellectually selecting a way of life that ‘works’ for them, nor by a cathartic emotional moment, but by God’s touch. They come to truly know through his revelation the Creator and Savior, Jesus Christ. During a Via de Cristo Weekend, Jesus Christ is present (*Matthew 18:20*).

While it is true that the community lived on the weekend is not that which is lived in the reality of our daily lives, it still gives a vision and an experience of human love centered in Jesus Christ. During the three days, the participants discover that Jesus intends to be their friend in all of life and that he is truly present in church, truly present in the family, truly present at work, and truly present in the neighborhood. In the Christian community of the weekend, the participants are encouraged to find their own role in Christian community. This three day lived experience of the *word* delivers power for participants to make a full commitment to Jesus Christ and thereby move deeply into the Christian way of life.

The weekend is designed to give all the participants an experience in authentic Christian community. Because of America’s “rugged individualism” people might be tempted to believe the Christian walk is an entirely personal event. God throughout history has chosen to keep the individual immersed in community. So while it appears that people do individually respond they do so in fellowship with Christians. The church is his means of grace using word and sacrament to touch individual lives and call them into community. In baptism it is the faith of the parent(s) and sponsor(s) that lifts the child into the heavenly Father’s outstretched arms. They are the ones called to channel God’s grace as the child grows until the child affirms her own faith. During the three days it is the team that is called to be the channel of grace lifting participants to the outstretched arms of the heavenly Father.

In saying this, remember that for each of the participants the deep and firm reality of the experience is always a personal event (*Luke 12:6-7*); as such, it belongs completely to those experiencing it. We can neither dictate nor discount these moments in Christ; for Jesus is the one who leads them to salvation (*Hebrews 2:10*). “In this way Christ is the cause and the leader of salvation, for he draws and leads his children to glory through him. One would commonly say that Christ is the instrument and means by which God leads his children. For God does not compel believers to salvation by force and fear, but by this pleasing spectacle of his mercy and love, He moves and draws through love all those whom he will save” (*Luther - “Lectures on Hebrews”*).

Breaking the bond, which enslaves people and prevents them from making free and conscious decisions, is the work of Christ by the Holy Spirit. It is the power of the Holy Spirit that convicts people and reveals truth to them. The greatest danger of the Via de Cristo method is misdirection. If any team member begins to believe that it is her own effort or words that will make the difference, she will fail. At the same time, this should not be construed to mean the team does nothing. We are responsible for being truthful, for being loving, and for being accepting. It *is not* up to us to change anybody; it *is* our responsibility to work hard for Christ. If we are honestly available to the Holy Spirit and praying for direction, we can confidently turn it over to the Holy Spirit and relax. Prayer and authentic action build the weekend. “Without me, you can do nothing” (*John 15:15*) is neither more nor less true than “In Christ, I can do everything” (*Philippians 4:13*).

Essential vs. Adiaphorous

For the weekend, we have a plan and a general awareness of what needs to be done. We know what normally happens so that, at any given moment, what should happen and how it should happen, may in fact, happen. In outlining this, we draw a clear distinction between what is essential and what is adiaphorous. Webster’s New World Dictionary defines essential as: 1) of or constituting the intrinsic fundamental nature of something: basic, inherent... 2) absolute; complete; perfect; pure... 3) necessary to make a thing what it is; indispensable; requisite....And, Webster’s defines adiaphorous as: 1) morally neutral or indifferent; neither wrong nor right. 2) in medicine, neither harmful nor helpful.

We feel the following items are essential for an authentic Three Day Weekend: palanca, retreat, 72 hours, 14/15 talks, note taking, discussions, posters, decuria sharing, 5 meditations, Celebration of Repentance, Holy Communion daily, closing and crosses. There may be some debate within Cursillo[®] about a specific individual item, but as a rule these are all and each present during an authentic weekend.

Through the years many other activities have been used on the weekends. To name just a few, we have: skits, send-offs, foot washings, singing for meals, trinkets, and serenades. These optional activities are neither wrong nor right, but they are not considered essential to the purpose of the weekend. If too much is added to a weekend schedule, it crowds out important time for reflection and community-building. An example of how this can happen is the way palanca is often mishandled. Genuine palanca is deep, intentional, selfless prayer. It takes place before, during and after the weekend. Palanca letters are written to the participants so they will be aware of the many efforts on their behalf. But, ‘palanca’ is misapplied when the team spends inordinate time before and during the weekend doing “cutesy” name tags, bookmarks, book covers, envelopes, etc. It is especially sad when someone spends \$10 at a bookstore and calls it palanca (unless there was genuine sacrifice made to set aside that \$10). Gifts are nice, but they are not the essential palanca. Whenever a weekend is being planned it is crucial that the essentials be emphasized and the adiaphorous placed to assist the essentials.

Essentials with definitions:

- Palanca — The heart and lifeblood of the movement — deep, intentional, selfless, sacrificial prayer.
- Seventy-two hours — Three full days of Christian community, away from *all* the distractions of daily life
- Holy Communion daily — Jesus is truly present in word and sacrament; both are made available to the participants
- 5 Meditations — Five guided image meditations; offered to assist the participants in examining their relationship with Christ
- 14/15 Talks — Actually separated parts of one talk necessary to cover the basics of the Via de Cristo method
- Note taking or write downs — Specific ideas and power phrases that capture the essential points of each of the talks
- Discussions — Small group encounters where Christ can come alive in the community and the fundamentals of Christianity can be reviewed
- Posters — Hand drawn expressions of the essential meaning of each of the talks
- Decuria sharing — A summarizing of the day's talks; a wonderful opportunity for participants to talk before a larger group
- Silent retreat — a period without talking; offered the first night to prick the conscience of the participants
- Celebration of Repentance — an examination of our life in light of the gospel; offered the first night to stimulate serious self reflection
- Crosses - A cross common to the Cursillo[®] movement with a telling inscription "Christ is counting on you!"
- Closing — The welcome of new participants into the community as a whole; designed to assure them that there are many brothers and sisters who understand
- Fourth Day - The term used to describe all days following the three day weekend. The fourth day is used to work the Via de Cristo method
- Group Reunion — A friendship and accountability meeting of 3 to 5 Via de Cristo supporters who review one another's 4th day work
- Ultreya - A larger gathering of Via de Cristo supporters designed to encourage individuals to persevere in the 4th day.

Staff for Three-Days

- Rector — An experienced layperson who will accept responsibility for calling, training, and leading the team for a Weekend
- Spiritual Director — Ordained clergy who support and are trained in the Via de Cristo method. They are present on the weekend to supply spiritual leadership
- Assistant Rector or Head Cha — An experience layperson who will assist the rector in her responsibilities; will organize and direct the physical plant for the weekend
- 9/10 Rollistas — Team members who will each deliver a 20-45 minute talk to stimulate discussion among those who participate
- Auxiliary — Additional personnel who will do the work of the weekend

Adiaphorous would include:

Special banquet	Sunday wake-up serenade
Saturday night serenade	Sunday afternoon serenade
Bible enthronement	Bible recessional
Flower for each rollista(women)	Theme for the weekend
Skits	De Colores “productions”
Singing for meals	Singing sessions in the evenings
Popcorn fellowship	Aisle of lights
Send-off	Personal palanca letters
Table palanca, trinkets, etc.	The big chicken or rooster
Stations of the cross	Baptism/communion films in rollo
Any other activity not listed as essential	

Auxiliary, silent professors, etc.
 Support person per table
 Thanking the support team

Thanking the staff
 Extra musicians

Site Selection and Needs for a Weekend

The Via de Cristo is meant to be conducted in a closed, prayerful atmosphere. We are looking for something much more than a place to feed 50 people and bed them down on cots. The participants and team need an isolated location in order to build true Christian community in only three days. The atmosphere should be reflective, prayerful and sincere. Everything that might be distracting should be avoided.

There needs to be facilities for a chapel, sleeping rooms, conference or Rollo Room, dining hall and kitchen, and a patio or outside exercise area. The following is a list of items that will likely be needed:

Facility	Podium	Round Tables
Chairs	Storage containers	Communion ware
PA system	Music books	Chapel programs
Movie projector	Overhead projector	Food
Kitchen utensils	Coffee pots	Bibles
Transportation	Candles	Postage
NLS Startup Packet*	Crosses*	Pens/pencils
Music	Envelopes	Notebooks
Mattresses	Poster board/Markers	Banners

**These items are available from the National Lutheran Secretariat.*

The three-day community should be left in peace as much as possible. The outside community should make every effort to avoid contact with the working team and participants. If prayer palanca is to be done, or kitchen help is offered, it should be done with as little disruption as possible. Again, all focus is on the participants and the close knit community in Christ. Isolation is critical and all distractions hurt, even when done with the best of intentions.

Weekend Elements (*Short form*)

1. Lutheran theology required (refer to SD Manual)
2. Basic requirements for table team (rollo room)
 - a. Conducting a 3 day weekend by the prescribed progression
 - b. Following progression with 14 or 15 talks and discussions
 - c. Including meditations and eucharist daily. (SD Manual)
 - d. Using progression with daily music.
 - e. Presenting to each participant a cross (the back of which says “Christ is Counting on You”)
 - f. Closing - participants to witness to their faith in Christ.
3. Basic requirements for servant teams include prayer and:
 - a. Provide needed support for the participants and table team (rollo room team). Major tasks
include: food, chapel, support for table team (rollo room), cleaning, etc.
 - b. Demonstrate the brotherhood of Christ in an attitude of servanthood, prayer, and sacrifice
4. Basic requirements for Fourth Day Community
 - a. To be available to provide needed support for weekend activities
 - b. To demonstrate the brotherhood of Christ in an attitude of servanthood, prayer, palanca, and sacrifice
5. Basic attitude of servanthood to permeate the weekend
 - a. Table Team (Rollo Room)
 - 1 To make self totally available to the participants
 - 2 To be respectful of the servant team
 - 3 To demonstrate the humility of Christ
 - b. Servant Teams
 - 1 To demonstrate the servanthood of Christ through palanca, prayer and sacrifice
 - 2 Not to draw attention to themselves
 - 3 Not to interfere with the table or rollo room dynamics
 - 4 Not to do for participants what the participants prefer to do for themselves
 - c. 4th Day Community demonstrates the brotherhood of Christ.
 - d. Participants are to be loved and served but not manipulated.
 - 1 Should be allowed (assisted) to feel love
 - 2 Should be the focus of all service on the weekend
 - 3 Should be allowed as much freedom as possible with regard to movement, expression, rest, and spiritual direction insofar as it does not create a negative impact for other weekend participants.
 - 4 Should be told, and made to feel, that their thoughts and feelings are to be their own and are acceptable wherever they may be in their experience
 - 5 Should be helped to recognize that the progression of the weekend and its results are in the hands of the Lord.

Progression and Dynamics of the Weekend

Much goes into a weekend that has influence on the participants. When we speak specifically about the “dynamics;” we are referring to those particular things, words or events that have a significant influence on, move, or motivate participants. The positive dynamics move a participant to participate, to open up, to tear down walls, to accept God’s love and grace in their lives. On the other hand, there are negative dynamics that do the opposite. Any one of the following can push a participant into a shell and defeat the weekend’s objective.

Intimidation - Anything that puts people on the defensive

Confusion - Disorganization, wasting time, arguments

Secrecy - Whispering, evasive answers, not being honest

Bragging - In talks, conversations, or discussions

Irritations - Childish actions, physical discomfort, lewd behavior even in jest

Theological error - Mis-quoting the Bible, misinterpreting the role of Via de Cristo within the church, “I was baptized as a baby but I finally became a Christian on my Via de Cristo Weekend.”

Uninteresting talks - long lectures, sermons, off the subject, being too clever, too complicated

Overly regimented - ‘brain washing,’ lack of free thought, feeling manipulated, ‘boot camp’

Fear and fatigue - using intimidation in any form, you have to do it this way, no feeling of rest

We make every effort to avoid these controllable negatives. Through effective team training and critiquing of talks we minimize their occurrence. Bathing the whole Three-Days in prayer and allowing a Christ-like Spirit diminishes the probability of offense to participants, and minimizes damage if a participant is offended.

During the three days of the Via de Cristo, by grace with the Holy Spirit, we become a community of the living word. Without pressure, without using contrived situations, without anyone mentioning the word Via de Cristo or Cursillo[®], Christ will awaken within the participants a desire to seek the better life. The team will slowly, taking all the time needed, provide living examples of the Christian life in these three areas: *Piety, Study and Action*. All team members will share their lives with the participants, so that the participant’s own perspective on life will change. This means team members will really share with participants. They share:

- 1) their own personal hope
- 2) their trust that there is a purpose to life
- 3) their own love of Jesus
- 4) their own joy
- 5) their willingness to live spiritual discipline

The team members allow the participants to truly know them; they speak of the doubt, the fear, and the faith. In this way, faith becomes more than mere hype or ritual. By seeing the faith of real people and sharing communion with these people, the participants are encouraged to commune with Jesus. In the same way the team makes every effort to truly know the participant. They use the participants names, pronounced correctly, as often as possible. They sincerely inquire about the participants’ home, work, personal feelings, thoughts and dreams.

All parts of the weekend are woven to fit together into a progression: the talks, worship, music, palanca notes, food, and visibility of the support teams. The weekend is allowed to move at its own progression; from handshakes to hugs, and from conversation to prayers, all elements become a part of a fine unique tapestry being woven at each weekend. The weekend is intended

to begin somewhat subdued and non-threatening with a steadily increasing dynamic which may involve not only rollos, meditations, and worship, but other elements of the weekend such as music, meals and food presentation, room decor-ambiance, and palanca. In this framework the Holy Spirit is allowed to work in the hearts of the participants.

The team itself will be a Christian community *before* it comes to the weekend. By Thursday night, a formed community is awaiting the participants. The team's "come to unity" is vital for the weekend to come to unity. The team has attained community through a series of team meetings held prior to the weekend using specific exercises. They join in worship and liturgy, discuss the talks, and personify understanding and sharing. All this is done so that on Thursday night, the team members can spread out among the participants and incorporate them into their community. They thereby form another larger community. All during the weekend, the team members exemplify Christian commitment to each of the participants; and encourage the participants to commit to working with the larger Christian community within the world, the Church. As the new participants return to their personal environments, they will have a powerful Christianizing effect. They will, through God's grace, transform the part of the world in which they live into a Christian community. The team that comes to the weekend on Thursday night is key to forming Christian community in the world.

The Spiritual Director (SD) for the weekend ministers to the team as it is being formed and grows with them as a part of the team. Then, already well acquainted with the team and a part of the community, the SD enters the weekend like the rest of the team, *for the candidates*.

A weekend begins the moment the first participant arrives on Thursday night. From the very first encounter, we focus on community building. It starts in the smallest ways. Team members do simple little things. They might offer the participants smiles and open friendly conversation. Perhaps they help the participants find their beds. They help with anything and everything; yet, without volunteering how much they know of what is happening. We are in this together, is the constant message.

Even after the team members have created a welcoming atmosphere, they continue to *do all they can* to help the participants feel "this is a good place to be". This can be quite a challenge given the fact that participants may or may not want to be there. All the participants are somewhat apprehensive when they arrive. Team members talk to them and help them feel a part of the group. *The first job of a team member is to welcome the participants and draw them into the caring environment*; they get to know the participants as quickly as possible. The team members always listen carefully to any personal introductions. At meals, team members talk freely and get to know the people around them. They encourage the participants to talk. To start this, they can tell others something about themselves; revealing things about themselves that may be of interest to the participants. It is wonderful how the Spirit uses this, and is a delightful experience for all parties.

Singing is a powerful dynamic throughout the weekend. Singing builds community and gets people involved. We are not concerned if some people initially hold back, in time they will catch the spirit and by Sunday morning the cautious ones are often the loudest singers. The team provides a good example by singing out comfortably.

Silence is also used as a very effective dynamic on the weekend. God is a friend of silence (*I Kings 19:12, Psalm 46:10, Isaiah 41:1, Habakkuk 2:20*), so it can be helpful before and during chapel, around the altar and before discussions. In a different way it is also used at the tables to encourage the participants to start talking. And still a third way is used on Thursday night when we are encouraging the individual to a serious exploration of their own lives (*Lamentations 2:10, Revelation 8:1*). The masterful exercise of silence can do much to encourage Christ's love in our hearts.

The opening meditation on Thursday night is “Know Yourself.” This together with the second meditation on “The Prodigal Son” reminds us that, like the prodigal son, we have often strayed away from our heavenly Father who is eager to welcome us home. Meditations open the door for the daily talks by helping the listeners be more aware of Christ’s presence (as if face to face) and by emphasizing the need to respond to God. From this point of the weekend on, the listeners are never allowed to forget that Christ is here loving us, asking us for a response; that his Spirit is moving us to be more fully and unreservedly open to him. Now, too, the silent spiritual retreat begins to work upon the participants’ hearts. The silence can challenge the participants to face their spiritual selves and prepares them for the next day’s liturgy. This first night the participants’ moral conscience awakens and through a careful self-examination, they start feeling a desire to be in God’s grace. We encourage all to be very honest in examining themselves and, with repentance, renew their own personal relationship with God.

Team meetings are conducted during the weekend usually beginning the first night. *In all team meetings, everything must be kept in strict confidence.* This point can not be over-emphasized. The team meeting is a time to talk candidly about the participants and their specific needs. It is *not* a psychological assessment, and *certainly not* a gossip session. At this team meeting, it may be necessary to change someone to a different table or make another basic adjustment. The team will characteristically review the following day’s activities, answer any question, discuss any logistical problems, and then pray together.

Throughout the weekend, we keep in mind the necessity of sleep. *It is never our intent to get the candidates tired, or to wear them down.* Candidates need sleep in order to be receptive to everything that is being presented for them. The only exception ever allowed to bed time is intimate sharing. If a participant is pouring out her heart, that situation takes priority. We listen attentively, for as long as it takes.

We recommend that the first communion service of the weekend be similar to those the participants have experienced in their own churches. We remember that the Lord’s Supper is a foretaste of the great Feast for the whole Church in heaven. The word united with the body and blood of Jesus provides the authentic foundation and real presence for each of the talks and every discussion throughout the day. As the participants form into community, we express that unity and love in each day’s liturgy. Progression on the weekend is matched through the liturgy.

At every meal, it is advisable for the team to change seats. They use this special time to get to know each of the participants better. We never know how or when a personality will touch a participant for Christ. The team will try to talk about the message just before the meal or maybe a special moment during the day. If they can, they build the conversation on what a particular speaker said or an idea that came up at their table. These little conversations can be very important in spreading community. Special acts of kindness and thoughtfulness at meal time are very good. We at all times avoid asking the inane question “How’s it going?” We want to encourage thoughts about the message, so we direct the conversation. Meals in some movements often end with a joke session. Other movements have joke sessions in the rollo room after the meal. Keep the jokes short, clean and funny. Telling a joke gives the participants a chance to speak in front of people. Some participants may never have had a reason to talk in front of a group. This is a very comfortable way for them to begin by being a speaker in this informal setting. The jokes draw people together through laughter. The team makes a reasonable effort to find the humor in the participants jokes, to support them and applaud their efforts.

Free periods and walks also give the team members and the participants a chance to meet one on one away from a table. The team members, during these walks, make themselves available to the participants. This is essential bridge-building time.

The team and participants are assigned to tables in the rollo room. The participants are grouped at the tables according to diverse ages, occupations, churches, and any other factors that may help them to learn from one another in their discussions. During the weekend we build community at the individual tables first. Later on, this feeling of community will spread to the entire group and grow.

Friday - the First Day

On Friday, the intention is to continue bringing the participant face-to-face with themselves. We try to answer the question, “Who Am I?” We present a set of values and ideals for life, much higher and more spiritual than the participants may have held before now. The meditation Friday morning is designed to help people recognize and make personal responses to God. In “The Three Glances of Christ” the participants are given examples from the gospels of three people on whom Christ directed his gaze. Each of them responded differently. Each of the listeners also responds differently when asked through the meditation, “How will I respond?”

The content of the five talks on the first day present clearly the ideal of living a life of grace. We do not challenge the attitude of the participants directly, but we present the much more worthwhile ideology, a ‘value’ much more sublime that by its intrinsic power will displace the perhaps not so Christian standards, which they have upheld until now.

Ideal

This talk seeks to convince the listeners of the need for having an ideal in life. Our human nature demands that we have a goal toward which we direct all our efforts. The talk is a philosophical study of the human mind and will, and how they operate. It is not a “spiritual talk” per se. The strategy is to arouse interest in our humanity, so that the talks that follow can build upon this, helping the listeners to be more and more aware of God’s image (divinity) in us. The point is made that we all have ideals of one sort or another, but that we must examine our ideals to see what they are and where they are leading us. The talk ends with a soul-searching challenge to know our ideal in life. This discussion of our ideal serves as the basis and point of departure for the rest of the weekend. As it awakens in us the desire to know our ideal, it makes us think, and thus prepares our mind to listen attentively to the remaining talks. It puts us in the proper mood to pursue this Way of Christ.

The Nature Of God’s Grace

In the Ideal talk, no attempt was made to point out any concrete ideal. In this talk we are presented with God’s supreme ideal: that all of his children might live in his grace and love. This is an intensely important talk, because it constitutes the doctrinal nucleus of all the others. The other pastors’ talks build upon the central truth of God’s habit of gracing us, while the lay talks show in detail how this life in grace is to be lived. The doctrine of this talk can be summed up in the notion that our heavenly Father, through his Son and his Spirit, has given us a share in his own divine life. Thus we are members of the family of our Father, living as brothers and sisters, with Christ as our brother. This was done not based on any merit we have, but solely on his divine nature.

The Layperson As The Church In The World (Laity)

After presenting the Christian ideal of living the life of grace in the family of God, we move to a layperson’s view of the Church. We learn that the Church is this family of God. In the words of St. Paul it is the mystical body of Christ. Laypersons are the Church, the people of God; the

hands, feet lips etc., of Christ, so that Christ can work and speak to the world today through us. Although this talk is rooted in the concept of the body of Christ that Paul draws for us, its primary emphasis is on the mission of the laity as living, active members of the Church. Its purpose is to initiate in the listener an active response to God's grace.

Grace in Action

The call to action in the Laity talk can make the listeners feel inadequate to the task, so we are reminded that we have not been left alone in our efforts to live a dynamic Christian life. Through faith, the same grace that showers blessings on us indiscriminately is channeled in special ways to us by God's Spirit in our midst. The Holy Spirit lives and works in us, enlightening our mind and inspiring our will. The Holy Spirit works in various ways through various means, such as the reading of scripture, preaching, the sacraments, fellowship, etc., to call, gather, enlighten and make us holy, enabling us to be active ministers, a part of the priesthood of all believers. As the body of Christ we are all in this together, encouraging, upbuilding, nurturing, exhorting each other through prayer and fellowship. Palanca is the spiritual "lever" of prayer and sacrifice on the weekend and in our ministry.

Piety

This is the key talk in the method of the weekend. At this point many of the participants have let go any defensive attitudes they may have had, and have taken on the spirit of an open mind and heart. This talk has the mark of the "personal testimony" and is presented in such a way that we can see in the speaker the happy and attractive embodiment of true piety. The first part of the talk, the negative element, serves only to introduce the main theme of true piety, which is a conscious and growing life in grace. A certain amount of admiration for the Piety speaker should develop among the participants, so the speaker should make every effort to be available to them for personal conversation. Normally a change in the atmosphere of the weekend will be evident after the Piety talk. The spirit of idealism, commitment and charity will show forth in the words of the speaker. The Piety talk uses living testimony in a way that none of the other talks of the day has, but it uses it in a different way from the way that will be used later on. Piety presents the picture of a truly pious individual, of how this person came to realize what piety involves and of what a difference this has made to this life. It should not contain the kind of examples that show in a concrete way: "how to do it." That is only sketched broadly and awaits development on the second day.

It is never necessary for anyone to give a long talk. A speaker can say all that needs to be said in a half hour or less. The exceptions to this are the Piety talk, due to intimate personal sharing, and the pastors' talks because they need to clarify what may be new or difficult ideas for the participants. It is very important that the table team set an example for the participants by taking copious notes during the talks. We want the participants to think of the Via de Cristo weekend as an educational course in Christianity, complete with note taking. We want the participants to have a tangible means to review the weekend at home. However, we are most interested in the development of community at the table and these notes will provide a reference point.

Community is formed when the participants are discussing at the tables. In the world we use the word community for any collection of individuals regardless of how poorly those individuals communicate. In Via de Cristo we restrict the meaning to groups of individuals who have learned to communicate honestly with each other. Their relationships go deeper than the masks of composure normally shown to others. The transformation of this collection of individuals to community requires little "deaths" in many of the individuals and perhaps even a group "death."

Yet, when community arrives, the table is bathed in peace — the peace that passes human understanding (*Philippians 4:7*). People in community have developed a significant commitment to rejoice together, mourn together, delight in each other, and make another's condition their own. At the table the participants share their ideas and they are able to build upon one another's thoughts. What the participants say to one another at the table is *much* more important to the growing community than what was said by the speaker in the talk.

The job of the table leaders is a delicate one. We may have significantly different theological histories at the table so we cannot try to get everyone to agree on particulars. In Christian community there is both a respect for the individual and a yielding by the individual for community interaction. A false community will form first; everyone being nice "I can handle this if they can!" The next stage will likely be a chaotic storming as table members get bold enough to express their differences. Perhaps the differences will be so strong there may be a feeling of emptiness or even hopelessness. We do not panic and we do not give up; because, the table has now arrived at the gate of community. Only a little more and the peace will begin to flow. This series of steps may repeat several times through the weekend. Each time, the new community will be deeper.

A team member will be a positive dynamic in this process if she willingly empties herself. In the beginning, she will honestly and succinctly share some of her thoughts. Then, most importantly, she will listen attentively to every other person, encouraging all to do the same. She will find value in what others are saying. She will at times openly disagree, but always with respect for the person no matter what that person has said. She will solicit input whenever someone is not participating. The table team's goal is to convey to each table member a respect owed every child of God. Only the Holy Spirit can cause lasting change in people.

The team member will assist the natural table leaders to take over. These leaders are, and should be, the true leaders at the table. Team members are there to help monitor the discussion, to help keep the participants on the theme of the talk. The table dynamics are most effective when everyone is involved; when everyone is participating in the discussion, in the summary, and with the poster. The table team always participates but never dominates. A question is an amazingly effective tool in the hands of good team member.

When "palanca" is introduced, it is a wonderful surprise for many of the participants and can be very moving to them. Until this time, for many participants, the weekend has been uninspiring. Now, with the palanca sent from all over the country and often the world, the Holy Spirit works in the participants. They see how this Living God works through other people. For many, this active God is a new experience, and for some, may cause strong emotions. God becomes personal and loving. We ought not interfere, let the Spirit work as the Spirit wills in the participants.

In *Via de Cristo* we are not trying to force emotions. The manner of the events should, above all, aim at authenticity, clarity, naturalness and conviction. The participants should be shown clearly the great things for which they have been created; yet, not be urged to action directly. We intend a relaxed and accepting atmosphere where emotions do surface from time to time. And, we especially remember that most participants are suspicious on this first day. They worry that "They are out to convert me." They will be looking for signs of overt manipulation. We know it is God who changes the hearts of people.

We keep building community slowly. We intentionally keep the weekend subdued on Friday until after the Piety talk. We know if we build too fast, we can lose some of the participants. It is best for them to come along at their own pace. A person who is slower in reacting to the weekend may be disturbed by the emotion others are showing and may even begin to feel isolated and outside the community. The strong love, joy and peace they begin to see around

them may cause them to turn into themselves and resist becoming part of the group. We try very hard to maintain a pace everyone can follow and accept. Whenever possible, the weekend is geared to the slowest participant.

The rector leads several chapel visits during the weekend. These visits focus on the seriousness of the Via de Cristo weekend, and help the participants see that even though they are here for fun and education, they are also here to make an authentic commitment to Jesus.

Friday evening is the first Decuria. Until this time together on Friday evening, the primary concern has been creating community at the table. Now, we begin to shape the whole community with all the participants involved together. Through the sharing, the clapping, and the laughing each person relates to the entire group. We can watch as the larger community takes shape. The evening is often a good time for the participants to seek counseling from the spiritual directors. Team members should encourage a participant who shows the interest, to seek them out now.

Saturday - the Second Day

By the beginning of the second day the participants may be asking themselves, “Can I really attain the ideal of a conscious and growing life in Christ? How? How can I become a truly dynamic Christian?” The talks on this day are geared to answer these questions by presenting a Christ-centered sacramental piety that makes people more fully aware of being the body of Christ, the people of God. Prayer is introduced as a personal conversation with our brother Jesus Christ.

We start this day with the meditation, “The Figure of Christ.” The emphasis is on the humanity of Christ; on the Christ who is living now; on the personality of Christ that attracts so many. We are invited into a personal, intimate friendship with him. The daily liturgy will blend in very nicely with the sacraments talk given by a spiritual director. In truth, the whole weekend serves as a preparation of the community to truly *celebrate* the liturgy. On Saturday before the liturgy we introduce the abrazo as a form of the peace greeting: a very legitimate expression of Christian love. We don’t force a participant to participate; however, we have been preparing the participants for this since Thursday night. It began with firm handshakes and good eye contact. Maybe it is a pat on the back for men, or a touch on the arm for ladies. Perhaps an arm is placed across the shoulder, touch whenever and as often as it is appropriate. When people care they learn to touch in sincere ways, never offensive but confident and loving.

The talks today move beyond the ideals, the beauty of the calling, and the importance of the relationship to God, that essential message of the first day. Now the speakers patiently explain how it is done, or to be more precise, how the participants can do it.

Study

This talk is not a dissertation on study. Rather, its purpose is to make us feel the need to grow in, and deepen our knowledge of, Christ in our life in grace. The talk intends to show that our life in grace is to be conscious and enlightened so we can give testimony to our faith. It gives us the desire to study and appeals to persons at varying levels of intellect. Examples of spiritual reading should be suggested, from the reading of the gospels to the study of other acceptable documents. Other modern methods should also be mentioned such as audio and video tapes, computer programs, and radio.

Means of Grace (Word and Sacrament)

In this talk we speak of word and sacraments as God himself intervening in our human history and in our human lives in three different stages of time: 1) the wonderful works of God

among the people of the Old Testament; 2) the work of Christ in redeeming humanity, in particular his death and resurrection; and 3) the work of Christ in his continuing redemption, making himself present to us through his Church, and in particular (“for you”) through the sacraments. Following the theme of the day, this talk is centered on Christ. The means of grace are how Christ personally touches us, making God’s forgiveness ours. The listeners also see themselves as having a sacrament-like quality in that they bear God’s grace to others.

Or Grace Filled Days (Day in the Life)

In some movements, Grace Filled Days is used in place of the traditional sacraments talk developed by the Catholic Cursillo[®] movement. In this style the grace of God is seen as touching our lives from birth through the many events of our life to our death. Each event, baptism, Sunday school, first communion, confirmation, teen years, young adulthood, courting, marriage, occupation, children, grandchildren, old age, and death is part of a grace filled “day.”

Apostolic Action

This talk, along with the Leaders talk, serves as a transition to the third day of the weekend, where the emphasis is on apostolic action. The purpose of this talk is to show the connection between the life of grace and apostolic action, namely that the life of grace flows into a life of action, that grace causes action, that apostolic action is a logical demand of the life of grace. In a word, to be graced by God evokes a response in us: we must be doing something. The notion of action in this talk can best be presented in terms of love; love for others flowing from our life in grace. Love is action. Love is the foundation of the priesthood of all believers and the essence of living in grace. In our apostleship, Christ asks us, both in word and deed, to give testimony to others concerning our relationship with him. Our commission is to “make disciples of all nations, (by) baptizing...and teaching....”

Obstacles To The Life Of Grace

The purpose of this talk is to remind us of the real difficulties that we will meet in living the life of grace. The talk is to be totally positive and constructive. The life of the believer is presented as a joyful and triumphant living in grace in spite of the obstacles we face. The commandments, like the laws of nature, are not meant to be a burden, but a positive guide. Having been obeyed perfectly by Christ; the commandments are obeyed by us as a way of responding to God’s grace. Sin is failure to love as we should. Obstacles are seen as tests of our love and are really reminders to love God more through our neighbor. Obstacles are: the devil, the world, and our own flesh, but the greatest obstacles are found in ourselves as attitudes of our mind and heart that frustrate our life and growth in grace (for example, indifference, misunderstanding of real life, not knowing ourselves). The talk is not a tirade against sin, nor does it go into any particular moral problems.

Leaders

This talk is a complement to the Action talk. It points out that in the Church, leaders are not only those who are active in the organizations of the local congregation, but include anyone who bears witness to Christ in his or her sphere of influence in life. Every baptized believer is called in baptism to be a servant, to lead others by being of service to them. An example of each quality or characteristic of leadership should be given. Care must be taken to avoid the impression that every person must possess all the qualities in order to be a leader. Each person may be a leader even if only possessing one of the qualities or characteristics of a leader.

Each table is asked to separately make a chapel visit during the weekend. It is important that there be a complete briefing to the participants before going into the chapel; particularly on the dynamic of freedom. We encourage the participants to be open, free, and honestly express their feelings. The silence in the chapel visit can be very beautiful, but we need to be aware that some feel considerable pressure. We do not pressure anyone into praying out loud if they would prefer not. Often a cross is passed from one person to the next during the visit. To help relieve undue pressure for performance, we tell the participants that they are free to pass it on without saying anything. It is interesting that this is often what they need to feel comfortable in speaking.

Sunday - The Third Day

By the beginning of the third day, most of the participants are beginning to feel renewed, committed, and filled with enthusiasm. On the first day we studied about ourselves and our ideal. On the second day we entered into intimate friendship with Christ. Today our thoughts are projected out into the world. We are told how we can bring Christ to the world in which we live. The third day is a call to apostolic action. The day begins with the meditation, "Christ's Message to the Participant." We hear that Christ has called us: "I have chosen you and have appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit" (*John 15:16*).

This days talks present the Via de Cristo method, and the Via de Cristo understanding of environment. Each talk presents its part of the method. Candidates are being given instructions on how to operate a successful approach to Christian life. The instructions, therefore, are intended to be as careful and as clear as possible. They are the same sort of instructions that might be given to someone about how to drive a car. The instructions cannot substitute for actually driving and getting the feel of it, but they do need to be provided, and they must be practical.

The Study and Evangelization Of The Environment

After the morning meditation, there awakens in our soul a desire to do something for Christ. This talk tells us where we have opportunity to work for him. It unfolds the environment of the world, its people and its institutions, where we can be of influence for Christ. We simply cannot transform and Christianize the world in which we live unless we understand it. The emphasis in this talk is on our vocation (personal apostleship), bearing witness to Christ in our workplace, our family, our community, wherever we may be. The talk helps us to examine the specific area that God has selected for us in which to work. This talk does not go into the various methods of apostolic action; that will be covered later.

Life in Grace

At this point in the weekend we are beginning to wonder how we are ever going to maintain, in our daily lives, the awareness of Christ that we are experiencing during these three days. This talk tells us the answer is found in the practices of our own piety. The practices themselves are only the means of maintaining a conscious and growing awareness of Christ in our lives. The purpose of the talk is to explain each one of the practices of piety, study and action, and to show us how to make them a part of our daily spiritual life. We are invited to set up our own plan for our spiritual life and to promise Christ that we will follow it to insure our perseverance after the weekend. We are reminded that this is just the beginning. We will grow and deepen our spiritual lives. We will get new insights into living the life of Christ. So our practices of piety will also change and take on new forms, to keep pace with our spiritual growth.

Developing Christian Community Within Our Environments (Christian Community in Action)

In this talk we get very specific about the ideas presented in the Action and Leadership talks. We are given examples of what we can do and how we can do it. In Environment we heard about the call to bear witness to Christ in our particular circumstances in life. In this talk we are impressed with the idea of acting as a member of a group. As Christians, we are a group, the people of God, the body of Christ, the Church. Our attitude cannot be individualistic. This talk seeks to dispose us to be active apostles in Church groups as well as through our civic organizations (various examples are given). It's best to give this talk the character of personal testimony, relating practical examples and living stories of Christians acting together. The talk should stress not so much the theory, but the spirit of group action that has succeeded in changing the world. This talk prepares us for the ideal of the group reunion in the next talk.

Group Reunion and Ultreya (Total Security)

We are assured that what we have experienced during the weekend is not the climax of something, but a new beginning. We can look forward to a richer Christian life because we see new dimensions we never knew existed. The key to our perseverance and growth is the "group reunion." Our experience in Christian living on the weekend makes us aware that we are dependent on others, their prayers, the talks, the table discussions. If we are to continue in this spirit, we will need each other after we return home. The group reunion continues the Via de Cristo weekend experience of living in a Christian community. The group reunion is simply a small community of Christians inspiring each other to grow in the spirit of idealism, involvement, and love that we began to live on the weekend. The ultreya is explained as an extension of the group reunion by being a reunion of groups.

The Fourth Day

The theme of this talk is again our perseverance in living the life of grace. The simple rule for us to follow is "contact with Christ and contact with our brothers and sisters." The effectiveness of this talk depends a great deal on the personal conviction of the speaker and the power of persuasion he or she puts into his or her words. Through personal testimony, the speaker shows that it is possible to live and grow in the life of grace throughout the rest of our lives.

Total Security in the Fourth Day

In some movements, this is the 14th and last talk, incorporating the themes of both the Total Security and the Fourth Day rollos into one talk. All the above notes of the 14th and 15th talks apply to this talk.

On Sunday, there is a danger that the spirit of the weekend will level off or even drag. Almost everyone is tired, the tight structure of the weekend is being loosened, and the mechanics of the service sheet aren't very exciting. It may seem to some team members as if the whole weekend is falling apart. *We don't panic, and we don't worry, even if someone hasn't gotten the message.* If a person has not opened herself to the group by this time, any attention or concerns we show her will likely turn her further into herself. We must allow the Holy Spirit to work. For some participants, it will take till closing to get the message of the weekend. We absolutely cannot force an authentic religious response from anyone. We must respect the person's freedom to close out the Spirit and choose not to be part of the community. The spiritual encounter must always remain between the participant and God.

The team must again come forward and take the lead. They keep taking notes. They keep discussing. They keep encouraging. After the *Life In Grace* talk they help the participants with

the service sheet and suggest a realistic commitment from them. The group reunion is explained during the rector's talk and introduces the Fourth Day program. *The success of the weekend is measured only by how well the participants attend group reunions after the weekend.*

At the closing the participants discover that they are part of a much larger Christian community. They see that these people, too, really care. The people who come to the closing assure the participants that living the Fourth Day is possible because others are already living it. At the closing, the emphasis is first on the testimony of the participants and then on introducing the participants into the larger Via de Cristo community. The members of the community who come to the closing must come for the participants. Of course, we always enjoy seeing some of our friends there; but, *the main reason to be at a closing is to welcome the participants into the larger Christian community.*

The following chart points out the many ways we hope an individual will grow during the three days.

Weekend Growth in Spirituality

1)Hearing our name	2)Part of our family	3)Part of a church family	4)Understanding we are part of God's family
1)See others love us	2)Loving ourselves	3)Think and meditate on the words	4)Sharing God's love with others
1)Rote singing	2)Relate songs to special experiences	3)Think and meditate on the words	4)Worship and praise God in songs
1)Reticent to talk	2)Discuss in small groups	3)Stand in front of a small non-threatening group	4)Witness to groups... and to others
1)Handshake	2)Touch	3)Enthusiastically reaching out	4)Abrazo
1)Pray privately	2)Pray together with a group	3)Pray by oneself in a small group	4)Lead in prayer
1)Attend worship service	2)Worship attentively	3)Participate in worship	4)Worship in spirit and in truth
1)Burdened with sin	2)Understand God's mercy	3)Truly desire forgiveness	4)Knowing complete forgiveness and freedom
1)Friendly	2)See joy in others	3)Understand source of joy	4)Have and share the joy of the Lord
1)Hear about God's grace	2)Better understand God's grace	3)Desire to live in grace	4)Live in God's grace
1)Define ideals	2)Understand ideals	3)Desire the best ideal	4)Make living in God's grace the ideal of life
1)Priorities mixed up	2)Understand what is important	3)Apply the great commandment	4)Priorities in correct order
1)Define church	2)Understand WE are the Church	3)Understand the Church's mission	4)Help the Church change the world for Christ
1)Understand piety	2)Utilize practices of piety	3)Grow in relationship to God	4)Turn our whole life over to God
1)Understand the need for study	2)Learn how and what to study	3)READ the bible	4)Develop a study program
1)Understand the need for apostolic action	2)Learn procedures	3)Desire to share Christ	4)Practice apostolic action in daily life
1)Understand Christian leadership	2)Learn the qualities of a leader	3)Desire to grow as a Christian leader	4)Develop and implement a program to GROW
1)Understand environment	2)Desire to be God's person in environment	3)Learn what to do	4)CHANGE your environment
1)Understand Christian community	2)Desire to become a part of Christian Community	3)Learn what to do	4)Be ACTIVE in Christian community
1)Persevere	2) Keep Going!	3)PERSEVERE	4)ULTREYA!!

A Sample Time Schedule

The following is a sample schedule used in some movements. Most of the detail on any weekend will be determined by individual secretariats as they work through meeting facilities, travel needs, kitchen and dining facilities, etc. It might be appropriate here to again caution against too much of the adiabatic, so these items are marked with a †. It so easily becomes part of the “tradition” and may begin to crowd essential time for free thought, meditation, conversation or discussion.

Thursday

- 12:00 pm - 6:00 pm - Team arrives and completes last minute preparation (unless team member is a sponsor)
- 6:30pm Team altar visit
- 7:30 Send off (if used †)(other movements: participants arrive)
- 8:00 Arrive at CENTER (if there is a bus ride †)
- 8:45 Rector introduces self and hands out badges
- 9:15 Second talk by rector
- 9:45 Begin Spiritual Retreat - meditation “Know Yourself”
- 10:00 Celebration of Repentance - meditation “Waiting Father”
- 10:20 “Way of the Cross” or Examination of Conscience
- 10:55 To Bed - Silent retreat for participants
- 11:15 Team meeting

Friday

- 5:45am Rector, professors and support team **arise!**
- 6:15 Participants **arise!**
- 7:00 Chapel - Silent Retreat ends
- 7:05 Meditation “Three Glances of Christ”
- 7:20 Prayers by rector
- 7:25 Holy Communion (may be at another time in some movements)
- 8:00 Prayers by rector
- 8:15 Breakfast
- 8:45 Jokes
- 9:10 To rollo room, introductions and table assignments
- 9:55 Talk by rector - distribute roster sheets(†)
- 10:00 **Ideal**
- 10:30 Table discussion
- 10:50 Posters
- 11:10 Break - Singing - Picture(†)
- 11:30 **The Nature O God’s Grace**
- 12:15pm Table discussion
- 12:35 Posters
- 12:55 Lunch
- 1:20 Jokes
- 1:30 Break
- 1:55 Singing
- 2:00 **The Layperson As The Church In The World (Laity)**
- 2:30 Discussion
- 2:50 Posters
- 3:10 Break and walk outside

3:30 **Grace In Action (Palanca)**
 4:30 Table discussion
 4:50 Posters
 5:05 Break
 5:15 Singing
 5:20 **Piety**
 6:00 Talk by rector
 6:10 To chapel(‡)
 6:30 Dinner
 6:50 Jokes
 7:00 Break
 7:15 Table discussion
 7:35 Posters
 8:00 **Decuria**
 10:00 To chapel (some movements: Way to the Cross follows Piety ‡)
 10:20 Bed
 10:45 Team meeting

Saturday

5:45am Rector, professors and support team **arise!**
 6:15 Participants **arise!**
 7:00 Chapel
 7:05 Meditation “Figure of Christ”
 7:20 Prayers by rector
 7:25 Holy Communion (may be scheduled amid or following Means of Grace talk in some movements)
 8:10 Breakfast
 8:35 Jokes
 8:45 Break
 8:55 To rollo room - singing
 9:00 **Study**
 9:30 Talk by rector
 9:40 Table discussion
 10:00 Posters
 10:15 Break
 10:25 Singing
 10:30 **Means of Grace, (Word and Sacrament)**
 11:15 Break(‡) In some movements this talk is only 60 minutes or less) Holy Communion may take place here
 11:20 **Means of Grace, (Word and Sacrament)** Rollo Continues
 12:15 Luncheon
 12:35 Jokes
 12:45 Break
 1:00 Table discussion
 1:20 Posters
 1:40 Singing
 1:45 **Apostolic Action**
 2:15 Table discussion (start chapel visits)
 2:50 Posters

3:15	Obstacles To The Life Of Grace
4:00	Table discussion
4:20	Posters
4:35	Break/walk/singing
5:00	Leaders
5:40	Table discussion
6:00	Posters
6:15	More general palanca - singing
6:25	Dinner (in some movements, a great banquet)
7:00	Serenade(‡ not done until supper on Sunday in some movements)
7:30	Break
7:50	Decuria meeting
9:50	To chapel
10:10	Bed
10:30	Team meeting
Sunday	
5:45am	Rector, professors and support team arise!
6:15	Participants arise (and PACK?)(Participants may be serenaded awake by team)
7:00	Chapel
7:05	Meditation “Christ’s Message to the Participant”
7:15	Prayers by rector
7:20	Holy Communion (this is scheduled later in some movements)
8:00	Breakfast
8:20	Jokes
8:25	Break
8:35	To rollo room - singing
8:45	The Study and Evangelization Of The Environment
9:15	Table discussion
9:35	Talk by rector
9:45	Life in Grace
10:15	Talk by rector
10:25	Table discussion
10:45	Break
11:00	Developing Christian Community Within Our Environments (Christian Community in Action)
11:30	Table discussion
11:50	Lunch
12:20pm	Jokes
12:30	Break
12:45	Group Reunion and Ultreya (Total Security)
1:15	Table discussion
1:35	Service Sheets (to chapel)(‡)
1:45	Break
2:00	Fourth Day
2:30	Table discussion
2:50	Special Palanca(‡)
3:20	Sad Rollo(‡ has many titles) (after Christian Community in other movements)
3:40	Pie and coffee

- 4:00 Break
- 4:15 Talk by rector (some movements have “Apostolic Hour” here and give crosses to the participants; also supper may follow in some movements, after which the Fourth Day community surprises participants with a serenade)
- 4:45 **Clausura**

Capsule of Clausura Bulletin (*used in some movements*‡)

Enter singing “De Colores”

Welcome by rector and introduction of new participants

Introduction of visiting clergy

Fourth Day speaker(s)

Distribution of crosses (as new participants kneel -- may have been done earlier in some movements)

Closing liturgy - some movements combine weekend participants, team and fourth day community in the third Holy Communion service of the weekend, with the “offering” being the sharing by the new participants.

Developing a Via de Cristo Talk or Rollo

A Via de Cristo talk or rollo implies more than just a “talk” but it is definitely NOT a sermon. It is a talk, illustrated with sharing and examples. It is a talk by a person who is living what they are saying. In the talk one can “see” Christ in the person, as well as “hear” Christ from the person. If the speaker tells about herself, about what she thinks, about what she does, about what has happened to her, and about what Jesus has done for her; no one can argue. If the speaker tells others about her experiences, they can “relate.” As people we all have very similar wants, needs, cares, and drives. Stories about others are good, but not as good as “my” story. The talk is a message on a subject, but it is my story, my version, how I feel.

We try to select people who can “illustrate” the talk with their lives. If a person has a good study program, she can give a good Study rollo. If he has turned his whole life to Christ, he can give a good Piety rollo, etc. A person can share what she does, how she does it, what she thinks, what the Lord has done for her.

Giving a talk takes a special kind of discipline, humility, and technique. If the unified message of the weekend is to come through, each speaker must cover the assigned part in the way that it was designed. All talks center on the good news of the saving action of Jesus Christ. “Make the sharing of God’s Grace with others your Ideal for the rest of your life,” is the consistent theme. We start with the definition of Ideal, build slowly, each rollo in sequence, each building on the last one, until the picture is complete. All this has to be surrounded with God’s love and grace so the Holy Spirit can be effective in each person, both participants and team members.

It might be helpful to think in terms of there being one rollo with 14 or 15 parts. The talks build gradually one upon the other from Friday morning to Sunday night. Because of the carefully worked out progression, it is crucial that each talk be done accurately, in its own style, and not say too much. Each rollo does a predetermined job in a definite way. Only the points in the talks outlines should be made, and no others.

If each speaker makes only the points in the talks outlines, a more effective overall job will be done. If something is left out, a part of the picture will not come through. If more is added, it will usually obscure the purpose of the talk and the flow of the weekend. For example, it has happened that the Laity talk was given with an enthusiasm for changing the world that should

only appear in the Fourth Day talk. Some early speakers have said things about being an apostle that should not be said until Christian Community in Action.

Even though the progression of points needs to be followed closely, the talks should not be “canned” or “rigid.” Creative writing and speaking abilities are called upon to prepare a talk unique for each weekend and each speaker. The outline remains the same, but the speaker must give new life to it each time. It is important to use inclusive language, and be sensitive to people who are married/single, female/male. The Via de Cristo talk manuals are gender neutral. But a speaker may feel more comfortable using one gender.

Each talk, in its own way, will do two things: explain some part of the picture or method, and then, urge and inspire the listener to act on what is presented. The opening talks should explain Christianity, both intellectually and practically. By making the Christian ideal seem very attractive, the talks should evoke a response in the listeners to change their lifestyles as followers of Christ. The final talks should lay out a concrete method with definite steps and, by recounting one’s own experience of renewal, inspire enthusiastic action on the part of the listeners. When the talks are given correctly, the listener will see a vision gradually unfold, and will be intrigued by the development up to the last minute of the last day.

Any rollo will only be successful to the degree that the speaker is available as the instrument of the Holy Spirit in its preparation and presentation. Examples (witnesses, or personal sharing) should help make a point; therefore they need to be selected with care and prayer. Any example is a living parable. We do not wish the example to lead the listener astray. Again, it is important to be aware of the progression of the talks and give only those examples that fit the points of the talk. Timing of the talk and within the talk is almost as important as keeping to the outline. Monologues tend to get longer each time given, and lengthy monologues are more appropriate in group reunions, ultreyas, or small groups in the congregation.

We start Thursday evenings with a “heavy” spiritual experience, the Celebration of Repentance and the Spiritual Retreat (silence). So, on Fridays, and the first rollo, we start very “low key.” This builds up all the way to Sunday afternoon with the personal Palanca and the Clausura. It’s a gradual building, and each morning it begins anew. We try to be more intellectual in the morning, and then later challenging the participants will and finally their heart. Ideal is very “low key”, no sharing at all. Layperson in the Church has a little sharing. Piety, on Friday night, has heavy sharing. Saturday morning, Study, has little sharing; Apostolic Action, more; Leaders, on Saturday night, has a great deal of sharing. The Study of Environments, Sunday morning, has some sharing, Christian Community, more; Fourth Day a great deal. Your talk, when synchronized with the other, will give this flow, this dynamic to the weekend. Each Rollo relates strongly to some, not to all. Each speaker relates strongly to some, not to all. God uses each team member differently; but, God does use each! We are all his instruments! One person tells another person, “Jesus is alive! He’s here for you!”

There is no “right” or “wrong” way to write a rollo. It is the speaker’s rollo, and she can say whatever she chooses, or better, whatever God leads her to say. She has to be very careful what she says, but, more so why she says it. In her sharing, does she want to shock the hearer to feel sorry for her? She must really think: “Why am I saying what I say?” Especially when sharing! Am I saying this to brag?... to show off?... to show how intelligent I am?... to make others think I’m really something?

“I am giving this rollo because I feel that I was called by the Lord to give it. I’m giving this rollo because I love Jesus, and I want others to love him, too. Lord help me to get out of the way when you talk through me. Don’t let me put myself between you and them! **“I’m Part of a Miracle!”**

Summary points for preparing a talk

1. It is presumed that you are living what you teach.
2. What is not studied is not known. What is not known cannot be communicated.
3. What is not lived is not experienced. What is not experienced cannot be shared.
4. The text of a rollo is built on prayer, study, knowledge, experience.
5. Consider the 14/15 talks of the Via de Cristo as one talk, of which you have a part, therefore cover only your part.
6. A rollo should be attuned to all - keep it clear, bright, and within the grasp of everyone.
7. Each rollo to be effective depends on its:
 - a. objective (the main points of the outline)
 - b. style (the manner in which it is given)
 - c. situation (how it relates to the other talks)
 - d. environment (the general feeling of the participants at the time of the rollo)
 - e. technique (how the material is presented)
8. Each rollo does two things:
 - a. explains part of a picture.
 - b. inspires the participants to do what is presented.
9. Examples should be used with care. Use only examples that explain the point, and that are relevant.
10. The rollo is not given to simply say something good, but to say what must be said.
11. Each rollo progresses from low key on the first day to high on the third day. Keep the rollo on the proper key.
12. Don't make the rollo confusing, with too many details and examples - the main points must stand out.
13. The most efficient speaker is the one who knows where the rollo is leading. Give the participants a road to follow without sidetracking.
14. Read again the outline for the rollo. Determine the main points. Study them. Write down the main points. Fill in with details and examples. Their use will depend on the rollo's objective, style, situation, environment, and technique.
15. If the outlines are followed, the points will be made, provided they are understood by the speaker.

A Prayer

Dear Lord,

Please help me in the preparation and giving of this rollo. Please calm my heart and head that I may think. Stop my knees from shaking and quiet the pounding heart in my chest. Instead of fear, fill me with joy at this opportunity to share my thoughts with others.

Please let my thoughts be worth hearing, and give me the words to express them well. But don't let me take myself too seriously, or worry if I make a mistake.

Help me to remember that to be warm and human is generally to be interesting; that to be honest is generally to be effective; and that a laugh is worth more than empty eloquence.

Let me avoid generalities and high-sounding abstractions. Let me speak in parables; the way you did.

Give me some small human measure of your divine yet simple power. Oh Jesus, who moved the multitudes, help me to reach this one small group.

Thank you for being with me as I prepare and deliver this rollo.

Amen, I am Your servant.

Critiquing Process

Every talk is critiqued before it is delivered on a weekend. The critiquing process is vital to proper talk preparation. When we say critiquing we are not referring to the traditional “grading” that occurs in education. We wish to assist the speaker in communicating the message of the particular talk.

Every effort should be made to make positive references to the speaker. The hearer should inquire about any concerns she might have, especially if any sharing does not seem to illustrate the point. If there was a particular point that “got to you” share that fact. If there was a point that was unclear to the hearer, then ask for clarification and encourage the speaker to include that in her talk.

Another dimension of critiquing is similar to that used in the Ultreya. When a particular point is similar to the hearer’s experience, that needs to be affirmed. When the hearer’s experience is completely different that, too, needs to be shared. It is very likely that there are others who will have experiences similar to the critiquer and that needs to be included in the rollo.

Someone should be appointed to be sure the primary points of the rollo are covered and that it teaches what was intended. A timer should be assigned to give the exact length of the talk so necessary adjustment can be made. And a spiritual director should review the talk for doctrinal content.

Talks and Meditations

- | | |
|---------------------------|--|
| 1 Rector’s Opening Talk | 12 Means of Grace (or Day in the Life) |
| 2 Know Yourself | 13 Apostolic Action |
| 3 Waiting Father | 14 Obstacles To Life In Grace |
| 4 Three Glances | 15 Leaders |
| 5 Ideal | 16 Christ’s Message to the Participant |
| 6 The Nature of Grace | 17 The Study and Evangelization Environments |
| 7 Layperson In the Church | 18 Life in Grace |
| 8 Grace in Action | 19 Christian Community in Action |
| 9 Piety | 20 Group Reunion and Ultreya |
| 10 The Figure of Christ | 21 Fourth Day |
| 11 Study | 22 The Closing and Fourth Day Entry |

Condensed Outlines

For all talks of the Via de Cristo weekend

1. Opening Talk

Introduction

What is the three-day weekend (Via de Cristo?)

Purpose of the Via de Cristo

For whom is the weekend intended?

How to obtain the greatest benefit from the weekend experience

How will it be accomplished?

Beginning our Via de Cristo properly

2. Meditation - “Know Yourself”

What is a meditation?

Matthew 6:26-34 - How do you think the disciples reacted to this?

We each need times for reflection.

Luke 10: 41-42 - the Martha syndrome

We can challenge and change by asking fundamental questions.

Socrates, "Know yourself."

Augustine, "That I may know you, O Lord, and that I may know myself."

The Via de Cristo - Fill our heads with ideas and our hearts with fire!

3. Meditation - "Waiting Father"

Christ pictures God in the parable of the Prodigal Son - Luke 15:11-24

Every man's story.

The cruel insult.

Father's release "He can never be mine by force."

The mad search for satisfaction in things and fun.

The difficulty and decision to return.

The incredible joyful welcome.

Day One

4. Meditation - "Three Glances"

Introduction - eyes as instruments of communication

Rich young ruler - Mark 10:17-22

Why can't we trust Jesus instead of ourselves?

Judas - John 6:66-71

What keeps us from seeing Jesus' glance of love?

Peter - Mark 14:27-31 - trust in himself

Luke 22:54-62, but he repented and we have John 21:15-17

What does Jesus see in our hearts? Our minds? What do we see?

5. Ideal

Introduction

Consequences of being human

Limitations of being human

Despite limitations, persons have limitless hopes and dreams

Self-giving is a measure of a person's human development

Process of becoming fully human

What is an ideal?

Qualities of an authentic ideal

Influence of the authentic ideal on life

Kinds of ideals

Necessity of knowing our ideal

6. The Nature of God's Grace

Introduction, three R's of God's grace

Revelation of God's grace

Rudiments of God's grace

Results of God's grace

7. The Layperson in The Church (Laity)

Introduction

God's plan for the world

What is the Church?
Mission of the Church
Specific mission of the layperson
Characteristics of the laity's mission
Conclusion

8. Grace in Action

Introduction
How does God help us live the life of grace?
Why do we need God's help?
When does God help us?
How does God help us?
How much help does God give?
Responsibility
Role of prayer in asking for God's help
Conclusion

9. Piety

Introduction
False piety
Authentic piety
Style of piety
Acts of piety - nourish a life of piety
Conclusion

Day Two

10. Meditation - "The Figure of Christ"

John 1:1-26
How can we truly know Jesus?
Jesus true God. Jesus true man.
Jesus subject to all the things of humanity.
Jesus the one mediator.
Philippians 2:8-11
Jesus our brother

11. Study

Introduction
Definition: applying minds to learn the truth
Need for study
Objectives of study
Methods of study
Obstacles to study: cowardice, childishness
Remedies to obstacles: courage, childlike humility
Resources for study
Conclusion

12. Means of Grace, Word and Sacrament

Introduction: means of grace central in life of Church

Jesus is the means of grace
Word and sacrament as means of grace
Word of God
Holy Communion
Holy Baptism
Sacramental character of the Christian life
Conclusion: the mark of the cross

OR Grace Filled Days (Day in the Life)

Introduction
Baptism
Lord's Supper
Confirmation
Marriage
Children
Ministry
Death
Conclusion

13. Action

Introduction
What is apostolic action?
False concepts of apostolic action
Authentic apostolic action
Qualities of apostolic action
Method of action
1. Make a friend
2. Become a friend
3. Bring your friend to Christ

14. Obstacles to Grace

Introduction
Definition
God's plan
Man's sin and obstacles to grace
God's remedy for our obstacles
Conclusion

15. Leaders

Introduction
Definition
Natural qualities of a leader
Supernatural qualities
Christian leaders
Me, a leader?
Conclusion

Day Three

16. Meditation - "Christ's Message to the Participant"

Who brought you here? God!

Mountain tops are lived and then shared.

Go — bear fruit.

The strength is Christ in us.

Be in community and receive by giving.

Continue this work. Go renew your community!

17. Environment

Introduction

Christianity

Environment

Study of the environment

Christian transformation of environments (evangelization)

Conclusion

18. Life in Grace

Introduction: how can we keep this faith alive?

What is this life in grace?

A plan to deepen this grace life:

- piety

- study

- action

Conclusion

19. Christian Community in Action

Introduction

Christians in the Christian community

Need for community

Christian community

Christian community in action

Conclusion

20. Group Reunion and Ultreya (Total Security)

Introduction

What do we insure?

How do we insure ourselves? (group reunion)

Guarantees of the insurance

Ultreya

Conclusion

21. Fourth Day

Introduction

Your mission

Your responsibility

Two dangers encountered in the fourth day

Solution to avoiding these dangers

What the Christian should be
What the Christian should have
What the Christian should know
Life is a perennial Via de Cristo

OR Total Security in the Fourth Day

Introduction
Perseverance of Christ in life
Purpose of the group - to be in community
Elements of the group reunion
Characteristics of the group reunion
Group and its reunion
Ultreya: the reunion of the groups
Purpose and mission of the ultreya
Characteristics and content of the ultreya
Conclusion

The Team

A team will consist of the following positions:

Rector: The experienced lay leader and chief executive officer of the weekend - The Rector will be responsible for calling the lay team members, training them, and administrating every activity of the weekend

Spiritual Director(s): Ordained clergy, who will officiate at all chapel services; support the Rector wherever possible; and maintain the theological integrity for the weekend. The Lead Spiritual Director will be responsible for organizing the work of other SD's for the weekend

Assistant Rector (or Head Cha): The executive assistant to the Rector - she will take responsibility for the physical functions of the weekend, including the training of the servant team (chas or auxiliary), the organization and placement of equipment, supplies, etc.

Table Team (Rollo Room Team) or Professors: The 9/10 lay speakers (Rollistas), team members who will each deliver a 20-45 minute talk to stimulate discussion among those who participate. They sit at table in the Rollo room with the participants. They also serve as a catalyst to table discussion. There will be a lead and an assistant professor at each table. There will also be occasion for an additional team member (silent professor) who will be at a table without giving a talk. She will be there to assist the flow of the table community.

Servant Team: Any number of lay servants who do the labor of the weekend. There will be at least enough auxiliary for preparation of meals and meal servers, servants to keep the other facilities clean and accommodating, servants to handle all supplies needed in the rollo room as well as serving specific needs of participants, a servant to coordinate the chapel, and a servant(s) who is/are glorified postal workers(palanca). Each area will have a lead servant reporting to the assistant rector(head cha).

For more information on team development see the "NLS Team Formation Manual."

Spiritual Director selection and responsibilities

I. The Selection of a spiritual director

- A. The lead/head spiritual director should have served no less than two teams (preferably 5), be active in the Via de Cristo movement and be willing to serve.
- B. Other team clergy must have been participants, be active in the Via de Cristo and be willing to serve.
- C. The lead/head spiritual director must be Lutheran; for others, it is favored
- D. Spiritual director rollo's should be prepared before the weekend and be critiqued at the team meetings.
- E. Spiritual directors must be able pastoral counselors.

II. Duties of the spiritual director

- A. The lead/head spiritual director for the weekend will:
 - 1. Assemble the team of spiritual directors in consultation with the secretariat spiritual director and lay director. Do this 6-9 months prior to the weekend.
 - 2. As much as possible, try to develop a balance in the team selection (old-young, extroverted-introverted, experienced-inexperienced)
 - 3. Make talk/rollo assignments before the team meetings, and pass the information on to the rector
 - 4. Assign meditation and worship responsibilities
 - 5. Plan the services for the weekend, including the hymns; involve the team and participants
 - 6. Normally gives "Know Yourself" meditation and the "Means of Grace/Grace Filled Days" talk on Saturday
 - 7. Work closely with the rector, remembering that this is a lay movement. Serve as a spiritual advisor during team formation.
 - a. Work with rector in establishing team meeting schedules, worship services and prayer sessions.
 - b. Exercise leadership for other clergy and team in acting as spiritual advisor in critiquing the rollos, both lay and clergy,
 - c. Join with the team and the Holy Spirit to create true community in Christ. From the very beginning there needs to be a growing Christ-centered atmosphere. This is aided by the use of liturgies, prayer and singing. The team must be in community before the weekend!
 - 8. During the weekend:
 - a. Pray for and with the team, the participants, and the Via de Cristo.
 - b. Serve as a natural leader
 - c. Attend the team meetings and all events of the weekend
 - d. Be available to the participants and the team for spiritual direction, making use of every opportunity to be close to the participants.
- B. The clergy play a vital role in team formation, especially by their example. They need to know every rollo, lay and clergy, because they are the "theological experts."
- C. All clergy are expected to be available for counseling throughout the weekend. Be flexible in the style of counseling, such as prayer for healing, confession and absolution, active listening, guidance, etc.

- D. Other duties according to tradition that may include explaining abrazo, spiritual direction, etc.
- E. Clergy should be committed to the entire weekend.
- F. Pray for the team, the participants and the Via de Cristo.
- G. Be familiar with the “Essentials of Via de Cristo,” the “Spiritual Directors Manual” and the “Team Formation Manual”.
- H. It is hoped that all clergy will own Via de Cristo as a part of their overall ministry and be willing to serve regularly on teams.

III. The Role of the Spiritual Director

The rector is responsible for all external aspects of the Via de Cristo. The spiritual director is in a supportive role for the rector. Whenever a question arises concerning the external aspects of the weekend the rector is the one consulted and has the final word. The spiritual director is responsible for the internal aspects of the weekend: the spiritual direction, doctrinal soundness, and matters of liturgy. All authority exercised by the spiritual director should be low key and exercised in love.

The spiritual director must know and support the Via de Cristo in all its method, including the pre-weekend, weekend, and fourth day activities. Spiritual directors are not free to modify the method or any part of it, to suit their own theological preferences. Suggestions and/or disagreements should be discussed in advance with the rector, lay director and spiritual director for the secretariat. Where these disagreements cannot be resolved the spiritual director should feel free to resign from the weekend. We respect, need, and appreciate any and all ideas that will enhance the Via de Cristo. At the same time, Via de Cristo seeks to accomplish its goals through a specific and highly structured program. These are stated clearly in this manual. We sincerely believe this method bears much fruit and at the same time recognize the method’s limitations. Our aim is not to make Via de Cristo all things to all people, but to use this instrument as faithfully and as effectively as possible. It has been wisely said, “The more one understands the movement, the less inclined one is to change it.”

As for the three days, the spiritual director exercises a ministry of presence. They should therefore have all rollos, meditations, palanca, liturgies, etc., prepared in advance. These preparations free the spiritual director to be fully involved and sensitive to the dynamics of the weekend as well as the individual responses to these dynamics. Spiritual directors must be available at all times to and for the rector and team. They must be well equipped for ministry. The team must be aware of all the liturgies and songs so they might lead by example.

Availability to the participants is also of major importance. The spiritual director must at all times be open and accessible to the participants especially in times of need. Every attempt should be made to know every participant by name and establish contact with them individually throughout the weekend. This is not an attempt to push the participants in a particular direction, but to establish a pastoral presence and genuine friendship. The three days may be the first time many participants have been able to experience a pastor as friend.

Rector and Team Selection and Responsibilities

A. Selection of participants and training of team

- 1. Local secretariat:
 - a. Establish procedures and time schedules for weekend.
 - b. Establish guidelines for selecting and training of the rector and spiritual director
 - c. Establish guidelines for team selection and training, rollo room and support teams.
 - d. Establish guideline for participant selection.

2. Spiritual director selects the assistant spiritual directors.
 3. Rector selects the assistant rectors.
 4. Rector and assistant rectors
 - a. prayerfully select team members keeping the progression of the weekend in mind and the opportunity to prepare new leaders.
 - b. divide duties and assign participants to table leaders.
 5. Rector plans and leads the team training
 - a. to provide 20-30 hours of team building and training
 - b. to focus team training on prayer, the covenant relationship and the progression of the weekend not to focus on frills or emotional extras.
- B. Provisions made available by the local secretariat**
1. To provide the team and its leaders with guidance/support.
 2. To provide printed materials and resources. These may include, but are not limited to:
 - a. List of team-eligible persons, their previous team experience and assignments.
 - b. Copy of the current locally-produced rector's manual.
 - c. Copy of the NLS Rector's Manual.
 - d. Copies of NLS approved rollo outlines and, if available, copies of locally-resented Rollos.
 - e. General inventory list of the local secretariat's physical resources, including: banners, songbooks, weekend supplies, worship material and all available physical supports and tools.
 3. To provide printed copies of local standards and guidelines. These may include, but are not limited to:
 - a. NLS recommendations, which include
 - (1) Lutheran rector and head spiritual director,
 - (2) Ecumenical weekend of participants and team
 - (3) Baptized Christian participants
 - (4) Team members have made their own weekend
 - b. Local guidelines
 - (1) Establish the denominational and experience ratios of the team
 - (2) Establish the numbers, ratios and qualifications of participants.
 - (3) Possible participant qualifications
 - (a) Waiting to attend if a person has experienced a major trauma; death or divorce of spouse, etc.
 - (b) Requiring a pastor's signature on the participant registration form.
 - (c) Requiring that husband and wife attend during a pair of weekends
- C. Expectations of team members**
1. To form a VdC team by developing a covenant relationship with God, team, and participants
 2. To commit to attend all training meetings, and the three-day weekend,
 3. To commit time and energy to preparing themselves:
 - a. To serve as one body, without individual recognition
 - b. To prepare spiritually, emotionally, and physically for the weekend
 - c. To pray for the participants and team before, during and after the weekend
 4. To commit to grouping and local ultreya
- D. Preparation of individual team members**
1. To pray
 2. To develop a servant attitude and become a servant

3. To participate in the eucharist as a part of team training
 4. To build team unity and acclimate new team members
 5. To review individual duties and affirm team responsibilities
 6. To train team members in their roles in table dynamics
 7. To teach how to write a rollo and its focus in the weekend
 8. To suggest techniques in the presentation of rollos
 9. To affirm/critique rollos of the team, laity and clergy
 10. To orient team to physical facilities, equipment and supplies at the weekend location
- E. Recognition of established dynamics for weekend
1. To present the dynamics of the Via de Cristo history
 2. To teach the progression of the daily theme in spirituality: God and me, Christ in me and thee, Christ through me in the community.
 3. To emphasize progression and interrelationship of the rollos: piety, study and action (using the three-legged stool)
 4. To stress the progression and importance of the eucharist.
 5. To focus on prayer support before, during and after the weekend.
- F. Progression of the music selections
1. To progress: adoration, confession, thanksgiving, from fun to joy, worship to praise, belief to commitment
 2. To emphasize the progression through selecting music
- G. Progression with support team and community
1. Thursday and Friday out of sight, invisible servant
 2. Saturday and Sunday progress from a few to a multitude
 3. Post weekend visible servant

A rector for our weekends should be given at least forty (40) weeks to prepare. This would mean that approximately one year before the weekend a rector will serve, the rector selection process should begin. Many movements use a rector selection committee that includes at least the lay director, the spiritual director, and a leader's coordinator (and leaders committee if one exists). When they meet they will select three (3) individuals as nominees for the rector position.

The following qualifications should be considered:

- 1) Active in their own church.
- 2) Have served in several varied positions on weekends and have given a rollo
- 3) Active in a reunion group
- 4) Active in ultreyas, send-offs, clausura, and in other ways demonstrate leadership in Via de Cristo
- 5) Member of a Lutheran church

The nominees will be ranked, either by the selection committee or by the secretariat. The chair of the selection committee will then contact the nominees, in order, as soon as possible after the ranking. A short time can be allowed for the nominee to consider prayerfully the calling. In the event that all three nominees decline, the selection committee will meet again to provide more nominees.

The rector designate should serve on an upcoming team no less than twenty-six (26) weeks before her weekend, preferably giving a rollo. The rector of this service team must be notified as soon as possible so that allowances can be made. The rector designate should not be revealed until after she has served this team and had the opportunity to poll the community for her team participants. This will allow both rectors the freedom to operate with a minimum of conflict.

Rectors will meet with the leader's coordinator approximately twenty (20) weeks prior to her weekend to receive instructions and all training materials necessary for the weekend. All rectors are invited to secretariat meetings to allow communication and assistance between team and secretariat. Here are some suggested general policies:

- Secretariat treasurer will make arrangements with the rector for cash or reimbursement for expenses: printing, postage, telephone, etc.
- Team members will usually cover expenses for travel, team training, meals, weekend expenses etc. as part of their palanca.
- No additions or deletions of training materials, scripts, and schedules should be made; of course, some rearranging, particularly of schedules, is understandable, but the essential's of the method are to be followed to the letter.
- Rectors will decide whether the team training will occur on weekday, or weekend basis, as long as the twenty (20) hours of team training is respected.
- Rectors will decide whether they will have an overnight meeting.
- Kitchen training materials, sample menus, facility information, food procurement information, server information and instructions, etc. need to be shared.
- General team training materials and specific training for professors and servant teams will be available.
- Suggested music and/or songbooks are made available; we respect all copyright and reproduction laws.

Suggested policies for team selection:

- The spiritual director for the secretariat will select the spiritual director for the weekend and notify the rectors.
- The rector will select her own assistant (head cha) but help will be made available from the secretariat on request; it is best if both live closely to one another for convenience of special meetings.
- Approximately one half the team should be experienced, having served on previous weekends. Approximately half should be first timers in order to build experience.
- We encourage a rector to have her group reunion serving on the team.
- Other than group reunion, team members should only be asked to serve one team per year.
- No more than 8 from the rector's home church.
- The rector should try to get team members from the whole geographic area the community covers, with as many churches represented as realistically possible.
- Except in rare, compelling situations, no one should serve in the same position twice, or give the same rollo a second time.
- It is best if there is a growth progression among the servants serving on the weekends, so our most experienced people are in the most critical areas. Of course, gifts will play significantly in these decisions.
- Team members should, if at all possible, be selected from the trained leadership (see Ch 6).
- Team members should be in group reunions, actively involved in their churches, and supporting Via de Cristo activities.
- Speakers (professors) are selected because their lives illustrate their talks; a Piety speaker has committed her whole life to Christ, a Study rollista has a strong study program, the Apostolic Action speaker is actively involved in changing her environment, etc.
- The strongest speakers should give Sunday's rollos, because they reinforce the fourth day.
- If assistance with training is needed, contact the secretariat or its lay director.

Policies for the weekend

- Jobs on the weekend should not be rotated. However, there needs to be cross training with all team members ready to assist in any area that needs help.
- Community participation is encouraged, but the liaison on the team should coordinate and schedule this to avoid confusion.
- Any adiaphorus activity may be eliminated at any time due to schedule restraints.
- Bell stealing is discouraged because it pulls the focus away from the participants, we are here for the participants only.

Suggested Team Positions

Table team (professors) —9 (8 if only 14 talks, Rector gives the additional rollo)

Silent professors - enough to have two team members at each table

Support staff (chas/palanca teams) - main meeting room (rollo room) - 4 to 6

Music — 2(may serve as rollo room cha also)

Chapel - 2

Palanca - 2

Utility/facility - 2

Kitchen - 3 to 4

Servers - 4 to 6 (based on seating arrangements and total number being served).

Community action coordinator - 1 (coordinates food donations and other community volunteers)

These team members may be altered according to specific needs of weekend facility; but, all changes need to be planned with the secretariat. Whenever any of these policies appear impossible, discuss it with the lay director. If this can not be done or no clear answer is forthcoming, use common sense. Ask yourself, a) is it good for the participants? And b) does it glorify God? The correct procedure will usually be obvious now, if not, don't worry about it. Make a choice and go with it. Remember Romans 8:28; and Martin Luther's advice to his friend Melancthon when he worried about what to do, "Sin Boldly, and trust in Christ even more."

The following are our suggestions for effective team training. All true guidance comes from the Lord. It is his weekend and we seek his direction in every area. We work as if everything depends on us, and pray as if everything depends on God. Some times our minds are completely oblivious to the Spirit's action, but as we are faithful he does answer our prayer.

Careful planning, a good schedule, and good communication with the team does much to assure prompt and serious participation from everyone. Your first contact with a potential team member does much to set the tone for the weekend. The very first thing to request, after a person accepts the call, is Palanca for the team, participants, and weekend.

Here are some possible schedules:

- 10 meetings, 2 hour each.
- 5 meetings, 4.5 hours each.
- 1 overnight, 2 hours in the evening, 4 hours the next day, and 3 more meetings of 5.5 hours each.

The longer the meeting time, the more breaks that will be needed. On the other hand people who travel far deserve consideration. All meetings should not conflict with congregational or church year activities. At least one meeting should be conducted at the weekend site so the team can understand the facility's layout.

Twenty hours is considered the minimum training time for the team. We must develop a clear understanding of the material and have a community spirit developing. In truth, this is

surprisingly easy if the schedules are clear, and the meetings challenge, support, and show consideration for the team member.

Team training agendas are essential. Each meeting must be planned and efficiently conducted. All necessary training must be placed in the schedule. Here are some helpful suggestions for the schedule:

- All meetings start and end as scheduled.
- All team members will participate in the openings, closings, general training sessions, critiques, communion, altar visits, prayers, etc.
- Communion for the first and last meetings.
- A minimum of 4 hours specialized training with the kitchen crew, palanca teams and/or chas. A better guide might be: “whatever it takes” for rector and servant teams to be confident, 6 hr, 10 hr, whatever it takes.
- Rollos should be critiqued in sequence if at all possible. Chapel palanca is not necessary for this presentation; but, as much as possible, the whole team should hear each talk. Be sure critiquing process is carefully explained before beginning.
- Spiritual director and/or assistants should also be given time to speak in addition to their rollo(s). They may be asked to present their rollos if there is time. If not, they need to present a summary of the rollo content. They may also be asked to cover the meaning of palanca, team spirituality, conduct, discipline, servanthood, etc.
- Assign team members, with plenty of prior knowledge, to participate with opening or closing prayers, meditations, assist in communion, reading palanca letters, etc.
- There should always be time for questions and discussion prior to closing each meeting. It is desired, as much as possible, that questions be answered before they are forgotten.

Music on the weekend

Music is a powerful dynamic of the Via de Cristo weekend. It is much more than a time filler or tension reliever. As has been well said by another, “Music hath power to soothe the savage breast.” Note the strategic placement of music for the weekend:

- in the chapel, of course, but also before rollos (in some movements),
- singing before we eat, and the powerful community serenade (in some movements),
- awakened for our third day by singing,
- welcomed into the community at clausura by singing.

All music selected should heighten and enrich the Via de Cristo experience. It should punctuate the progression of each day and sum up the entire weekend. We are gently wooed to Jesus through the progression of the weekend, and the music should match where we are at any particular point. Please remember, Jesus may choose a song to be the moment of first introduction of himself to the participant; it often happens that way. Our music must pace itself with the weekend material.

The primary quality sought in a music leader is enthusiasm and relative comfort in leading the singing. Playing an instrument is not a requirement. Actually, in group singing, the instrument is to introduce the pitch or first note and to provide the rhythm. If a music leader feels comfortable in her ability to hit pitch and set the rhythm, that is all that is necessary. There is certainly no need for professional-level talent. With the team also familiar with the songs (because of the team training) the music leader will have plenty of help. Although a guitar or banjo is often used, any instrument is acceptable, such as a piano or a keyboard, for example.

Before the weekend the rector and music leader should decide what songs will be sung during the weekend and a general idea as to when. Since many of the songs will be new to the

participants, they need to be repeated several times through the weekend. The better the participants know a song, the more likely they will be to get into the song and the greater probability that it can speak to them. So, 10 to 15 songs is the maximum for a weekend. If there is a serenade, and the songs are already familiar to the participants, the change in voices can be particularly effective. Before a serenade the rector should confer with the serenade coordinator. During the weekend do not solicit requests from the participants, it is too easy to disrupt the dynamic this way; nothing worse than a rousing chorus of “Roll Out the Barrel” after “Surely the Presence.”

The character of each day is important in song selection. Thursday Night we want “getting together” type songs which most people are familiar with and which are social in nature. These songs will assist the participants in relaxing; good secular songs are appropriate. On Friday the theme of the day is the ideal of Christians living a life of grace. It is low key, with songs which encourage community and are easy to teach.

The theme of Saturday is the grace filled life made possible by the love and character of Jesus. So, songs about grace, Jesus and his character are appropriate. Saturday is also the time for emotionally charged songs, and there is time for teaching songs. Sunday’s theme is the participant’s presence in the world and their relationship to others. Songs of this day bring the world back in; they should be positive, and bring the participants to the great challenge before them. Songs about the Holy Spirit, consecration, perseverance and holiness fit well into the theme.

Always consult with the spiritual director who is presiding at worship about songs for worship. Instrumental accompaniment is at a minimum during chapel. Singing during prayer palanca is discouraged unless carefully chosen because this is a time for prayer — constant prayer! At no time should any copyright law be violated by a Via de Cristo associate; the law is very specific and we will not break the law. If a special song occurs to a rector during the weekend, of course feel free to add it. More often than not it is Spirit inspired and God always knows what God is doing.

Chapter 9

Fourth Day or Post-Weekend

The general term we use to refer to post-weekend Christian living is “Fourth Day.” A Christian living in our secular world faces many difficulties. Our society is not conditioned to Christian community and no matter how well-intentioned and devoted a person might be, it will always be difficult living out the Christian faith without the help, support and contact of other Christians. The work of Via de Cristo is helping Christians to become effective apostles and grow as saints.

The Fourth Day is to be lived with a clear and constant vision for the evangelization of the world. Each participant must recognize the role asked of them, and the dire need for them to fulfill it. We most clearly see the fruit of Via de Cristo in the post-weekend. Sadly, this is also where we experience most disappointments and difficulties. Some Participants attempt to live on, depending only on the memory of their powerful weekend, and eventually loose touch with our community and the encouragement this community provides. Also, because of our specific and detailed method, some think the method is sufficient by itself and try to function outside a church. Worse still, some become cliquish and offensive to other Christians within a church. Virtually any group or ministry can facilitate growth or retard it. There is possibility and peril in every religious activity. The Via de Cristo method has much to offer the individual and the Church; however, it must avoid the many pitfalls. All movements are very susceptible to a pattern of thought that tolerates nothing except narrow and self-protective opinions formed by the group. If any group refuses to be under the discipline of a more expansive and wise perspective they are in danger of isolation, tyranny and/or authoritarianism.

Because Via de Cristo is a movement of the Church, we are nurtured in the Church. We avail ourselves of word and sacrament. We submit to Church discipline and open ourselves to law and gospel through the Church. Our piety is always oriented to Christ through the Church. As an analogy, consider the moonlight. At night, a person sees light from the moon, which gets its true light as it faces and reflects the sun. Via de Cristo is much like the moon in that it is dependent on the Church as God’s chosen instrument for bring the gospel to the world. The Church offers needed discipline and wise perspective.

Our society is not Christian, perhaps not even within some churches. An isolated Christian is a paralyzed Christian. Without support she will become a “back-sliding” Christian, or even agnostic. We can never be satisfied just offering the powerful conversion experience of the weekend. As a part of the Church of Jesus Christ the Via de Cristo offers a method of perseverance in the Lord Jesus Christ. We believe that small friendship/accountability groups are building blocks for vital Christian community and for perseverance in the Christian life. We also see the need for a larger experience that will renew the vitality of the small group. The Church is our primary source of grace, but in our method we also offer an additional large group Via de Cristo experience we call Ultreya (‘persevere’), where we review, stimulate and inspire to apostolic action. Here the participants are supported and encouraged in our method, so that, the apostolic life may overflow into their surroundings, and transform them according to the gospel. Once more we say our desire is to Christianize, not make Via de Cristo alumni.

Fourth Day then, implies evangelization to us, and we encourage three activities to make fourth day living powerful. First is the use of small groups. Second is the encouragement from larger gatherings we call ultreyas. The third we refer to as spiritual direction.

Role of small groups

Groups are a human need. Persons within society have formed groups for mutual protection, education, support, and entertainment. Groups are also a Christian need; however, we wish our groups to be a Christianizing influence. The Church is the very essence of community. This essence flows from the Trinity and the communion of saints. A small group is the smallest unit in which community is formed. Jesus had a small group of intimate friends that he depended on in difficult times (*Mark 14:33*). When we read the gospels carefully, we see that this small group, which included Peter, James and John, was significant to Jesus throughout his earthly ministry. He also had the group of twelve disciples, the group of seventy, and then the one hundred and twenty. Jesus paired his disciples when he sent them into the world.

Rugged individualism in American society encourages us to go it alone. It encourages us to hide our weaknesses and failures, to be ashamed of limitations. Rugged individualism isolates us relentlessly, and makes genuine community almost impossible. It seems contradictory to our human mind that we are created both unique and, at the same time, as social creatures that desperately need each other for meaning in our lives. We are called to develop as individuals, yet, we are weak and imperfect creatures needing each other. Though seemingly impossible to our natural mind, in the power of Christian community, both can be honored.

There is a great deal that can be said about the small group process; we will shotgun some key principles and then focus on the Via de Cristo method.

We can learn things much easier as part of a group; certainly easier than by trying to “go it alone.” It is important to get people away from bad environments, and even more important to provide an environment where it is possible to live as a Christian. If people are Christian, but can never talk about it and live it, then their environment doesn’t contribute at all to their faith and could eventually provide enough pressure to eliminate it. Within a Christian friendship/accountability group, we can nurture faith by talking about our behavior in the other environments and encourage Christian action.

The most direct natural source of vitality in any group is a purpose and the commitment of the members to that purpose. Proclaiming a clear mission is one of the most effective ways of articulating a purpose, forming a community environment, and maintaining its strength.

A community that has a true unity with Christ is an organism that grows naturally. This community cannot be legislated but allowed to change and grow naturally.

All small groups need to be part of a larger community. A small group on its own tends to stagnate. A larger community provides balance, stimulation and breadth. If a small group is part of a larger community it is always possible to regroup or find support from outside as well as inside; there is no need for excessive demands on the members of the small group.

Just like a beautiful tapestry, Christian community must be planned, elements acquired, and then woven. Always the source is the Holy Spirit; like the three-day weekend it is the humble effort of people fully dependent on Christ. True community is inclusive. That is to say members are always reaching out to extend themselves. There is commitment to community.

Expectations for groups can sometimes be too high, striving to find the “perfect” group. If we keep in mind that sin and dysfunction are common to all, we might not be so shocked or disabled by troubles in group selection and group action. Too many people bail out too early. We need to commit, to hang in there when the going gets tough. We also know that obtaining a community life once does not necessarily make it permanent. In community, we do have faith that any

problems the group experiences can be found and healed. We can transcend our differences and weave them into the final fabric. Indeed, we welcome differences and view them as gifts to the group. They are the color and variety in the tapestry. In humility, we appreciate another's gifts and learn to appreciate our own limitations.

The group operates by consensus. Unfortunately, many people will depend on a dictator to tell them what to do, rather than do the work necessary to find consensus. Real community does not exist if we are dependent on someone to lecture us or carry our load. Each member has no more and no less responsibility for the success of our work together. Most groups at first choose a dictator, then become a democracy, but finally settle into decision by consensus. Then every person, guided by and yielded to the Holy Spirit, makes contributions according to the person's individual gifts.

Please do not misunderstand; every group needs leadership. This does not mean that every group needs only one dominant leader. A good group needs leadership, whether from one or from many. Leadership is not learned through a book. We learn with practice. It is caught, not taught. The leadership talent comes through modeling and coaching; through experience, trial, error, correction, and continuing practice. Leaders can recognize the temptations and seductions of small group power. Leaders must have resources, either in or out of the group to help them deal with their own dark side. They must develop skill to move the group out of negative behaviors. The Holy Spirit will provide every gift necessary for healthy group dynamics.

The world sees leadership as power. Jesus sees leadership as service. Service does not mean slavery. The difference is like night and day, and until one fully grasps the difference this person cannot truly understand leadership. The slave lives in fear, dominated by shoulds, by law. The servant is free in love and operates from grace, from gospel.

In the group we create a safe place. In safety there is healing, support and continued growth. Whenever a person feels safe there is freedom for healing and growth. In the group, we confess our brokenness to one another. We receive absolution from one another. In this small group community, we are willingly vulnerable to one another. We realize no healing will occur for another without our being willing to hurt. Jesus is the most vulnerable person to ever live. The Christian motto is "in weakness, there is strength," (*2 Corinthians 12:9*); so, the greatest gift we can give each other is our woundedness. The Spirit of peace then enters the community in an almost tangible way. The Spirit's visitation is not accidental or unpredictable because we have done this work to prepare the Spirit room.

Finally, the most essential dynamic for communication in the group is emptiness; this is created by genuine repentance. The more we grow, the greater is our capacity to be empty. Members remove the expectations, the preconceptions, the prejudices, the solutions, the need to heal, convert, fix, solve, or control. Each time community is lost we can be sure it is time to re-empty ourselves, repent, and be filled with the Holy Spirit. Life in community can then go deeper to the joy of God, then to the love of God, and ultimately to the glory of God.

Group Reunion

Group Reunion means simply "group meeting." The word for meeting in Spanish is "reunion." A healthy group reunion will incorporate most of the above principles, but be patient, it cannot happen overnight. Perhaps you are saying to yourself that you already are doing group reunions, but never called them that. We would not argue. Small groups are a part of faith history throughout the Bible. Within Via de Cristo, we simply add some special ideas and methods that help us focus on our unique reason for being, and by grace discipline ourselves in doing good works.

Here are the primary disciplines of the method:

- the group meets weekly at a mutually convenient location
- it is a primary commitment for its members
- the members use the Service Card that was distributed on the weekend. The format includes the Prayer to the Holy Spirit, round-the-group sharing, and touches on piety, close moments to Christ, study, and action.
- the members tell how they are planning apostolic action, what they have done and will do to bring another person closer to Jesus Christ - this could be at home, work, church, or any other environment
- the members report how last week's plan fared, holding one another accountable for planning and executing apostolic action
- they pray daily for one another and then lift up the detailed plans they have discussed together

When we say that the group is primary, we intend to imply that there is very little that will interfere with a participant attending the group reunion. When Jesus speaks to us about the kingdom of God (Matthew, chapters.5-7), clearly, to him there is nothing more important than service in the kingdom of God. Please also understand it is not necessary for someone to make a three-day weekend in order to participate in a group reunion. Anyone, who is willing to use the ideals of friendship and accountability as means to being better witnesses for Christ, should be welcome.

A group reunion may go on for years and years, growing in friendship with Jesus and one another. Another group may need to change after a shorter period of time. Perhaps members move away or, after trying the method for a time, the group may lose its affinity for one another and decide together to change. In some cases clearly a group is "right" for a period of time then, due to changing situations, needs to be changed. This is not failure; it is change, and change is part of how God made this world. It is wise to begin each group as if it will be forever. Be faithful in friendship to those in your group, knowing that only God knows what is the right life-span for each group reunion.

If there are 2 to 5 people in your group, and all share briefly in each category, it should take no more than forty-five minutes, or a lunch hour. Of course more time may be desirable to the members, but the point is that it need not be an overwhelming time commitment. Group reunion is an essential and valuable part of the Via de Cristo method and must not be neglected. Those of us who have invested ourselves generously in group reunion can testify that God has honored the commitment by increasing faith, hope, and love. He sends us into our daily lives with renewed courage and desire to bring the world to Jesus Christ.

It should now be clear why group reunion is prerequisite to team service.

Ultreya

"Ultreya! Keep going!" Pilgrims on the steep road to the Shrine of St. James at Compostela shouted this to each other. This name was chosen for our larger group meetings, because here we challenge each other to "keep going" on our journey to a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ and our service to him.

The simplest description of the ultreya is a meeting of group reunions. Here we witness together to the life in grace and the life transforming changes all over our area. While the primary group reunion is weekly, the ultreya will not occur as frequently. Some meet as little as quarterly, others as often as monthly. In larger movements it is good to have several ultreya locations with the meetings staggered so that one will be available somewhere in the secretariat on a weekly basis. At the ultreya you will reaffirm friendships you made on your weekend, or

weekends should you have been called to serve on a team. You will also make many new friends and receive encouragement and support. But, the time is intended primarily to provide cross-fertilization so that groups do not become ingrown and stagnant. The best ultreya is not one having a stirring lecture or one praising the work of Via de Cristo, but, it is one in which participants are inspired to their own works of love. This should never be a contrived “ain’t it wonderful” time, but honest sharing of closest moments and apostolic successes. This will include mutual support for the felt apostolic failures as well. Simplicity should be the rule of thumb in conducting ultreyas! It is habitual without being mechanical; short but intense; simple but not without substance.

The size of an ultreya may vary from just a few, to hundreds of participants. It is normally best to have 70 to 80 participants. This seems to optimize Christ-centered participation and is a manageable size for most church facilities. It is necessary to have a large enough room for all to meet together, with some smaller rooms to allow breaking down into smaller group meetings. It is especially helpful if there are no other activities going on at the same time that might break the participants’ concentration.

Originally, the ultreya included sharing a meal to “break bread together.” If this is done it is not to be a formal dinner, but more like a fast-food stop or quick pot-luck. The ultreya need never be more than an hour to an hour and a half, including the meal or snack. It is informal, but will always follow the same pattern. People should be encouraged to drop in and not worry if they need to leave early.

Here is a sample schedule:

- 7:00 pm - Ultreya leaders meet to set up the room. There needs to be adequate seating for the expected number of participants and facilities for food preparation and serving. Following set up the leaders meet for a half-hour in their own group reunion to pray for the ultreya, study its aspects, and plan to build a quality ultreya program. In some places people plan to hold their group reunion during this time period prior to the ultreya. As people arrive, they are guided into small groups with leaders and veteran participants interspersed among the newer participants. Latecomers are placed here and there. Singing as people arrive may help warm the atmosphere.
- 8:00 pm - One of the leaders opens the ultreya with a prayer. People at each table give their name, church, weekend and table to this floating group reunion. Begin with the Holy Spirit prayer. Each person is encouraged to share one closest moment to Christ, and some insights on one area of piety, study and action. The purpose for floating reunion is to promote contact with as many different people and backgrounds as possible. Often it is in this floating group that people find others with whom to form permanent groups. During this time the spiritual director is available for counsel, especially for those who need help in finding personal spiritual directors.
- 8:25 pm - The leader gives a five minute warning so any that have not spoken may have opportunity to do so.
- 8:30 pm - A ten-minute lay witness or fourth day talk is given (see the guideline).
- 8:40 pm - Two or three participants from different backgrounds respond and critique the message, relating it to their own lives. They show how similar action for Christ has been possible in their own lives.
- 8:50 pm - A five to ten minute reflection on the same theme by the spiritual director tying the sharing into specific gospel lessons. This is the teaching phase of the ultreya and

helps the participant center her life in Jesus Christ. Participants should always gain one clear thought that encourages their daily walk with Jesus Christ.

9:00 pm - An informal prayer time, announcements and fellowship. Do not encourage individuals to stay too long. We want everyone to know that when necessary they can leave, but also that time together is necessary for their life in Christ.

Guidelines for ultreya speakers

The talk should be ten minutes; it may be shorter but never longer! It is:

1. about Jesus Christ - how you live with Jesus as a part of your life and how you share him with others. The purpose of this talk is not to tell others what to do but to share how much you love Jesus and how in loving him you try to bring all that he loves closer to him through the ordinary circumstances of your life.
2. about a recent experience - how through piety, study, and action you are trying to bring others to Jesus in the normal flow of your life. The experience should have been within six weeks of your talk. Pick one or two points and build around them.
3. concrete and practical - make your talk vivid by telling who, where, how, when, as you carried out your planned action. Tell what happened as a result - was it a success or failure and your conclusions.

Do not feel unworthy to give this talk! All Christians have failures, but we do have successes, too. We all have moments in our lives that can be shared to lift our friends. That is what you will share. The talk should not be: flashy - a sensational production number, a sermon, a Bible teaching. It should not be too emotional - others will be affected by a sincere talk on Christian action. The focus is on Jesus in your life!

Questions you may wish to ask yourself: Does this talk show that Christ is in my life? Will it show how much I want to follow him? Does Jesus Christ hold the most important place in the talk? Will this talk help others think of things they might do to share Christ in their home, play, work, and church?

How should I prepare for this talk? Do palanca! Pray for wisdom, inspiration and guidance. It is better to make one point clearly and illustrate it well with one story than to overload the talk; the simpler the better. Speak clearly, slowly, informally; you are simply sharing with friends. Give the theme of your talk to the spiritual advisor for the ultreya to assist in preparation for that part of the ultreya. Do this several days before the ultreya along with any scripture you plan on incorporating.

Response, or, Critiquing Speakers

These speakers take two minutes each and may be chosen either before hand or volunteers may be requested after the speaker. Their response should be spontaneous and related to the theme of the talk. It is best if these speakers are from a different profession and life situation than the witness speaker. This gives a further dimension to living the principle in individual lives in differing environments.

Spiritual Director

There certainly is no experience that cannot be related to scripture. The spiritual director will pull the shared experiences together and link them to the gospel. Even though the spiritual director knows the theme ahead of time this should not be a written response. The more conversational the talk, the better it will be. The speaker is asked to give the theme of her talk to the director ahead of time for basic research, but it is better to hear all the speakers out and then

respond from the reservoir of scriptural knowledge. This is the time that the participants are taught clearly how the gospel applies to daily living.

Spiritual Direction

Authors William A. Barry and William J. Connolly in *The Practice of Spiritual Direction* offer this widely-accepted definition: Spiritual Direction is “help given by one Christian to another that enables that person to pay attention to God’s personal communication to him or her, to respond to this personally communicating God and to live out the consequences of the relationship.”

Spiritual direction is an important part of the fourth day. It pairs a participant with a person mature in spiritual wisdom and experience. Always the true spiritual director is the Holy Spirit, while the human director serves more as an experienced interpreter, encourager or guide. This pairing serves to direct the growing Christian into a deeper relationship with her Lord and protect her from the ever present self-deception.

A person who is committed to seeking holiness and wholeness in union with God can obtain this only through the Holy Spirit. Individual study of scripture, prayer, theology, spiritual disciplines, etc., is all very good. Ordinarily though, this should not be attempted alone, because we so easily fool ourselves. As the old schools of philosophy taught, “A person who is master to himself is master to a fool.” Persons by themselves are so often side tracked, stalled, or deceived. Further, the difficulty is rarely that an individual does not have resources available, but that she does not have clear direction as to what to use first and what might be most effective for her at this time. Then there is also the danger we all face when we become comfortable with familiar ideas. We fail to venture into areas of spiritual life that are difficult or intimidating. Spiritual direction is intended to provide the means to grow beyond the comfortable and familiar into the fullness of the life of grace.

The spiritual director will encourage several disciplines. One of the first will be to help a participant learn to listen in prayer. This may include entering imaginatively into the life of Jesus and be present as a gospel story unfolds. This is similar to the meditations given on the weekend. Listening prayer also serves to get us in touch with sin similar to our examination of conscience. Often with a director’s help the participant receives clarification of God’s personal calling to them.

Another work of the spiritual director is to remind the participant of the importance of acting on God’s word. As Christians, we too easily get caught up on the inward journey, and the pray-er disengages from the world. With good spiritual direction from both the group reunion and the spiritual director, people feel the Holy Spirit prodding them to accept new challenges, and enter the fray as Jesus does. Whenever someone acts on what she perceives as God’s call to ministry, the experience is set apart from other paths of knowledge as truly Christian. Through the authentic daily Christian life we come to know God not as the great fixer, but as the great lover who will walk with us on life’s journey.

It is important for us to distinguish spiritual direction from other models of counseling. Pastoral counseling, like psychological counseling, deals with a conscious conflict and seeks relief or remediation. It helps a person see the potential for growth in her problems. Spiritual counseling has to do with a person who has a specific area of concern and/or sin and needs specific advice to deal with this situation. It often involves private confession and absolution with a subsequent amendment of life. Spiritual direction is focused on growth. There will be times when pastoral and spiritual counseling will be a part of spiritual direction, but this is to assist the primary agenda of growing. A good spiritual director will have a good understanding of what the human soul goes through in its journey to God.

Spiritual direction will involve counseling the directee on his experiences in prayer, the highs and lows, the fruitful places and the arid places; and provide insight into that experience. The method is usually conversational with absolute honesty and openness. The goal is to assist the directee in changing thought and behavior to conform to the gospel. The director will usually assign a series of exercises in a rule of life discipline. These exercises establish a rhythm in daily life leading us to piety, study and action and assist us in seeing holiness in ordinary actions. The final goal is to know Jesus Christ as a part of all of life.

There is a very appropriate analogy between physical growth and spiritual growth. In each a balanced diet is necessary. In each, there needs to be a willingness to ingest and digest the food for it to do its work. Spiritual food represented in our acts of piety must be entered into wholeheartedly. Like all growth, spiritual growth is a process of unfolding. I grow into an understanding of my place as a child of God and my future in heaven. As we said in the introduction to this manual, Christianity is a ministry of revelation, from God, in God's time, at God's direction. We believe he uses spiritual direction as a very effective tool in this process.

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Glossary

of

Via de Cristo Terms

Via de Cristo continues the tradition of the Cursillo[®] movement of the Church that began in Spain. Many terms used in Via de Cristo, therefore, have a Spanish origin. Individual Via de Cristo communities have their own separate traditions and do not use all of these terms.

Abrazo [a bra zo]: an embrace or hug.

Acts of Piety: an outflow of our relationship (love) with God. They are actions that help us to direct our whole life to God.

Actual Grace: see “Grace in Action.”

Agape Dinner: a special dinner served to the new cursillistas usually on Saturday of the three day weekend. Some communities serve a late evening snack with beverages called the Agape Feast. Another tradition has the participants serve each other.

Apostolic Action: any action undertaken for the specific purpose of improving a situation or helping others to grow and strengthen their faith in Christ. It involves setting a Christian example, witnessing, sharing, encouraging and supporting. The Via de Cristo phrase “make a friend, be a friend and bring your friend to Christ” is normally seen as one way of apostolic action. However, it can be any action which improves an environment, the customs, the way people relate to each other, etc., in order to make them more in line with the gospel, is also an apostolic action. Apostolic Action is **one** of **three facets** of a Christian’s life. The others are Piety and Study.

Arise: a psalm set to music by Father Gelineau, sung to usher in a speaker as well as awaken candidates on Sunday morning.

Assistant: a table group leader on the three day weekend. See Group Leader.

Assistant Rector: a person who assists the rector.

Associate Professor: a table group discussion leader on the three day weekend. See Professor.

Auxiliary: a group leader on the three day weekend. See Group Leader.

Candidate: see Participant.

Celebration: see ultreya.

Cha, Chacha, Chacho [cha, **chah** chah, **chah** choh]: Spanish for “tea,” “maid” and “lad,” respectively. Refers to members of the servant team, palanca team, kitchen team or Fourth Day Team serving inside and outside the Rollo Room.

Chapel Rector: the servant team lay person in charge of the chapel where the servant team worships and prays with and for each speaker prior to each talk, and for the candidates and other prayer concerns.

Clausura [clau sure ah]: Spanish for “closure.” In the Via de Cristo three day weekend, it is a service which the new weekend participants meet with the fourth day community to reaffirm their baptismal vows and recommit themselves to the Christian life. It is also called Closing.

Closing: see Clausura.

Conference Room: where the talks are presented on the three day weekend. It is usually called the Rollo Room after Thursday evening.

Convener: the lay leader of the governing organization within a Via de Cristo community. Some call this person the Lay Director or President.

Council: the governing board for a Via de Cristo community. Most communities use the term secretariat.

Cursillista [ker see yee sta]: Spanish for a “short course student.” A person who is attending or has attended a Via de Cristo three day weekend or cursillo. See Pilgrim.

Cursillista Table Leader: a group discussion leader during a Via de Cristo weekend. See Group Leader.

Cursillo [ker see yo]: Spanish for “short course.” Note that the capitalized word Cursillo[®] is registered in the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office by the (Roman Catholic) National Secretariat (of the Cursillo Movement), Dallas, Texas. Via de Cristo is the name of the Lutheran expression of the cursillo movement. The word cursillo is usually used as an adjective in English speaking Cursillo movements.

Cursillo de Cristiandad [ker see yo day crees tyahn dahd]: Spanish for “short course in Christianity.”

De Colores [day coe low race]: Spanish for “the colors.” De Colores is the title of a Spanish folk song used as a traditional song at Via de Cristo gatherings. The song reminds us of the colors and the glory of God’s creation and grace.

Decuria [day cure ee ah]: Spanish for “group of ten,” the small table group (usually less than ten) on a three day weekend. It is an adjective (sometimes a noun) for the summary and poster presentations on Friday and Saturday evenings on the three day weekend.

Dominant Professor: lead table professor.

Environment: refers to the people, ideas and relationships surrounding each person. It is also Rollo #11, the seventh lay rollo of the weekend.

Environmental Group Reunion: a reunion group of Christians who share an environment together, such as a place of work, a church, or a neighborhood.

Family: the group of candidates and team leaders assigned to a table in the rollo room for the entire weekend. Also called a decuria.

Fourth Day: the rest of one's life following the three day weekend.

Fourth Day Community: includes all who have attended a Via de Cristo or cursillo three day weekend.

Fourth Day Rector: leader of Fourth Day team which is responsible for greeting the Fourth Day Community on the weekend. Also responsible for equipment and facilities.

Fourth Dayers: members of the fourth day community.

Grace: God's unmerited love and protection bestowed freely and abundantly on humankind. Rollo #2, the first rollo by a spiritual director, is titled The Nature of God's Grace sometimes called "Habitual Grace" or simply "Grace."

Grace in Action: refers to an unearned specific act of loving intervention by God in a person's life, identifiable in time and place. This is Rollo #4, the second rollo by a spiritual director, also called "Actual Grace."

Group Leader: the leader of the small discussion group or decuria on a Via de Cristo weekend. Other terms are table leader and professor. There may be more than one leader in a group. A group leader may be a rollista or speaking professor. A group leader who does not give a rollo is a silent group leader, cursillista group leader, associate professor, support professor, auxiliary or assistant group leader.

Group Reunion: see Reunion.

Grouping: see Reunion.

Habitual Grace: see Grace.

Head Cha: leader of the servant team on the Via de Cristo weekend. See also Palanca Rector, Head Server, or Cha.

Head Cook: leader and head chef of the kitchen team. Also known as Kitchen Rector, or Kitchen Cha.

Head Server: leader of the servant team (see also Palanca Rector or Head Cha). May be the dining room leader.

Kitchen Cha: see Head Cook.

Kitchen Rector: see Head Cook.

Lay Director: the layperson who is the leader, convener or president of a governing organization or secretariat of a Via de Cristo community.

Leaders: in the Via de Cristo sense, all believers who, with the help of God, seek to change their lives, and, by the personal influence of their Christian lives, their environments.

Mañanitas [mahn yah nee tahs]: Spanish for “the early morning.” **Las Mañanitas** is the title of a Spanish folk song sung early in the morning to celebrate a birthday or other special occasion. Mañanitas is the name of the morning wake-up on the last day of the Via de Cristo three day weekend.

Means of Grace: the vehicles God uses to bring to humans his revealed will and saving love. Lutherans identify two means of Grace (1) the Word of God, and (2) the Sacraments (Baptism and Holy Communion).

Method: The process through which the movement is implemented, individually by believers living what is essential for being a Christian, and collectively in the reunions and ultreyas.

New Cursillista: a participant who is attending or has just completed a Via de Cristo three day weekend.

Non-Dominant Professor: Assists the Dominant Professor.

Palanca [pah lahnk ah]: a direct word from the Spanish, meaning “lever.” In the Via de Cristo, it means an outward expression of agape love through prayer and sacrifice which is offered to God in petition for grace, so that as apostles we may accomplish more than we would be capable of otherwise.

Palanca Rector: the head server, head cha or leader of the servant team or servant community on the Via de Cristo weekend.

Participant: a person who is attending a Via de Cristo weekend for the first time. Other terms include: new cursillista, weekender, candidate, pilgrim and guest.

Piety: the direction of one’s whole life to God. Piety, along with Apostolic Action and Study, is one of three facets of a Christian’s life.

Pilgrim: the name given to those attending a weekend. Also a name given to a person living out his/her faith in the Fourth Day.

Pilgrim’s Guide: a spiritual guide book used on most Via de Cristo weekends; may also be used as a Fourth Day devotional aid.

Post-Weekend: the perseverance part of the method, sometimes called the Fourth Day, where the group reunions and ultreyas are structured and offered to the participants for their growth and support.

President: see Convener or Lay Director.

Pre-Weekend: the phase of the movement that involves the studying of environments, the selection of candidates, and the preparation of candidates for the three-day Via de Cristo.

Professor: a table group discussion leader on the three day weekend.

Rector: a lay person who directs the activities on the three day weekend.

Renewal Group: see Reunion.

Reunion [reh oon yohn]: the weekly meeting of believers in a small group to share their week's experiences of piety, study, and apostolic action. Members of small groups support, encourage, and challenge each other to grow in faith and to evangelize their environments.

Reunion Group: see Reunion.

Rollo [roy oh]: a colloquial Spanish word meaning "bore." In the Via de Cristo, Rollo refers to the talks given on the three day weekend. It is a sharing rather than a lecture or preaching.

Rollo Room: the conference room on the three day weekend where the talks are presented.

Rollista [roy eest ah]: one who gives a rollo. Also called a speaking professor.

Sacristan: person in charge of the chapel on the three day weekend in some Via de Cristo communities.

Secretariat: the governing board for a Via de Cristo community. May be called a council.

Send-Off: in some communities, a prayer meeting of sponsors, candidates and team at a pre-determined location in which the candidates and team are sent off, usually in a bus, to the actual site of the three-day weekend. It is also a prayer of intercession of the Holy Spirit for the rollista before giving a rollo.

Serenade: on Saturday: when the Fourth Dayers bless the candidates with song at the Agape Dinner. On Sunday morning: when the Fourth Dayers awaken the candidates with song. On Sunday evening at the final mealtime, prior to the Clausura: when the Fourth Dayers and sponsors surprise the participants with song.

Servant Community: those who serve outside the rollo room on a three-day weekend. Also the Fourth Dayers who serve in their environments and who come in for the serenade and the Las Mañanitas on the three day weekend.

Servant Team: may be composed of several teams. One such team is a Palanca or Sacristan team responsible for piety and chapel services on the three day weekend. Others may be a kitchen team and/or a Fourth Day team responsible for equipment and facilities.

Service Sheet: a small wallet size card filled out on the three day weekend by the participant on which he/she makes commitments to active piety, study and action. The service sheet serves as a structure for the reunion group.

Speaker: a rollista or professor.

Spiritual Director: one who, through the help of the Holy Spirit, guides and helps other Christians to grow in faith in their spiritual journeys. Spiritual directors are ordained pastors. The head spiritual director is usually Lutheran.

Sponsor: a cursillista who accepts responsibility for sponsoring a participant. Responsibilities include helping and praying for a new cursillista before, during and after the three day weekend. After the weekend, the sponsor is important for helping the participant find a reunion group and participate in ultreyas.

Study: an action that helps the Christian grow in faith and understanding of God's plan. Study, along with Apostolic Action and Piety, is one of three facets of a Christian's life.

Table Cha: responsible for taking care of the needs of one table group on the three day weekend.

Table Group: a small group that meets at a table on the three day weekend. See Decuria.

Table Leader: the group leader of the small group or decuria on the three day weekend. See Group Leader.

Ultreya [ul tray ah]: Spanish term meaning persevere. A reunion of reunion groups and of those who are not currently in reunion groups. Its purpose is to give and receive encouragement for living out one's faith in the Fourth Day by having experienced Fourth Dayers tell how they evangelize their environments. May also be called a Celebration.

Via de Cristo [bee ah day cree stow]: a Spanish term meaning the way of Christ. Via de Cristo is the name of the Lutheran expression of the cursillo movement of the church. Used as a noun, it refers to the entire movement and organization of affiliated communities. Used as an adjective, it modifies nouns such as weekend, method, Fourth Day and other aspects of the ministry.

Weekender: see participant.

Sample Constitution

Preamble

The purpose of the _____ Secretariat is to foster and encourage renewal in the Christian faith in the Lutheran Church and in the larger world community by presenting the fullness of Christ's ministry by both the laity and clergy. The _____ Secretariat aims at bringing Christians to a fuller personal knowledge of and a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ and a deeper level of commitment to him and to spreading his word.

The _____ Secretariat accepts as our norm the content and method of the Via de Cristo as expressed in *The Essentials of the Via de Cristo* published by the National Lutheran Secretariat of Via de Cristo.

Via de Cristo provides a method which develops leaders and community in the Christian Church. This method uses meetings and groups of Christians who share their common life in Christ, their efforts to bring others to him and to make the world more Christ-like. Via de Cristo asks exactly what baptism and confirmation ask of us and provides a method to live out that commitment within the Church.

The Via de Cristo provides a method by which Christians transform the world for Christ our King. This method calls Christians to live their lives in union with Christ supported by regular reunion with other Christians. We accept as normative the Via de Cristo method of group reunion and ultreya, the three-day weekend of fifteen talks, and the call to Christians to be Christ's witnesses in the world. Our Constitution intends to safeguard the norms of the Via de Cristo movement. Via de Cristo is the Lutheran expression of the Cursillo[®] movement. We will be affiliated with The National Lutheran Secretariat as a means to be represented on matters of national interest and a means by which to effectively communicate with other structures within the Lutheran Church and with other organized bodies.

Therefore, we, the undersigned, and others associated with us, desire, for the sake of our common purposes, to band together into the _____ Secretariat.

Article 1- Name

1. The name of this organization shall be the _____ Secretariat.
2. The principal office address shall be as stated in the bylaws.
3. Other offices for the transaction of business may be located at such places as the Secretariat may from time to time determine.

Article 2 - Purpose

This _____ Secretariat is organized for the purposes of:

1. Supporting, strengthening and guiding the autonomous Christians affiliated with us so that the Church may more effectively Christianize its community; and
2. Assisting the affiliated Christians in developing other Christian leaders and their awareness of their responsibility to Christ, the local church, and the environment in which they live; and
3. Coordinating the flow of information and resources among the affiliated Christians; and
4. Encouraging the use of liturgy and rollo outlines which are in keeping with general Lutheran practice; and
5. Providing organization and direction for affiliated secretariats;
6. Expanding the Via de Cristo movement in the United States and throughout the world.

Article 3 - Meetings

1. The _____ Secretariat shall have at least one annual meeting, the date being set according to the bylaws.
2. Other meetings may be set according to the bylaws of the _____ Secretariat.
3. Affiliated Christians are encouraged to participate in the annual or any special meeting as stated in the bylaws.
4. A quorum of the affiliates shall be as stated in the bylaws.
5. All affiliated Christians shall be notified of the annual meeting at least three months (90 days) in advance of the annual meeting.

Article 4 - Membership

1. Membership in the corporation of the _____ Secretariat shall be open to any 4th Day Christian who wishes to be affiliated with the corporation and expresses their concurrence with the Constitution.
2. There shall be at least 15 delegates on the _____ Secretariat. These representatives shall be selected as stated in the bylaws.

Article 5 - Executive Committee

An Executive Committee composed of Spiritual Director, Lay Director, Secretary and Treasurer, shall be elected from among the delegates in attendance at an annual meeting and shall function as the Board of Directors for the _____ Secretariat as stated in the bylaws.

Article 6 - Committees

Standing or special committees may be designated by the president as necessary to assist the corporation to further its purposes. Their organization and purpose shall be as stated in the bylaws.

Article 7 - Records

The corporation shall keep correct and complete books and records of account and shall keep minutes of any meeting of its delegates or Executive Committee or committees. Such records shall be kept at the principal office of the corporation or place designated by the Executive Committee and shall be available for inspection by any person connected with the Secretariat. A yearly audit of the financial records shall be conducted and submitted at the annual meeting. Additional guidelines shall be stated in the bylaws.

Article 8 - Bylaws

The _____ Secretariat shall adopt such bylaws as may from time to time be necessary. No bylaw may conflict with this Constitution.

Article 9 - Amendments

1. Except as otherwise provided by law, the Constitution of the _____ Secretariat may be amended by the delegates at any meeting thereof.
2. A proposed amendment of this Constitution shall be submitted in writing to the Executive Committee at least three months (90 days) prior to the date of the annual meeting or any other legally called meeting to ensure time for review by the affiliated secretariats.

3. Any such amendment must be passed by two-thirds of the delegates at a legally constituted meeting. The approved amendment would then be sent to affiliated secretariats for formal ratification.
4. Formal ratification by two-thirds of all the recognized affiliated secretariats is required for the adopting of any amendment to the constitution. The time frame for such ratification shall be set by the members of the _____ Secretariat.
5. Except as otherwise provided by law, the bylaws of the _____ Secretariat may be amended or adopted at any legally called and conducted meeting of the _____ Secretariat by a two-thirds majority of the delegates present.

Sample Bylaws

Bylaw 1 - _____ Secretariat

1. The principal mailing address shall be _____.
2. Other offices for the transaction of business may be located at such places as the Executive Committee may from time to time determine.

Bylaw 2 - Communication

1. There shall be a Secretariat Newsletter to be published at least _____ times per year.
2. The Newsletter is to be sent to all members by the most efficient method available.

Bylaw 3 - Meetings

1. The annual meeting of the _____ Secretariat shall be held between (mo/day) and (mo/day) for the purpose of transacting such business as may come before the meeting, as well as the presentation of committee reports. The time of the meeting shall be set by directive of the Executive Committee.
2. Special meetings of the _____ Secretariat may be called by a majority vote of the Executive Committee or upon petition bearing authorized signatures of not less than twenty-five (25) percent of the delegates. The purpose of the special meeting must be stated in the petition. The notice of such meeting shall state the nature of the business to be transacted at the specially called meeting which shall be limited to the stated purpose.
3. The Executive Committee shall determine the place at which the annual meeting or special meetings will be held.
4. All meetings shall be conducted according to Robert's Rules of Order, latest edition. A parliamentarian may be appointed by the president for each meeting.

Bylaw 4 - Members

1. Membership of the _____ Secretariat shall be elected from the _____ Community being those who have attended a 3 day Weekend and have chosen to be active with the _____ Secretariat by attending the annual meeting.
2. The officers of the _____ Secretariat shall be elected for a term of two (2) years and shall hold office until their successors are duly elected. No officer shall be elected to more than two consecutive two (2) year terms for the same office. The terms of the officers shall be staggered, so one half of the officers be elected each year.
3. The spiritual director shall be an ordained and rostered Lutheran pastor and will give spiritual

direction and guidance to the National Lutheran Secretariat and to the Executive Committee and to any standing or special committees or task forces as requested.

(Please review Chapter 5 of the Essentials Manual of Via de Cristo to determine those positions who will serve on Secretariat)

Bylaw 5 - Committees

1. The chairpersons of standing and/or ad hoc committees shall be named by the president, with the consent of the Secretariat..
2. Any action taken by any standing or special committee designated by the president shall be subject to the approval of the Secretariat.
3. The standing committees may be one or more of the following:
 - A. Palanca
 - B. Leaders
 - C. Publications
 - D. Public Relations
 - E. Post Weekend
 - F. Newsletter
 - G. Operations and Finance
 - H. Supplies

Sample Rector's Script

These notes are from the Women's Rector's Schedule in Iowa and they are included right when spoken in the schedule.

Thursday

Rector's Preliminary Talk (in Iowa, presented Thursday evening after introductions): All of us on the team want to welcome you to the Via de Cristo. We have all been looking forward to this moment for many weeks, wanting to meet you and tell you how **HAPPY WE ARE THAT YOU ARE HERE!**

Those of us on the team rely greatly upon the Holy Spirit and his presence in our lives. (Put Holy Spirit Prayer on overhead, and turn on.) On the screen is a prayer entitled "Come, Holy Spirit." It will be used frequently this weekend. Please stand and pray with me.

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful, and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your spirit and they shall be created. And you shall renew the face of the earth.

O God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant that, by the same Holy Spirit, we may be truly wise and ever enjoy his consolations. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

We will use this prayer often during the next three days. Those in the Via de Cristo movement place a great deal of trust in the work of the Holy Spirit and feel strongly his presence in everything we do - and that includes all we do during the Via de Cristo.

My name is _____. My spouse's name is _____. We live in _____, and attend _____ Lutheran Church. We have (#) children (give names) and I work _____.

For the next three days I will be your Rector. That is a very formal-sounding title, but it simply means that for the time we are together, I will try to guide you through the weekend in a comfortable, joyful way.

My assistant Rectors are (give names). Our Spiritual Director is (give name). They are the reason I can stand here so calm. They will really be my extra hands, head, and feet for this weekend.

As we introduced ourselves you noticed that several among you mentioned that they were "on the Team." You may also have noticed that they are wearing different name tags. This Team, some of whom will give talks during the weekend, will also assist me in conducting the three days.

You are here to begin your introduction to the Via de Cristo (write it on the overhead). It is a Spanish term for "Way of Christ" (write it on the overhead). It is pronounced, "BEE - YA DAY CREES - TOE." What is a Via de Cristo? It is the Lutheran expression of a Cursillo®. The Cursillo® method is a gift to us from our brothers and sisters in the Roman Catholic Church of the Des Moines Diocese. Our Via de Cristo is in every way the same as a Cursillo®.

The Cursillo® originated in Spain in the late 1940's. When the Cursillo® Movement came to this country, we kept some of the Spanish words used in the original movement. Cursillo® is spelled CU-R-S-I-L-L-O (write it out on overhead).

To pronounce it properly, remember that two Ls in Spanish have a "Y" sound. So, it's not pronounced ker-SILL-o, but ker - SEE - YO (write it out phonetically on overhead transparency under syllables of word like so:

Cur - si - llo

Ker - see - yo.)

Actually that is an abbreviated title. The full Spanish title is Cursillo de Cristiandad, which translated means, “Short Course in Christian Living.” You might say that Cursillo® is a short course, a means for studying and focusing our attention in ways which help us in our daily living at home, in the congregation, at work and at play.

As I mentioned, the movement began in Spain. That was in 1949. In 1952 it spread to other Spanish communities in South America. By 1957 the movement had spread to the U.S., being introduced in Hispanic communities in Texas and Boston. Although the movement spread rapidly to non-hispanic communities through the use of interpreters, the materials were not actually translated into English until the early 1960s, about when the movement began in Iowa in the Roman Catholic Church’s Dubuque Diocese. The movement was introduced into the Des Moines Diocese in 1968 and a short time later some Lutheran pastors and laypeople attended one of those Cursillos.® They were impressed with their experience and resolved to tailor the Cursillo® for the Lutheran community of believers.

The first Lutheran Cursillo was held in the Iowa District ALC in November 1972. This weekend is number (). Transposed into numbers of people, that means literally thousands of people like yourselves have had the same thoughts you are having now as they listened to a Rector give a preliminary talk similar to this.

In coming here you have demonstrated confidence both in yourselves and in those who Christ used to contact you and encourage you to come. We now ask that you continue to have confidence in the Cursillo® and in those who will be working with you.

Open your mind and heart to the Via de Cristo. If you do this, it will fill your head with ideas and your heart with love.

Most of us have had the experience of a husband or friend coming home from a Via de Cristo weekend tired but happy. They are excited and bubbling with joy, but when you asked just what is so special about Via de Cristo, they don’t tell you anything you haven’t already heard, and sometimes end up saying, “Well, a Via de Cristo is hard to explain...” I have an idea that after this Sunday you may run into the same thing. A Via de Cristo really has to be lived to be understood.

For now, we would just ask you to put any pre-conceived ideas or expectations aside. Have complete trust in those around you and RELAX. Even though you may feel confused now and then, you will find that each day unfolds into the next, all according to a plan.

At least once each winter our family gets a jigsaw puzzle to put together. We search and fit and work on that puzzle until finally the last piece is in place and picture is complete and whole.

A Via de Cristo is kind of like that; many pieces, all different, but each in its own place. So please, take each day as it comes, enjoy the people and the things you share and, like the puzzle, everything will fall into place.

Each of you have come as a very special individual, each with different backgrounds and experiences, each with your own special gifts to offer to the weekend. Your reaction to the weekend will be just as unique and individual as are you.

One thing is certain: you will receive from Via de Cristo what God wants you to receive, so DO relax; accept each day as it comes, and enjoy yourself.

Since Via de Cristo is made up of the teachings of Christ, to really understand it, we need to be spiritually prepared to receive the full benefits. There will be many opportunities to receive the Sacrament of Holy Communion, as well as to make chapel visits, and to visit with our pastors. These things all help us to open our minds to the message of Jesus!

The effectiveness of this weekend depends on three things:

THE GRACE OF GOD

ORGANIZATION, and
YOUR COOPERATION.

The first contribution is from God — his grace. He makes it available to us through our reception of Holy Communion, by the prayers of ourselves and others, and by the sacrifice of people all over the country who are praying and sacrificing gladly right now just for the success of this particular weekend.

The second, ORGANIZATION, is OUR contribution. The planning and work for this weekend began back in (approximate time the Secretariat set the dates, etc.). The team began meeting together to prepare for this weekend in (date of first meeting of leaders). The work has been done willingly and joyfully by all those who are interested in your welfare and comfort during these next three days.

The third, COOPERATION, is the contribution we ask of you. We ask for your
Idealism, your
Spirit of Cooperation, and your
Spirit of Charity
(PAUSE)

Idealism means to seek a high spiritual goal. The Spirit of Cooperation means that you surrender yourself to the Via de Cristo and take each thing as it comes, trying to do what you're supposed to do at the time, not worrying about what's coming next.

It's like the story of the pastor who took his son with him when he went to give a talk in a neighboring church. As they entered the church, the pastor noticed a poor-box by the door. He took 50 cents from his pocket and dropped it in the box. After he was finished speaking and was leaving the church, the usher at the back stopped him and said, "Here, sir, it is our custom to give the visiting pastor whatever money is in the poor-box." So the pastor put in his hand and drew out his own 50 cents. The son then said, "Gee, Dad, just think — if you had put more in, you'd have gotten more out!"

The more you put into the Via de Cristo, the more you'll get out of it. (PAUSE)

We also ask that you bring to the Via de Cristo a Spirit of Charity. We will be living together as sisters in a loving family. During meals or in chapel, move around so you can get acquainted with someone new. There will be many opportunities to make friends. By seeking others out, you will get to know everyone.

If you bring your Idealism, your Spirit of Cooperation and your Spirit of Charity, you are going to live three days of very special grace.

Examination of conscience (Confession and Forgiveness):

(In Iowa right after Rector's Preliminary Talk)

Rector: Since this is the first night of the Via de Cristo, we are going to make a special examination of conscience. First hear some thoughts from Dietrich Bonhoeffer from his book, LIFE TOGETHER. The first is on "Confession." He writes:

In James 5:16 we read, "So then confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you will be healed." She who is alone with her sin is utterly alone.

Many Christians, in spite of the fact that they join together for worship, prayer, and service projects, may still feel unforgiven and separated from GOD. The final breakthrough to fellowship and a feeling of being worthy does not occur because, though they have fellowship with one another as believers and as devout people, they do not have fellowship as sinners. The religious atmosphere of the fellowship permits no one to be a sinner. So, everyone must conceal her sin from herself and from the fellowship. We dare not be sinners.

Many Christians are horrified when a real sinner is suddenly discovered among the righteous. So we remain alone with our sin, living alone. The FACT IS, WE ARE SINNERS!

It is the grace of the gospel which is so hard for Christians to understand, because it confronts us with the truth and says: "You are a sinner, a great desperate sinner; now come, as the sinner that you are, to GOD who loves you. He wants you as you are. He does not want anything from you, no sacrifice, no work; he wants you alone, as in Proverbs 23:26 - "My son, give me your heart alone."

GOD HAS COME TO US TO SAVE THE SINNERS. BE GLAD. This message is liberation through telling the truth. You can hide nothing from God. The mask you wear before women will do you no good before him. He wants to see you as you are. He wants to be gracious to you. You do not have to go on lying to yourself or your sister as if you were without sin. You can dare to be a sinner and **THANK GOD THAT HE HATES SIN, BUT LOVES THE SINNER.**

CHRIST became our brother in the flesh in order that we might believe in him. Through him the love of God came to the sinner. The misery of the sinner and the mercy of God came together in the Gospel of JESUS CHRIST. It was this truth that his Church was to live. Therefore he gave his Church the authority to hear the confession of sin and to forgive in his name. John 20:23: "Whosoever sins you remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins you do not remit, they are retained."

When he did that, Christ made the Church, which is made up of our brothers and sisters, a blessing to us. Now they stand in Christ's stead and before them I no longer need to feel guilty, but dare to reveal the struggling sinner that I am. They stand before us as the sign of the truth and grace of God, given to help us. They hear the struggles and desires we have (in Christ's stead) and give us his help and forgiveness.

So in the community of Christians, when the call to confession and forgiveness goes forth, it is a call to the great grace and love of GOD."

Thus far the words of our brother, Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

Now, please listen carefully

Jesus Christ speaks to us... ..I have picked you. Because I love you I have called you. Because I love you, I need you. I want you to be holy so that you help me.

But don't be scared. Don't be frightened. I am your God and I want to be your friend. To those who indeed know me, my yoke is easy and my burden is light. The WORLD is more demanding than I...

Keeping these words of Christ in mind, let us examine ourselves as members of God's people; as friends of Christ.

Have I given up trying to improve myself?

Have I let myself remain infantile - intellectually, practically, politically, or spiritually?

Have I had any ambition not entirely directed toward serving people and God?

Have I betrayed myself, even a little, for advancement, money, or good opinion?

Have I lacked self-control: lost my temper with things, or persons, uselessly?

Have I done poor work, habitually?

Have I lacked perseverance and logic in carrying things out?

Have I been discouraged by difficulties or setbacks?

Have I been vain, praise-loving, proud, or smug?

Have I indulged in allowing my feelings to be hurt?

Have I acted out of ambition or the desire to be noticed?

Have I believed I'm always right?
 Have I failed to recognize my limits and accept them?
 Have I talked knowingly about what I don't know?
 Have I made snap judgments and comments to give the impression I know all about a subject?
 Have I been pre-occupied with the care of my body, and wasted time on it?
 Have I misused alcohol or any other chemical?
 Have I let my work suffer because my best energies have been spent in pleasure?
 Have I fallen in with current prejudices about sex or dismissed the gravity of sin in this matter?
 Have I looked for sexual pleasure outside of marriage?
 In marriage, have I looked for my own sexual pleasure rather than an expression of love?
 Have I been able to say honestly that I do not love my neighbor as myself?
 Have I loved others selfishly? Wanted to monopolize others' affections? Been jealous?
 Have I considered no one but myself?
 Have I failed to take a firm stand for the betterment of all the human race?
 Have I never felt real anguish for the misery of others?
 Have I passed by, indifferent of another's needs?
 Have I had contempt for anyone, consciously or unconsciously - that is, have I failed to regard someone as a person; not treated him or her as a person; not realized that I must contribute to the development of other persons?
 Have I in any way stifled the personal development of another?
 Have I not paid entire attention to a person speaking to me?
 Have I not given others a chance to express themselves?
 Have I been too selfish, or concerned with popular opinion, to do a favor?
 Have I sought only those whose friendship might prove profitable?
 Have I said hurtful things?
 Have I done harm by remarks that blackened another's character?
 Have I betrayed a trust; violated a confidence?
 Have I let fear, shyness, timidity, keep me silent when I should have spoken?
 Have I called myself Christian without making my life a witness to the New Testament?
 Have I failed to support those who work to defend justice and promote the common good?
 Have I kept for myself more than I need?
 Have I "earned" money without working for it?
 Have I sacrificed my family to my other work?
 Have I failed to be a full partner and source of strength to my spouse?
 Have I failed to respect the individuality of another, even a child?
 Have I expected more of children than I have the courage to do myself?
 Have I reduced the Church's work to policing morality or even to protecting the established order of things?
 Have I never read or reflected on the New Testament?
 Have I drawn from the Church's teachings only that which supports positions I've already taken?
 Have I confused tradition with hardening of the arteries?
 Have I not held myself responsible for my part in the inadequacy of Christians?
 Have I held the Church and the clergy to be identical?
 Have I spoken of the clergy as "them" instead of "us"?

Have I criticized the teaching authority of the Church, seeing only its effect on my own affairs or in my own circle, forgetting that the Church leaders speak to the whole world?

Have I exempted myself from the laws which apply to all the faithful?

Have I sought to bear witness to myself, rather than to the mission of the Church?

Have I not tried to make the Church even MORE pure, MORE vital, MORE widely radiant?

Have I not believed in God as the one who, in reality, runs the world?

Have I not seen and loved God in other persons?

Have I not thought of Jesus Christ as my brother; given up trying to make him my model?

Have I centered the cross on my walls, but not in my life?

Have I talked about Christ, without really trying to live the Gospel?

Have I not found time to pray?

Have I prayed mechanically?

Have I built my life excluding God, then expected him to intervene when things got rough?

Have I thought of spiritual life as something to do only after everything else has been taken care of?

Have I been satisfied with myself for having achieved a little spiritual growth...not made myself persist, go further?

Following Confession and Forgiveness

To Conference Room for ground rules.

On the tables you will find booklets called Pilgrim's Guide. Please carry yours with you at all times. Write your name on it so it can be returned to you if you lose it someplace.

Since we want to get to know each other quickly, please wear your name tags at all times and in plain sight. In case yours gets lost, we will have a new one for you. If you need anything at all, simply let a team member know. If we don't have it, we'll get it. You will notice that the team tags are (color) in color, and yours are _____.

There are quite a few of us here and we have distances to cover and full busy days ahead, so here are a few ground rules to help us keep our Spirit of Charity.

1. No phone calls. If it is absolutely necessary to call, please see me. If you receive any urgent phone messages, be assured that you will be told.
2. Remove watches. Put them in the corners of your suitcases. For these three days we will be on God's time. At home we are forced to run our lives by a clock. While you are here, just relax and let US worry about the time. If you need medicine at regular times, please let the Assistant Rectors know, and they will see that you get it.
3. Please, absolutely no smoking wherever you are sleeping. We would ask that you be a considerate smoker at all times.
4. A bell will be rung to summon you from one place to another. When you hear the bells, please respond quickly.
5. Rest rooms are located _____. We will try to give you plenty of break time, when possible, for your visits. When we are on the way to chapel, or participating in discussions, it is not a good time to leave the room. There are shower facilities _____ — however, we ask that you not use them tonight. If you did not sign the sheet beside the door in your (cabin, room, etc.) as to your bunk number, please do so when you go back. The bathroom facilities off the Conference Room are off limits until after chapel every morning.
6. There will be a supply table for your convenience. It should cover nearly every need, but if there is something you need and it is not on the table, contact one of the rectors and she

will see that you get it. A dish for a free-will offering will be on the table, but if you don't have any money with you, please don't let that stop you from taking what you need or want. If you did not bring sleeping gear with you, we have spare sheets, blankets, pillows and towels.

7. If anyone is diabetic, or has special dietary needs, see either me, or one of the other Rectors and we will arrange with the kitchen for what you need. Remember, too, that if you need medicine on schedule, tell one of the Rectors and they will see that you take it on time.
8. Cars will be available during the break times to take you up to cabins. It will work out better for you if you plan to go back to the cabin only once after lunch each day.
9. When we are in Chapel, if you prefer sitting to either standing or kneeling, go right ahead and sit - be comfortable and don't be embarrassed.

Does anyone have any questions at this time?

We will now enter what we call the SPIRITUAL RETREAT portion of the Via de Cristo, and we will be silent until after chapel in the morning.

Most of our lives are not set up to include much time for personal reflection. This is the reason it is included in this phase of the Via de Cristo. This will be a time for meditation. A time to attempt to really know ourselves - to find out who we really are. Since we came together to try to reach a little higher spiritual plane, it's fitting we find out where we are now. This will be a time to question ourselves - to speak to God - and to listen to him speak to us. This we ask you to do in silence. We call on your spirit of charity and cooperation by asking you to keep the silence until after Chapel in the morning. In the morning when you are called (and I emphasize this: please wait until you are called, because you will disturb others no matter how quiet you are), you will have a long half-hour to get dressed, then the bell will call you to chapel.

Right now we are going to have our Bible Recessional (read names of the two candle-bearers and the reader). Please stand.

[Bible Resessional]

We will have our Night Prayers now. Please turn to page ?? in your Guide Books.
(Assistant Rectors light candles at each table.)

10:15PM Night Prayers.

Teach me, my Lord, to be kind and gentle in all the events of life -
in disappointments,
in the thoughtlessness of others,
in the insincerity of those I trusted.
in the unfaithfulness of those on whom I relied.

Let me put myself aside - -
to think of the happiness of others,
to hide my little pains and heartaches
so that I may be the only one to suffer from them.

Teach me to profit by the suffering that comes across my path.
Let me so use it that it may mellow me, not harden nor embitter me - -
that it may make me patient, not irritable,
that it may make me broad in my forgiveness, not narrow, haughty and overbearing.

May no one be less good for having come within my influence. No one less pure, less true, less kind, less noble for having been a fellow traveler in our journey toward eternal life..

As I go my rounds from one distraction to another, let me whisper from time to time, a word of love to You . . . May my life be lived in the supernatural, full of power for good and strong in its purpose of sanctity.

Please read along with me the prayer on page 15(For the Acceptance of Others) in your guidebooks.

Let us pray: (Read the prayer in unison).

Please turn to page 9 (Evening Prayer) and pray along with me (read the prayer on page 9 in unison).

Then:

Dear Lord, we ask your blessing this weekend. Please send your Holy Spirit to us as you did to your early Apostles and disciples. We need your special help, Lord. We need your help and we promise to open our hearts to you. Help us to know your will for us as we hear and share your Word. It is late and we are tired, Lord. We are going to bed now and spend the time from now until after Chapel in the morning in a spiritual retreat, and in silence we will meditate on our lives and on your will. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

(Pause)

We now dismiss for bed. Remember to be silent until after chapel. Remember, we'll wake you in the morning with the bell and you will have a long half-hour to get ready before Chapel. Please wait for the bell. If at any time you would like to spend some time in the Chapel, it will always be left open. The team will remain here in the chapel for a brief meeting. Good night.

Friday

Rector's Opening Remarks (in Iowa, right after breakfast):

TO CONFERENCE ROOM for Opening Remarks, Table Assignments:

(Put your name on the overhead again)

The beauty of the person of Christ is with us today as we begin the Via de Cristo. We will become aware of this as we experience openness, friendship, and concern with and for one another as each day progresses.

We should also be conscious of Christ through his words. For that reason, we will now have a Bible Procession. This morning, (read names of candle-bearers and reader) will bring us the Word of God. Please stand.

[Bible Enthronement Processional and reading.]

Please be seated.

I hope each of you found the sleeping facilities comfortable enough to get a good night's rest. I've been looking around, and I think all of you remembered your name tags, but in case some of you didn't, please hold up your hand and we'll get you one.

We will now break up into Decuria, another one of those words from our Spanish founders. Decuria means a group of ten, so, we'll divide into (6 or 7) groups, or tables, of ten each, and we'll call our groups families. These families will be permanent for the three days. Each of us knows what it is to be part of a family, and we hope that your new family will be filled with the same unity and love. For identification purposes each family will be assigned a table named after

a well known matron saint: Saints Theresa, Catherine, Anne, Elizabeth, Joan of Arc, Martha and Lydia.

If those of you who are presently sitting at St. _____'s table will step to the back of the room, I'll read off the names of those who will be member's of St. _____'s family. As your name is called, please step up to the table. By the way, if I mis-pronounce your name, please correct me.

(Continue assignments)

HAVE A JOKE SESSION HERE.

RECTOR EXPLAINS DECURIA PROCEDURES:

You are probably all a little tired after last night. Today you will find it a little easier and tomorrow it will be easier still. Even though the Via de Cristo is not a continuous picnic, you will have fun if you take advantage of it — by opening your mind and heart and by continuing to surrender yourself and to enjoy each other.

I've a couple more Spanish words for you. We could get along without them, but because they've been used in so many previous Via de Cristos, we stick with them.

When we regrouped into our table families we formed what the Spanish call a "D-E-C-U-R-IA," (write it on the overhead) which means, "a group of ten working together." We don't always have ten at our tables, but we still call each family a "Decuria."

Each day we will participate in five separate conferences. That brings us to the next Spanish word, "R-O-L-L-O" (write it on the overhead) - pronounced ROY-YO. Translated, it means, "Conference." The "talk" portion of each Rollo will be given by some of the members of the team, either a layperson or a pastor. A person who gives a Rollo is often referred to as a Rollista. Each Rollo will begin with the prayer of the Holy Spirit. At the conclusion of the talk, the speakers prefer not to be applauded. We also ask that you not interrupt the speakers with questions or comments; save them for your family discussions following each talk.

On the tables are notebooks and pens. Take a notebook and write your name on it, it's yours to keep. As you listen to the Rollos, do take notes: write down the thoughts you wish to remember.

Most of the speakers will be using the overhead projector, so you'll be able to get your clues to what's important from that. You'll use these notes in your discussion after the talk, and they'll help you remember the message of the talk after the weekend is over.

After each Rollo, your family will discuss your impressions of it. In order to moderate our discussions and record our thoughts, each family will select a leader and a secretary before each talk. The members of the team seated at your table will do this for the first talk, and after that we will ask each of you to take turns being leader as well as secretary. We will leave the selection process up to you in each family. The leader is not the "expert" but more of a "facilitator", keeping the discussion going and on track. The secretary, with the help of the other members, will write down the key points of the discussion around your table. This should be a brief summary (a minute or two) of what your table felt about the meaning of the Rollo. We will ask for the summaries later. Everyone should be allowed to contribute to the discussions.

During the discussion period we will hand out poster paper and felt-tip pens. In addition to the secretary's report, we want you to express in picture form the main idea(s) of your discussion. We don't expect masterpieces. Quick ideas are all we are after. If you can't draw people, stick drawings are fine. If one person really does have a talent for drawing, please don't make her do all the work! The poster should be a cooperative effort. Here's an opportunity to let your imaginations go to work. Feel free to depict anyone or anything you want to — no one will

be offended. The posters don't have to be serious. If you are moved to do something comical, go ahead and put it into your picture.

Every team needs unity and team spirit. Your contribution will help make your team the best of the bunch. Get to know each other well, a good idea is to change places at your own table for each talk so you can sit next to someone else each time. Of course, you will want to meet others beside those in your own group, so we ask that you mix at meal times and when we go to Chapel. Tonight and tomorrow night after Night Prayers, you will have time to talk, get acquainted and generally socialize, here in the Conference Room, although we do emphasize the need for SLEEP!

Coffee is available, and water and tea and cocoa. If you would take time to put your name on your cup, it will be easier to keep track of it as you move around the table. PLEASE STAY SEATED DURING THE ROLLOS! There will be breaks announced, so we would appreciate your not leaving the tables except during those breaks. You are welcome to visit the Chapel whenever you wish during your free time.

Throughout the weekend you might be asked to say grace at meals, to participate in a Bible Enthronement or Recessional, or to read scriptures at the service of Holy Communion. If you would prefer not to do this, just tell the person who asks you. Please, we don't want you to feel pressured.

In order that we will benefit from each other's discussions, we will have a DECURIA MEETING this evening. Some call it SHOW and TELL time. At that time the secretary for your family will share the summary of your family's discussion on one of the Rollos given that day with the rest of us. After the summary, two or more members will display the poster for the same talk and another member of your family will "try" to explain it. There will not be time for discussion or criticism of the summaries. We do it just so others can hear YOUR ideas as well as their own. Remember to keep the summaries brief, and you might put on each poster who was secretary for that Rollo discussion so it will be easier this evening.

As we said last night, everything will be introduced by the bell. It is the COMMANDER GENERAL. Please listen for it and be prompt to answer the call.

We will get started now, but before we do, I'll give you a minute to fill your coffee cup or get some pop. Please put your name on your cup, so you can re-use it all of today. Are there any questions?

[Then, after short break:]

Again, I would like to stress the importance of taking notes. Please open your notebooks to a clean sheet of paper... ..and stand. The first Rollo will be given by a laywoman.

Just before the Grace Rollo:

RECTOR: From this point on each Rollo will begin with a prayer and the one used most often will be the prayer to the Holy Spirit on the last page of your guidebooks. Please open your notebooks to a clean sheet of paper... ..and stand. The second Rollo will be given by a pastor.

Just after the Piety Rollo:

RECTOR SAYS THE FOLLOWING AFTER PIETY ROLLISTA LEAVES:

We have now reached a turning point in our Via de Cristo. Last night we took a long quiet look at ourselves and our relationship with God. Today the focus has been on Christ looking at us. In IDEAL, (Name of Rollista) asked us what we will see when He looks at us - what is our top priority, our ideal? Then Pastor _____ told us of the constant showering of grace that comes to us even when we are not looking for it. (Name of Laity Rollista) issued a challenge of how a laywoman can and must be effective in God's Church. We need to know what we are

doing and why we are doing it. And then Pastor _____ gave us that Christmas feeling as he told us of others' concern for us, and their love for us; people are grace to us, too, one of his many gifts to us. And now, with PIETY, (Name of Rollista) has shared her struggles in responding to God — in looking around in love and knowing the joy of directing her whole life to God.

If you have any prayer requests that you wish to have the members of our 72-hour prayer vigil pray for you, simply jot it down on a piece of paper and drop it in the basket on the table. We are going to the Chapel now to share another gift. The Way of the Cross is a gift from the Roman Catholic tradition and piety. It gives us a way of looking at our lives in the light of the story of Christ's suffering and crucifixion. Come, let us pray together in courage and joy. Please take your guidebooks along. We will be going from Chapel right to supper. If any of you need to go to the rest rooms, do so now.

[Allow time for this. Then:] "Follow me."

Saturday

Right after the Study Rollo:

(Follows right after "Study" Rollo):

I wonder if any of you realize how nervous and excited these women are when they come in here to speak to you? None are professional speakers. Giving a Rollo at a Via de Cristo is the first time many of these women have ever spoken before a group.

I'm sure you've noticed that the Rollista, before and after her or his talk, leaves the room for a while. The reason for this is that we can never forget that here in the Via de Cristo we are merely instruments for the Lord. So, before speaking, we go to the Chapel and ask God to use us; to put the right words on our lips; and after the Rollo we go to give him thanks for having used us.

As (Name of Grace, Too, pastor) told you yesterday in the Grace, Too, talk, for as long as the Rollista is speaking, Pastor (Name of Palanca S.D.) and the rest of the Palanca team (those who serve us at the meals and all through the weekend) are in the Chapel in prayer, asking for God's grace for the Rollista and for all of us that we will have open minds and hearts to receive His wonderful message. He also mentioned that people on the Palanca Team are conducting a 72-hour Prayer Vigil during which time they lift up any prayer requests that we might have. So, our whole weekend is virtually bathed in prayer.

I know you have noticed the roses. They are strictly a woman's touch. Each Rollista brings a rose from the altar in the Palanca Chapel into the Conference Room. These flowers are symbols: they are a sign of love. Then, too, they act as our heavenly time schedule, showing the passage of time as the vase fills. And it makes me think of each of us as we are filled up by God's love brought to us by the Rollistas.

Yesterday during the Way of the Cross, we were introduced to a Christ of many dimensions. We were in close communication with Christ. After living with him in this way, we know him a lot better. It is important that we visit him as friends, and during our free time we can do that. We can visit him individually or with others, and we encourage you to do this. Later today, however, we will visit him in the Chapel with our families. We will announce the times for your family visits later on.

A BOOK TABLE has been set up for you. Please feel free to browse during breaks. The prices are on the books, and there are envelopes for your money and checks. Make your checks out to Iowa Lutheran Secretariat. If there is only one book of a kind and you want it, put your name on it, but please leave the book on the table until Sunday morning so others may see what's

available. There is also a paper on the table with a list for ordering books (for those of you who are willing to wait). To order, just write your name and the books you want and add a little extra for postage, as indicated on the paper.

O.K., let's start our discussion of the "Study" talk.

Right after the Means of Grace/Sacraments/Day in the Life Rollo:

Rector (after Pastor exits):

In a moment, we will join Pastor _____ in the chapel where we will experience an altar visit. An altar visit is an opportunity to spend some time in prayer and/or meditation in an atmosphere conducive to feeling close to God. This afternoon we'll be giving each family an opportunity to make a chapel visit together, so, to give you some first-hand experience at what such a visit is like, we will now go to the chapel. Please enter quietly, as a chapel visit will be in progress when we arrive. Follow me.

Suggested Write Downs

At this place in previous generations of the Essentials Manual we included detailed lay talk outlines with suggested write downs underlined. Since all talks are now available on line at www.viadecristo.org/share under “Resources from the NLS: Lay Talk Outlines; they are being omitted from this publication.