

Dear Cursillista,

You have been chosen to give a Rollo during the Via de Cristo weekend. God has given you a great responsibility and He will give you're the wisdom, strength and endurance to fulfill the task. In addition, the Via de Cristo method provides two special people; an "angel" from the Palanca Team and an "angel" from the Kitchen Team, who will help you through the weekend.

You will be receiving a Rollista Request Sheet from your Palanca Angel. It is very important for you to fill this out and return it to your Palanca Angel as soon as possible. Your angel will use this sheet to plan your send off on the weekend. During the weekend, it is your responsibility to be in the Palanca Chapel 20 minutes before the time scheduled for your Rollo. If you are a table leader, you may need the help of an Assistant Rector to let you know what time to leave the weekenders so you will be ready on time.

Every sendoff is unique, because you are unique. In addition, there are events happening on the weekend that may add to its uniqueness. For instance, when two Rollo's are given back to back, your send off may be too short to read all of the scriptures you have chosen or to sing all of the songs as requested. Because the weekenders are always the first priority, you may need to be flexible and understanding if all of your expectations are not met. The most important part of the sendoff for each Rollista is prayer!

When your Rollo is over, return to the Palanca Chapel. After a short prayer of thanksgiving, your Kitchen Angel will have a special plate of food prepared for you. Your Kitchen Angel would like you to request something special on your "Rollista Request Sheet", but keep in mind that your request should not be overly extravagant nor excessively time consuming to prepare.

Now, to prepare for your Rollo, thoroughly read your entire Rollo outline and support material as supplied.

GLYASDW,

Utah Via de Cristo Community

## SUGGESTIONS FOR WRITING A TALK AND USING THE TALK OUTLINES

### I. GENERAL COMMENTS

You received a call to be on a team, asked for discernment, and concluded that the Lord was calling you to serve at this time. There is a reason God wanted you on this particular team in the role you have been assigned. Serve Him with prayerful anticipation.

You were asked to give a talk. You may be eager to do so and/or very uncertain about it. Whether or not you feel capable of giving a talk is not relevant at this point. Many people before you have had those same feelings, probably even someone who gave a talk at the weekend you attended. In the Leaders talk, we are reminded that we are all leaders. We just need to rely on God to guide us and to develop the qualities in us that are necessary for the task. It is the same for giving a talk. For many people, this is a growing experience and they must trust God to work through them. What is more important than feeling capable of giving a talk is that you are living the Via de Cristo method. Are you growing in your relationship with God? Are you reaching out to others with God's love? Do you have the support of a Group Reunion and an Ultreya? Are you living the life that you will be presenting in your talk?

Once you have said "yes" to writing a talk, pray for wisdom and guidance. Read all of the material for your talk and be familiar with the progression of the weekend before you begin. The progression of the weekend has been carefully planned, even if we were unaware of this on our own weekend. The talks on the weekend are not simply fifteen talks, but fifteen sections of one talk. Think of your talk as a chapter in a book. Each talk, like the chapter of a book, says the things that must be presented at that time. There is a natural progression. The author has carefully thought through the presentation of the material or the plot of the story. The whole would not make sense if one chapter was omitted or strayed from the purpose of the book. In the same way, if you go off on your own tangent, give inappropriate examples, give a stirring witness too early in the weekend or omit things that are important to the progression of the weekend, your talk will not fit into the overall plan of the weekend. Make every point in the outline and add none of your own. Your choice of words and your personal examples and/or witness will make your talk unique.

Another way to think of the talks is to imagine building a tower of blocks. Each block must be firm and whole to build a solid foundation. If a talk does not include all the points, it does not give the solid foundation that the subsequent talks need to build on. It is also deficient if it presents examples or a witness that do not fit the points of the talk. Time will have been spent on unnecessary material, which weakens the talk and interferes with the progression of the weekend. A stirring witness, no matter how touching, will obscure the message of the talk if it does not clarify a point of the outline and fit into the progression of the weekend. Examples should be brief, with only enough detail to make the point.

Giving a talk on a Via de Cristo weekend takes a special kind of discipline and humility. The talks build gradually from Friday morning to Sunday afternoon. Each one is meant to do a certain job in a certain way. It is important to present the material that is unique to that talk because the remaining talks build on it. You may use your own creative writing and personal speaking style, while still making the points of your

particular talk. The talks should catch and retain the attention of the participants and fit into the purpose of the talk in the progression of the weekend. They should not sound “canned”. It is customary to write out your talk. It will keep your talk concise, avoid rambling, and stay within your time limit. Once it has been critiqued at a team meeting, your talk should not be changed without the consent of the rector/a.

If you are asked to give a talk for the second time, do not use your old talk. Each talk should be written for a particular weekend. In the time that elapsed, you have grown in your relationship with God and in your understanding of the Via de Cristo method. You may now have an example or a witness that is more current and more relevant. If it is fresh for you, the participants will respond to that.

It is important to use inclusive language. If it is a men’s or women’s weekend, use the appropriate gender pronouns in your talk. There are a few secretariats that sponsor co-ed weekends. Be sensitive to use of gender if you are giving a talk on one of these weekends. It is also important to be aware that there are participants who are married, single, divorced or widowed. Differences in national origin, race and age should also be considered when choosing examples and witnesses.

Each talk, in its own way, should do two things. First, it explains a part of the picture or method. Second, it urges and/or inspires the participants to do what is presented and shows that it is possible. Each talk does this in its own way. Be sensitive to the progression of the weekend. The opening talks explain Christianity more generally and the participants are encouraged to develop and deepen a relationship with God. The final talks lay out a concrete method of sharing our faith in the world. Each one progresses, with definite steps, to inspire the participants into action. The later talks are to be given with more enthusiasm, including examples of how the Via de Cristo method of renewal has worked in their own lives.

There is also a development of several minor topics. These ideas do not have a talk assigned to them, but are developed gradually in several talks. For instance, lay-clergy relations are discussed in three talks: Layperson as Church in the World, Means of Grace (or Days in the Life or Sacraments) and Developing Christian Community Within Our Environments, each time in a different way. Spiritual direction is mentioned in several talks. The same is true of prayer, family life and the Church.

By making the Christian ideal seem attractive and attainable, the talks should evoke a desire in the participants to respond to God’s love by developing or deepening their relationship with Him and by instilling in them a desire to share God’s love with others. To do this they need the support of the Christian community. As the talks unfold, the participants will gradually see a vision develop and will stay interested until the end of the last day.

It is good to be aware of the different responses possible during the weekend. For introverts the silent retreat may be welcome and allow them to go within. For others, it is frustrating to be with all these people and not be able to talk to them; they are more comfortable if they can talk with and connect to other people. Later in the weekend, the extraverts will be energized and the introverts may feel overwhelmed with too much togetherness and little or no time to process what they are hearing.

## II. PROGRESSION OF THE WEEKEND

### THURSDAY

The first meditation Thursday night suggests that the participant “Know Yourself”. The second meditation, “The Prodigal Son”, reminds us that we, like the prodigal son, have often strayed away from our heavenly Father. God joyfully welcomes us home when we stray from Him, just as the father welcomed his son. When he was a long way off, his father ran to him joyfully. In the same way, our Father is waiting for us to come to Him. The spiritual retreat follows. It prepares the participants for the weekend by making them more aware of Christ’s presence and by emphasizing the need to come to Him.

### THE FIRST DAY OF THE VIA DE CRISTO WEEKEND

On Friday the intention is to bring the participants face to face with themselves. They grapple with the question, “Who am I?” The speakers present a new set of values and ideas about life, higher and more spiritual values than they may have had before. The purpose of the morning meditation, “The Three Glances of Christ”, is to make the participants aware of the need to respond to God. They are given examples from the gospels of three persons on whom Christ directed His gaze. Each person will react differently, asking him/herself the question, “How will I respond?”

The five talks on the first day clearly present the ideal of living the life of grace. The following are the important points of each talk:

#### IDEAL (The Call to be Fully Human)

- Humans are the crown of creation because they have intellect, freedom and will.
- The balance between the intellectual, emotional and spiritual aspects of a person is a measure of human maturity.
- Self-giving is the measure of a person’s human development.
- An authentic ideal gives purpose and meaning to life.
- You can discover your ideal by examining what you think about and how you spend your extra time and money.

#### GRACE (HABITUAL GRACE)

- God’s supreme ideal is that all of His children live in His grace and love.
- We are invited to a new relationship with God because of God’s habitual grace.
- We can respond to God’s invitation.
- Grace, a natural attribute of God, calls us to be part of the family of God.
- We are members of the family of our Father, living as brothers and sisters, with Christ as our brother.
- Grace is not based on our worthiness, but solely on God’s divine nature.

#### THE LAYPERSON AS THE CHURCH IN THE WORLD

- Christ did not intend merely to save individuals but to save the world. For this reason He founded the Church to continue His mission to the world.
- As members of the Church, the laity have a specific mission to the world and in the world to be fully Christian.
- Because responding to God’s love changes our lives, we are called to penetrate

and transform society through the power of the Gospel.

#### ACTUAL GRACE

- Humans feel inadequate to participate in God's mission, but God has not left us alone.
- God offers us His grace and enables us to accept it and grow in faith.
- The Holy Spirit lives and works in us, enlightening our mind and inspiring our will.
- As the body of Christ, we are in this together.
- Palanca is the spiritual "lever" of prayer and sacrifice on the weekend and in our ministry.

At this point general palanca is introduced and the low-key approach ends.

#### PIETY

- Piety arises out of our relationship with God.
- There are many types of false piety.
- Authentic piety is directing our whole life to God.
- We need to nourish our relationship with God through practices of authentic piety.
- Piety is a life-long process.

#### THE SECOND DAY OF THE VIA DE CRISTO WEEKEND

By the beginning of the second day, the participants begin to ask themselves: How can I attain this ideal of a conscious and growing life in Christ and how can I become an authentic, dynamic Christian? The talks on this day are geared to answer these questions by presenting a Christ-oriented sacramental piety that makes us more fully aware of being the people of God, the body of Christ. The participants are introduced to prayer as a personal conversation with their brother Jesus. They begin to feel a concern for their brothers and sisters in Christ. The second day begins with the meditation, "The Figure of Christ." The emphasis is on the humanity of Christ, the Christ who is living today, the Person who attracts so many to Him. The participants are invited into a personal, intimate friendship with Jesus.

#### STUDY

- Christian study is not the same as the study of Christianity.
- The principle source of study is the Bible.
- Everyone studies throughout life.
- There are obstacles to study.
- There are remedies to overcome these obstacles.

#### MEANS OF GRACE (A DAY IN THE LIFE, OR CHANNELS OF GRACE)

- We encounter Christ throughout life. He personally touches us.
- This enables us to lead fully Christian lives, sharing God's grace with others.
- Sacraments as means of grace.
- Baptism

- Holy Communion (Eucharist)
- Other events in our lives become grace-filled days in the life of a Christian.

#### APOSTOLIC ACTION

- Apostolic action naturally follows piety and study.
- Apostolic action is anything we do with the sole purpose of sharing Christ with others and desiring that they have a relationship with Him.
- Apostolic action is non-manipulative.
- Apostolic action's purpose is to infuse Christ's ideal into the world.
- Friendship is the key to sharing Christ with others.

#### OBSTACLES TO GRACE

- Sin is a reality, a failure to live as we should.
- Obstacles are sin, Satan, the world and our own flesh.
- Obstacles in the attitudes of our hearts and minds frustrate our growth in grace.
- There are influences in our society that encourage us to sin.
- Obstacles are tests of our love and reminders to love God and others more.
- Prayer, spiritual direction and Christian friendship are among the remedies for overcoming these obstacles.

#### LEADERS

- Each person is a leader in his/her personal environments.
- Natural and supernatural qualities of leaders can be developed through enhancing loving characteristics.
- Transforming the world depends on each individual Christian.
- Each individual is responsible to offer all of his/her individual talents in service to God in his/her natural environments.
- The group is more than the sum of its individual members when influencing an environment for God.

#### THE THIRD DAY OF THE VIA DE CRISTO WEEKEND

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 they encountered themselves. On the second day they entered into intimate friendship with Christ. Today their thoughts are projected out into the world. They are told how they can share Christ with others in the world in which they live. The third day is a call to apostolic action. The day begins with the meditation, "Christ's Message to the Participant." The participants hear that Christ is counting on them: "I have chosen you and have appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit."

#### THE STUDY AND EVANGELIZATION OF THE ENVIRONMENT

- Christianity is lived in community.
- We need to study our environments in order to change them.
- God gives us what we need to evangelize our environments--to make them more

Christ-like.

- This is accomplished by working with others who share our mission.

#### LIFE IN GRACE (CHRISTIAN LIFE)

- The practices of piety provide a practical program for spiritual growth.
- The Piety section of the reunion card is explained, including spiritual direction and the importance of prayer.
- Our practices of piety will change and deepen as we grow spiritually.

#### DEVELOPING CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY WITHIN OUR ENVIRONMENTS

- Our mission is to transform our environments into living Christian communities.
- We are to form Christian communities in our environments.
- The purpose of Christian community is the evangelization of the world.
- God gives the community what it needs to accomplish this goal.

#### GROUP REUNION AND ULTREYA

- The principal problem in living the Christian life is perseverance.
- In order to persevere, one must be in community with others who are also striving to live the life of Christ - a balanced life of piety, study and apostolic action.
- Group reunion is the deep relationship of a few close friends - friendship and accountability raised to the level of the divine.
- Ultreya, the reunion of groups, includes a broader spectrum of the Christian community to support our mission.
- Without Ultreya it is harder for a group reunion to reach its purpose of sharing Christ with the world.

#### FOURTH DAY

- We each have a responsibility to carry out the mission entrusted to us.
- It is not easy, but the Via de Cristo method helps us persevere.
- Christ is the cornerstone and source of our ability to persevere.
- Each person's call to apostolic action is unique.
- Life is living the Via de Cristo.

#### III. PROGRESSION OF EXAMPLES AND WITNESS IN THE TALKS.

This is an overview of how to use examples and witness in the talks. A more in-depth discussion is included in the specific talk outlines under the heading "Suggestions for Writing This Talk."

#### THURSDAY

Thursday evening the participants are usually nervous and uncertain. They know no one or just a few people in the group that has gathered. Although the team tries to make them feel at ease, the unknown brings with it a certain amount of anxiety even for the most confident participants. The team, on the other hand, is excited and eager. Being

sensitive to the participants and their feelings of anxiety are important. Keep the progression of the weekend in mind.

#### FRIDAY

The first day presents the life in grace as the fundamental ideal of Christian life. The most common mistake is saying too much. The talks are low-key and do not use the actual experiences of the speaker in the same way that later talks do. The talks should be clear, natural and presented with conviction. The participants are told clearly what a great thing s/he is called to do and urged to do it. The use of illustrations and examples is carefully controlled.

#### IDEAL

The first talk is difficult to prepare, and for this reason it should be assigned to an experienced team member. It is very matter-of-fact in presenting the material. There is no prayer, no mention of God or any use of scripture, no matter how tempting it is to slip it in. The first three meditations, two on Thursday evening and one Friday morning, have challenged the participants to look at their relationship with God. Without saying it directly in the talk, many participants will already be thinking that a life with God should be his/her ideal. All examples should be short, to the point and not religious in nature. It is essential that this talk remains secular and does not deviate from its purpose.

#### ACTUAL GRACE

Given by clergy, this talk presents the life in grace as the Christian ideal. It, and all the talks that follow, begin with prayer. The use of scripture is introduced.

#### LAYPERSON AS CHURCH IN THE WORLD

This talk remains low-key. Examples are not stirring testimonies, but concrete examples of the Church active in the world. Scripture is used in this talk.

#### ACTUAL GRACE

This talk ends with the presentation of general palanca and the low-key approach ends.

#### PIETY

The Piety talk presents the example of a person who is living the life of grace. It includes how the speaker came to realize what directing one's life to God means and the difference this has made in his/her life. Being the first talk with a personal testimony, Piety often has a significant impact on the participants. It must be presented with conviction and enthusiasm. The participants see that it is possible to live a life dedicated to God because the speaker presents a life that has done this successfully.

#### SATURDAY

While echoing the message of Friday, the second day talks patiently explain how it is done--what each person must do to live the Christian ideal and become a leader for Christ. Each talk presents the participant with one part of the process. Each talk is



explanatory in nature and explains how the method works. The speaker needs to be aware of not saying too much. Examples are primarily explanatory and show how the method worked in the life of the speaker. They are not to be inspirational in the way the Sunday talks are. The focus is individual and personal.

#### STUDY

The Study talk is meant to explain Christian study and why it is important. The examples are explanatory in nature and illustrate the study method that has worked for the speaker in deepening his/her relationship with God and in discerning God's will for his/her life.

#### MEANS OF GRACE (A DAY IN THE LIFE, CHANNELS OF GRACE)

This talk is given by clergy. It discusses the sacraments--God touching us in everyday things and throughout life.

#### APOSTOLIC ACTION

The talk presents a method of personal evangelism and shows how it works. Apostolic action is the natural response of a Christian who has experienced God's unconditional love and wants to share it. The witness in the talk is sharing the speaker's response to God's love. S/he introduces his/her friend, Jesus, to a friend. Make a friend. Be a friend. Bring your friend to Christ.

#### OBSTACLES TO GRACE

Obstacles to Grace is given by clergy. It discusses some of the obstacles we face when trying to live the life of grace. It also presents remedies to these obstacles.

#### LEADERS

Leaders is the inspirational talk of the day and summarizes the day in a moving way, showing that what has been presented during the day works. The speaker shows what a person can do when living the method that was presented. It includes examples of the natural and supernatural qualities of a leader, a person who is putting all s/he is into being a Christian. In his/her own way, everyone is a leader in his/her environment.

#### SUNDAY

The third day explains further what it means to be a Christian leader, but does it on a different level. Up to this time the focus has been on the individual. This now changes to focus on the environment in which a person finds him/herself and his/her relationships with others in these environments. The talks stress how the participants must co-operate with other Christians and form Christian community with them. It fills out the vision of how the Church and the individual Christian can function in the modern world. It takes a deepening relationship with Jesus Christ and relationships with our brothers and sisters in Christ to give us the support and encouragement we need. This involves the presentation of a method. Each talk presents its part of the method. The participants are given instructions on how the Via de Cristo method works. It also provides a vision of the Church as a Christian community that is accomplishing something. The talks are strong, urgent, confident and triumphant. He is risen! He has

overcome the world! He is present in His Church, still overcoming the world! Examples need to show a Christian community working together to evangelize an environment. The participants should have the feeling that there is such a community, they can fit into it, and they can also be successful in sharing Christ with their world.

#### THE STUDY AND EVANGELIZATION OF THE ENVIRONMENT

This talk introduces a new concept. Our environments are those groups to which we belong. As Christian leaders we should be having an impact on those environments in order that they become more Christ-like. Eduardo Bonnin, the founder of Cursillo®, thought that this talk presented a concept that most participants had not heard before. The first talk of each day, including this one, is explanatory in nature. It must be clear, systematic, specific and concrete, laying out a method. It presents specific examples of things to think about when planning to influence an environment for Christ and working with individuals in that environment. It gives practical methods that produce positive results.

#### LIFE IN GRACE (CHRISTIAN LIFE)

This is the final clergy talk. (In some movements it is given by a layperson.) It presents spiritual direction as one method of persevering in the Christian ideal and discusses the Piety section of the reunion card.

#### DEVELOPING CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY WITHIN OUR ENVIRONMENTS

The remaking of society can only be accomplished through the building of self-giving Christian communities developed within our environments. The appropriate witness in this talk is the example of an environment being transformed by a group—a practical example and living story of Christians working together to change the spirit of an environment to be more Christ-like. It is to be joyful and inspirational, leading the participants to believe that they can do this too.

#### GROUP REUNION AND ULTREYA

This talk introduces the Via de Cristo method of persevering. It is the living example of a person who is part of a Group Reunion that supports the deepening of his/her faith and encourages him/her to share Christ with others in order to transform his/her environments. S/he also witnesses to the support of the greater Christian community through Ultreya. “This method works!” is the message of the talk. It is not possible, at best very difficult, to persevere alone. We need the support of our relationship with Christ and our relationships with our brothers and sisters in Christ to persevere. The witness in the talk shows how this worked in the life of the speaker. As in the previous talk, the emphasis is not how the Christian community supported the speaker through a difficult time, but supported his/her reaching out to others with Jesus’ love and forming Christian community with them. It is inspirational in nature and witnesses about a method that works.

#### THE FOURTH DAY

This talk emphasizes what has been presented in the previous talks and is another example of someone living the Via de Cristo method by influencing those around him/her

for Christ. It also prepares the participants for some of the common problems they may face when they get home. It is a joyful example of another person who shows by example that it is possible to persevere.

#### IV. HOW TO USE THE OUTLINES

There are three main sections of each talk outline. The first section is divided into four topics: Orientation, General Comments, Atmosphere and Suggestions for Writing This Talk. The Outline and the Clarification of the Outline follow.

The first section is important to provide the framework of the talk. It discusses the important points of the talk, the atmosphere of the weekend at the point that this talk is given and important suggestions for writing the talk. It talks more specifically about the points in the outline, which ones should be emphasized, appropriate examples and witnesses for the talk and where they should be inserted. It is important background information the speaker needs in order to write an effective talk that fits into the progression of the weekend.

The outline presents the points that must be made in the talk. It is expected that each talk contains these points and no others. Write-downs are underlined in the outline. If a participant writes down only those things, s/he will have a good outline of what was presented on the weekend. For those movements that use overheads, this is the minimum of what should appear on the overheads. There are a few places where the outline clearly says that a specific Bible verse should be included. In some talks there are more Bible verses than can be included and stay within the time frame, or there are several Bible verses that clarify a point being made. Use of Bible verses in those instances is at the discretion of the speaker.

The Clarification of the Outline section is meant to clarify the points made in the outline point by point. It is meant primarily for the enlightenment of the speaker and fleshes out the points in the outline. It expands and explains the thought. Although the speaker may want to use some of these ideas in his/her talk, it is not possible to use all of the Clarification in your talk. Bible verses in the Clarification may be included, but do not need to be used.

It is important to read all three sections of the talk outline before beginning to write a talk. This will help you understand what is to be presented in the talk, how it fits into the progression of the weekend and the atmosphere of the weekend at this point.

Pray first, last, and always. Pray for team formation during team meetings, since building Christian community is the first priority for the meetings. Pray before you begin preparing your talk. Pray as you read the material. Pray as you sit down to write the talk. Pray after the talk is written, asking for discernment whether you have said the things that need to be said. Pray for the people who will critique the talk. Pray for the participants who will hear the talk, that each one would hear what God wants him/her to hear in the talk. There will be prayer support as you give the talk. Pray for the discussion after the talk. Pray for the weekend as a whole. In other words, bathe the weekend and your part in it in prayer. After the weekend, continue to pray for the participants as they return home. Pray for their perseverance in the Via de Cristo method.

To God be the glory!

## **DEVELOPING CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY WITHIN OUR ENVIRONMENTS**

Recommended time: 35 minutes

### **I. Orientation**

This talk has been renamed Developing Christian Community Within Our Environments from Christian Community In Action to make it clear that this talk is a continuation of the Study and Evangelization of Environments talk. The witness in this talk is the speaker's participation in a Christian community that changed an environment, not what the Christian community has done for the speaker

Everything that has been presented from the beginning moments of the Via de Cristo weekend (a loving God who saves us by His grace), points to the fact that Christianity is communal as well as personal. God did not create us to live in isolation. As Christians, we need the strength that comes from being part of a Christian community. The purpose of this talk is to present the importance of Christian community as we grow in faith and share the message of Christ. Our Reunion Group encourages our spiritual growth (sanctification) and supports us as we live out our Christian faith in our environments and witness to others. By sharing our authentic personal experiences, we show that we need not walk alone. God created us to be in a community that acknowledges Him and serves Him. From the beginning of salvation history, God has not just chosen individuals, but people who are members of a community. Jesus did not minister alone but gathered a group of disciples around him.

Words from the service of Holy Baptism in the Lutheran Book of Worship support this concept: "made members of the church which is the body of Christ" (page 121), "members of the priesthood we all share" (page 124), "into the Lord's family...as fellow members of the body of Christ, and workers with us in the kingdom of God." (Page 125)

The main points of this talk are:

- We are to form Christian communities in our environments.
- Our mission is to transform our environments into living Christian communities.
- The purpose of Christian community is the evangelization of the world.
- God gives the community what it needs to accomplish this goal.

### **II. General Comments**

There are three steps in creating the backbone of Christian life: developing leaders (the Leaders talk), helping the leaders find their place in the mission (The Study and Evangelization of Our Environment talk) and linking them together to work more effectively when evangelizing their environments. This talk explains the third step. The group encourages, supports and helps Christians to grow in faith and to desire to do God's will in their lives. This prepares the participants for the message about Group Reunion and Ultreya in the next talk. We are more effective leaven in society when we help each other reach out into our environments and balance each other's weaknesses and strengths.

The remaking of society can only be accomplished through the building of self-giving Christian communities. Introducing new life into the environment--a grace-filled and self-giving Christ-like life--will transform people and, through them, the whole environment. These communities are channels of God's grace into the environments -- channels through which God can heal and help people realize their God-given potential.

All groups of Christians, whether they be families, small groups, congregations, or Christian organizations must function as channels of God's grace. A Christian community is a group of people working together to bring the world to Christ by spreading God's love, forgiveness and encouragement to others. It reflects the self-giving, the joy, the spirit of Christ. Its aim is a living, working group formed by the Spirit of God. It is Christ living among the ordinary people of the world transforming the world. This is the vision of the Via de Cristo movement.

### III. Atmosphere

The talk on Developing Christian Community within Our Environments bridges a very wide gap. It transports the listeners from thinking of themselves as isolated individuals to seeing themselves as part of a small, closely-knit group of Christians living out their lives as part of a larger evangelizing community -- the Church in the world. In this talk we get specific about the ideas presented to us in the Apostolic Action and Leaders talks. We give examples of what we can do and how we can do it. In the talk The Study And Evangelization of the Environment, we heard how to witness about Christ in our particular circumstances. Here we are impressed with the idea of working as a group - the body of Christ.

The biggest hurdle to understanding this talk is our culture's long history of "rugged individualism." We are taught that mature people are independent. The truth is that we all are interdependent. We need positive relationships to flourish as individuals and to be fully ourselves. Only in true community can we feel loved, unconditionally accepted and free to develop into what God created us to be. It is only in community that God's love and grace can fully develop and be experienced.

### IV. Suggestions for Writing this Talk

If you are part of a group that is transforming an environment, the talk will fall into place. If you have not had this experience, you will have more difficulty understanding the outline and the purpose of this talk. As you begin thinking about this talk, ask yourself: Do I really believe in the Via de Cristo method? Have I lived it? Do I walk the talk? The only witness pertinent to this talk is an example of an environment being transformed by a group -- a practical example and living story of Christians working together and changing the spirit of an environment. If you have not experienced this yourself, use an example of a group that has. The story begins in section II D by briefly revealing what the environment was originally like. In III D describe the development of the Christian community that penetrated the environment. In IV B describe the development of the Christian Community within this environment. In section VI B show how relationships in the environment are different and how the Christian community became the catalyst for change, making the total environment more Christ-like (self-giving).

## DEVELOPING CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY WITHIN OUR ENVIRONMENTS OUTLINE

### I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Why is each of you here?  
God called you by invitation from the Christian community.
- B. These members of the greater Via de Cristo community were changed by God's unconditional love and grace.
  - 1. They found Christian friendship with one another.
  - 2. They have a sense of mission to change their environments to be more self-giving (Christ-like). (Matthew 28:18-20)
- C. How wonderful if all of our environments could be like this weekend!
  - 1. Everyone would live surrounded by love and grace, able to develop to their full potential, living in the freedom and security of God's love and grace.
  - 2. Christ would be present to all and within each of us.
- D. Our mission: transform our environments into living Christian communities.
  - 1. Definition of Christian community: A Christian community is a group of people working together to share Christ in the world by spreading God's love, forgiveness and encouragement to others.
  - 2. It is achieved by introducing new life into an environment.
  - 3. Three steps toward that mission:
    - a. Develop leaders. (Leaders talk)
    - b. Help them understand their place in the mission. (The Study and Evangelization of the Environment talk)
    - c. Link them together to work more effectively. (this talk)
  - 4. We can more effectively impact our environments through small Christian communities working together as the body of Christ.

### II. NEED FOR COMMUNITY

- A. Our society teaches us that in order to be successful we must be self-sufficient. However, reality is:
  - 1. People need people. Loneliness and fear of isolation are two of mankind's greatest fears. The need for relationships with others is a basic human need.
  - 2. People cannot fully develop in isolation. We inevitably form into different kinds of groups. Some groups are short-term, some are long-term and they have a variety of purposes. They all show our need for sharing life with others.
- B. Society is made up of groups such as family, vocational, cultural, social, recreational, political, etc. Each group has a purpose that influences the atmosphere of the group. List several types of groups. (See clarification.)
- C. Most of these groups (environments) do not provide for our basic needs. Even many church groups never become a close community. They tend to be centered on the specific purpose of the group rather than centering their lives and purpose in Christ.
- D. Briefly describe the environment you will use in your witness as it was before being influenced by the Christian community.

- E. To effectively bring Christ to the world, we must form small Christian communities in each environment. For true Christian community to form, Christ-like loving, self-giving, and prayer for one another must be present.

### III. CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

- A. Christianity is based in community. It is God's plan. God gave us a family. We are baptized into a church family and the family of God. Scripture confirms God's plan for community to accomplish our mission. Thus, to enter into God's plan, Christians form communities where the mission of Christ forms a common bond. The nature, purpose and spirit of a Christian community are unique. (Matthew 18:20, Ecclesiastics 4:9-10, 12, Acts 2:44-47)
- B. Pastors and laity are partners in Christ's work. The pastor is the shepherd charged with enabling laity and guiding them in their walk with Christ and their attempts to reach out to others. (Malachi 2:7) Clergy and laity need to work together.
- C. Characteristics of a Christian Community
  - 1. Only one center: Jesus Christ and His mission.
  - 2. Living friendship with Christ.
  - 3. Guided by the Holy Spirit.
  - 4. Common idealism, spirit of self-surrender, trust, self-giving love.
  - 5. Desire to share Christ with the world
  - 6. Praying together. (I Thessalonians 5:17)
- D. Briefly describe the Christian community that was formed to influence the environment described in II D.

### IV. Process of Becoming Christian Community

- A. Developing Christian community among believers.
  - 1. Personal encounter.
  - 2. Sharing concerns and joys. Feeling understood.
  - 3. Forming friendships.
    - a. Giving of self to one another.
    - b. Based on our common love for Jesus and each other.
    - c. True friendship is the key to Christian community. In true friendship, animosity is not present.
- B. Developing Christian community in the world. Helping others become part of a Christian community.
  - 1. Identify other Christians in the environment who are also called to witness.
  - 2. Form a Christian community with them.
  - 3. Together saturate the environment with a sense of the gospel by living out the Christian ideal.
  - 4. Respect the personal freedom of each individual to respond to the gospel. Remember, conversion is God's work.
  - 5. Briefly illustrate the development of such a Christian community in the environment.
- C. Teamwork -- working together
  - 1. Recognize our mission. Teamwork is one of the keys to apostolic success.

Coordinated, planned, intentional action is better than haphazard, individual action. An isolated Christian is a paralyzed Christian.

2. The Christian community transforms the environment.
  - a. Know the environment, its leaders, and what will be necessary to change the group for Christ.
  - b. Work with fellow Christians. We must be aware of our own gifts and those of others to effectively work together.
  - c. Form Christian groups that share the ideal of spreading God's love in this environment.
  - d. Influence environments by living the Christian ideal and sharing Christ with others.

V. THE VIA DE CHRISTO METHOD IS A MEANS TO FORM CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

- A. We must establish a Christian community in each environment if we are to bring the world to Christ. We cannot hide our faith. We have to share the treasure of God's grace with others. Make a friend, be a friend, bring a friend to Christ. This is our mission. It is not an option. It is a requirement of following Christ.
- B. The method to begin, form and sustain small groups of Christians:
  1. Get to know one another.
  2. Share your joy, pain and concerns.
  3. Grow in friendship centered in Christ.
  4. Receive the love and grace of God.
  5. Give your idealism, self-surrender and spirit of charity
  6. Depend on the power of God.
  7. Pray together.

This weekend, as you experienced this at your table, a Christian community was formed.

- C. God-given characteristics needed to achieve this goal.
  1. Generosity.
  2. Depending on prayer and the power of the Holy Spirit. (Ephesians 6:18, Matthew 10:20, Mark 9:23b, Proverbs 3:5-7)
  3. Love and humility to work as a team.
  4. Sense of responsibility. (Matthew: 10:16)
  5. Dedication and initiative. (Luke 14:18-23 and 26-27)

Briefly illustrate these characteristics as they developed in the Christian community that influenced the environment you described earlier.

- D. Stages of community development. Forming authentic Christian community is not easy. Community develops as members learn to trust each other, become vulnerable and are honest about their feelings, even negative ones.
  1. Honeymoon stage. We are idealistic and committed and develop a bond with each other.
  2. Disillusionment stage. Problems among members emerge. Often the group falls apart at this stage. As a group, we must persevere in order to work through the problems that arise. We should reach out to each other in a spirit of encouragement and love.



3. Reality stage. The group works through its problems together. True community begins.

## VI. CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IS APOSTOLIC

- A. Christian community reaches out to others. It is not turned in on itself.
  1. Jesus sent his disciples out two by two. (Mark 6:7)
  2. The first Christians knew the value of community. (Acts 2:46-47; 4:31-32)
  3. We must create our own communities as living witnesses of Jesus' love both locally and globally.
  4. Christian community exists as long as its love reaches out to the entire world. (Galatians 3:26-28, Luke 10:25-37)
  5. This example of Christian life answers humanity's deepest needs.
- B. The purpose of Christian community is the evangelization of the world.
  1. Through teamwork and the power of the Holy Spirit, Christians can influence all environments for Christ, thereby influencing society.
  2. Christians are called to be the salt, light and leaven of the world.
    - a. Called to bring the good news of salvation to our environments, beginning with our families.
    - b. Called to stir up other groups of Christians who can, in turn, influence others in many areas of life.
    - c. Called to challenge the world's ideals that contradict the gospel, to become more Christ-like. (in social, economic, political, religious, education, health care, etc. environments) (Isaiah 42:1-4)
    - d. Called to be Christians who live the life we have presented. We need to "walk the talk." Will we present the real world to them or a caricature?
  3. Every Christian should be part of a vital community that, through its actions, is the source of Christian influence in the environment.
  4. The witness of how we live our lives is only the beginning; at some point we must proclaim the Word.
  5. As the final part of your witness show how the apostolic Christian community transformed the environment described earlier.

## VII. CONCLUSION

- A. Authentic Christian community is a true extension of Christ's hands into the world. He has no other plan. (I Corinthians 12:12) As part of the body, we all use our God-given gifts. All gifts are needed.
- B. The pain of the world is very real and very deep. People are crying to God for an answer, sometimes not even knowing they cry. God heard their cry and sent His son Jesus. We are sent to bring His message to the world, beginning where we are. This challenge is real. If we all give to others what we have experienced this weekend, our environments will take on the spirit of Christ. It begins with our families and extends to all our environments, even those that seem to be the most challenging. Thus, the world will become more Christ-like. The Church will be the people of God, the body of Christ, the light of the world. This may seem overwhelming to us as individuals, but we have the support of a Christian

community and God will give us what we need for the task. Our confidence is not in ourselves, but in Christ! (John 16:33)

## **CLARIFICATION OF THE OUTLINE DEVELOPING CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY WITHIN OUR ENVIRONMENTS**

This talk brings together the mission message of Via de Cristo and makes clear how all of the previous talks fit together. By this time participants should have a clear picture of the need for apostolic action and the kinds of things that need to be done, as well as a clear picture of the importance of being a living, witnessing member of the Church. In this talk, all these points are brought together in order that the participants see that the problems in environments and the problems in remaking the world can only be solved through the building of self-giving Christian communities. These communities are the channels of God's grace into the environment, channels through which God heals and raises people to their full potential. All groups of Christians—families, small groups, congregations or Christian organizations--must function as channels of God's grace. This talk gives a picture of HOW to do it--how we can structure Christian community. Community is presented as groups of Christians working together to spread God's love, forgiveness and encouragement to others for the purpose of bringing the world to Christ. At the end of the talk, participants should genuinely desire to work with others to make Christ's love present in their environments.

The talk leans heavily on the themes of the Layperson As Church In The World and Apostolic Action talks, showing how people need to work together to bring Christ's love to their environments, proclaim the kingdom of God, and be the Church in the world.

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

- A. This opening part of the talk asks the participants to contemplate their response to the weekend so far and the role of Christian community in the weekend.
- B. The participants are aware of the closeness that has developed at their table and of the role of the team on the weekend. Few realize that the team is only a small part of the Via de Cristo Community which made the weekend possible. The people in this community have experienced and been transformed by God's love, are part of the Via de Cristo community, and share in the vision of Via de Cristo—bringing Christ into their environments.
- C. Many wish they could bring this feeling of closeness home with them. This talk shows them how to develop close, loving Christian communities in their lives, while at the same time carrying out the apostolic mission of sharing Christ with the world.
- D. The mission of Via de Cristo is transforming our environments into living Christian communities.

1. Christian community is defined.
2. This concept was introduced in The Study and Evangelization of the Environment talk.
3. The three steps of providing the backbone are:
  - a. Develop Christian leaders who are directing their whole lives to God, growing in faith and sharing Christ with others. This was explained in the Leaders talk.
  - b. Understanding one's place in the Christian mission is explained in The Study and Evangelization of the Environment talk. Each person must return to his/her own situations motivated to exert a Christian influence in them. S/he is not asked to take on anything new, but to change the environments in which s/he is already participating.
  - c. The third step is explained in this talk. Christian leaders are linked together to work more effectively. The purpose of the Christian community in this context is meeting together to encourage, support and help one another carry out the Via de Cristo mission.
4. We need each other in order to fulfill this mission.

## II. NEED FOR COMMUNITY

- A. Personal independence, rugged individualism, is one of the values inherent in the development of this country. Being independent with an "I can do it myself!" attitude is a norm in our society.
  1. The result of this is a fear of being dependent and a feeling that we don't need anyone. Out of this comes a fear of loneliness and isolation, emotions common to all of us in varying degrees. They result from the absence of self-giving in the environment. The cry of loneliness is the most common of all emotions. Community is the opposite of isolation. Relationships give our lives meaning and purpose. We need others to talk to, to affirm us, and to reassure us of our value.
  2. Since we are social beings, we form ourselves into groups of all types, including family, vocational, social and special interest groups. Some groups are short-term and some are long-term. The importance of groups shows our need to interact with one another.
- B. Society creates groups of all types. Each group meets periodically for a purpose. God Himself created the family. Business and professional people develop associations. Workers form unions. Those with like political ideas form political parties. People with all kinds of special interests and hobbies form clubs such as the golf club, swim club, bridge groups, ham radio club, etc. Each group has a purpose that influences the atmosphere of the group. For example, the spirit of the group in a bowling league will be different from a Bible study even if the same people are involved.
- C. Communities are essential to all people, including Christians. We are social beings and other people must meet many of our needs. Most groups do not meet people's need to belong. There is little giving to each other, even in church groups.

People do not develop in isolation. Every environment has people who are

lonely, isolated and who need others to help them grow. They need to be loved, affirmed, and forgiven by others. In true Christian community, people are cherished and encouraged to grow in faith and develop their God-given gifts.

- D. Briefly describe the environment you are using in your witness as it was before being influenced by the Christian community.
- E. Successful Christian communities are a prerequisite to sharing Christ in the world. We need the support of others to fulfill this mission. Christian communities fail when the members do not give themselves to one another.

### III. CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

- A. Christianity is based on community. The level of self-giving, trust and caring among the people who make up the Christian community determine the maturity level of that community and reflect the power of Christ within the group. The Christian community's nature, purpose and spirit are unique. Its nature is to be one with God, sharing life in Christ. Its purpose is to be the channel of God's grace to the world. The spirit of the Christian community is the spirit of Jesus living in people attempting to direct their lives to Him and to discern His plan for their lives--Jesus with skin on. There are diverse expressions of this spirit, but a feeling of community and a unity of motivation and purpose are necessary.
- B. Pastors and laity are meant to work together, especially in the congregation and in groups within the congregation. Pastors are to be leaders who provide the spark and direction for the community. No matter what our calling or vocation, clergy and laity have one mission--bring Christ to the world. It is important for pastors and laity to work as partners, cooperating with one another to further God's kingdom.
- C. Characteristics of a Christian Community  
It is the attitude of the members of the community that makes it Christ-like and self-giving.
  - 1. One center -- Jesus Christ. Christian community is confident in God's power to change the world. Jesus provides the power and direction for each person's apostolic action to be effective.
  - 2. The motivation comes from living an authentic relationship with Jesus. His love propels us.
  - 3. The Holy Spirit leads the community. Allow time for study, meditation, sharing and discerning God's will.
  - 4. The Christian community embodies and models the Christian ideals of self-surrender, trust, and self-giving that we want to share with the world.
  - 5. The community has a common mission -- sharing Christ with the world. Its purpose is not to keep people safe, quiet and content but to be a force for transforming society.
  - 6. Pray together first, last and always. Pray without ceasing. (I Thessalonians 5:17) A vulnerable community trusts God to bring Christ to the world. God works through our faith and in spite of our weaknesses.
- D. Describe the Christian community that influenced the environment you previously mentioned.

#### IV. THE PROCESS OF BECOMING CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

God's plan is that environments exist for the good of the people within them and to encourage each person to grow and mature. The level of self-giving, trust and caring among the people who make up the community mark the maturity level of the community and the power of Christ in the group. People cannot develop without communication with others. Studies have shown that babies die without human touch. Likewise, only persons touched by God can reflect God and relate to each other in a community attitude of truth, life and love.

There are different processes in developing Christian community among those who already believe and those who do not.

- A. Developing Christian community among believers,
  1. We begin with personal encounters. Make a friend.
  2. We then share on a more personal level. We also encourage our friend to share and we truly listen so that our friend feels heard and understood. Be a friend.
  3. Friendship forms groups on a human level.
    - a. Regular contact with one another deepens and strengthens the group. As we begin to share our concerns and joys and to feel understood, friendships deepen. We begin giving to one another in many ways.
    - b. What makes a Christian group unique is the common love for Jesus and each other. We share our love for Christ. We also share a common mission that, obviously, is not present in other groups and environments.
    - c. Trust, self-giving and love are lived so that each person can develop into his/her full potential. When we accept each other unconditionally, animosity is not present.
- B. Forming Christian community in the world has a different purpose -- to share Jesus with others and bring our environments to a more Christ-like ideal.
  1. We need our Christian community to encourage us in this work.
  2. Jesus sent his disciples out two by two, knowing that they would need each other for support and encouragement. We, also, are to form Christian community with other believers. By living the Christian ideal--directing our whole lives to God--the atmosphere of the environment will change. This is the purpose of the Via de Cristo movement. A handful of Christians become community. This draws others who are then drawn into the community at various levels of understanding. Gradually, the whole atmosphere of the environment becomes one of self-giving, an atmosphere which promotes harmony in the group and spiritual maturity in its members. The environment remains true to its original purpose, but now it serves the people within, instead of the people serving forces from without.
  3. As the gospel influences the environment through the Christian community, the members of the community begin searching for God's purpose for them in the environment. This does not necessarily mean that every person is converted. What is important is that God's love is now active in the environment. Each person lives in an atmosphere where they are respected. In an attitude of self-giving, this handful of Christians, now a Christian

community, knows the source of its strength.

4. It is also important that we, as Christians, respect the freedom of each person to respond to the gospel as s/he see fit. We are called to be obedient, not successful. We can prepare ourselves and pray for others to open their hearts to hear and accept the gospel. We cannot make anyone believe. Conversion is God's work.
5. Illustrate the development of the Christian community in the environment you are describing in your witness.

C. Teamwork -- working together

1. It is important to have the support and encouragement of a group that shares a common mission. We have others to help plan the apostolic action and to share in the successes and failures we encounter when carrying out the mission--bringing the group to accept and follow Christ-like ideals. A single individual Christian in the environment can easily be dismissed as a unique and unusual individual. A whole group of Christians working together and reflecting God's love is more difficult to ignore or ridicule.

An isolated Christian is a paralyzed Christian. An image that might be useful: In a wood fire logs placed together produce a fire. If one log is pulled out of the fire, it will burn a short while on its own, but the fire will go out. The log will become cold even while the rest of the logs in the fire continue burning.

2. This handful of Christians in the community witnesses to the others.
  - a. Who are the leaders in this environment or group? It is important to influence the leaders first. They may be either positive or negative leaders. If the leaders become Christian and/or accept Christ-like ideals, and become more self-giving, they will influence the rest of the group.
  - b. As we plan our strategy, we must be aware of our gifts and the gifts of the others in our Christian community in order for us to work most effectively. Each person should work within the community using his/her spiritual gifts.
  - c. We become a small Christian community in this environment that purposefully reaches out in love to others.
  - d. We influence the environment first by our way of life so that others who see us begin to ask questions. Why are they like that? Why do they live this way? What or who inspires them? Note that this is all plural. The witness of the group shows that this is not unique to one individual, but that it is possible for life to have a fuller meaning. At this point we can begin evangelizing, sharing our faith in Christ.

V. THE VIA DE CRISTO METHOD IS A MEANS TO FORM CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

- A. This is a restatement of the purpose of this talk and the Via de Cristo method. Via de Cristo provides a way to bring together and sustain small groups of Christians. It is a method of getting to know one another by sharing and giving ourselves to each other. This is how friendships form. These friendships are centered in Christ and share in His love.

- B. This is the HOW of forming Christian community. A handful of Christians first become Christian community.
1. We must get to know each other on a deeper level.
  2. This happens by being willing to open up and become vulnerable to one another, sharing our joys, our concerns and our pain.
  3. Our relationship with one another deepens as we have a better understanding of who we truly are, not just the social facade we want most people to see.
  4. Only as we are open to receiving God's love, grace and forgiveness can we pass it on to others. We must be continually growing in faith--on-going sanctification.
  5. This equips us to share with others in a spirit of idealism, self-surrender and love.
  6. We know we can not do this in our own strength. We must depend on God to give us what we need for each task.
- C. God gives us what we need to accomplish His work. These gifts are present in the individual and also in the Christian community.
1. Generosity. Self-giving in true friendship is generously giving to others. (Apostolic Action talk)
  2. Faith. It is the Holy Spirit who strengthens our faith as we turn to God in prayer. (Piety talk)
  3. Teamwork. Working together in love and humility gives a stronger witness.
  4. Responsibility. Our mission, evangelizing the world, is not an option. It is given to each person who answers God's call to follow Him. We are to bring the gospel to the whole world, beginning at home. (Matthew 28:19)
  5. Dedication. Each person must see his/her mission within each environment—to live and witness in such a way that his/her environments become Christian communities. Christ is our common denominator.
  6. Briefly illustrate these characteristics of the Christian community that influenced the environment you described earlier.
- D. Stages of community building.  
This concept is introduced in this talk and will be expanded later. It should be presented with little or no further comment.
1. Honeymoon stage.  
We are committed and enthusiastic. We develop friendship and love for one another.
  2. Disillusion stage.  
The handling of this stage is crucial to the formation of true community. Enthusiasm wanes. Members are more reluctant to share or even to take the time to meet. Do not give up or let the group fall apart. Reach out to one another with love and understanding, even if your feelings are hurt. Persevere!
  3. Reality stage.  
This is possible only when everyone in the group is directing their lives to God and also seeking God's will for the group.

## VI. CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IS APOSTOLIC

The Christian community reaching out and giving of itself is not done in our power, but in Christ's power. We must continue to reach out to remain a viable Christian community. When the community stops giving, it turns inward and loses its mission and eventually dies. It is no longer an effective Christian community.

- A. The Christian community reaching out and giving of itself renews life.
  - 1. Jesus knew that in sending out his disciples by twos they could support and encourage one another in difficulties and share in the joy of success. Jesus promises to be present whenever two or three are gathered. He is present to us as individuals, but His presence in the group can propel the group to do things that would not be possible for them to do on their own or in their own strength.
  - 2. The early Church went to the temple each day (Acts 2:46), and by agreement met in Solomon's portico (Acts 4:32). They were of one heart and mind (Acts 4:32). They were filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke God's word with confidence (Acts 4:31). The result was that men and women in great numbers became believers. As in the early Church, we must create communities as living witnesses to Jesus' love.
  - 3. As each Christian community reaches out where it is, it becomes a witness of Jesus' love locally and globally in ever-widening circles.
  - 4. The world needs the call to freedom that the Christian community presents. It is not license to do your own thing as the world often interprets freedom; rather it is the freedom to become a whole, mature person. If this freedom existed in every environment, each environment would provide opportunities for growth and the kingdom on earth would be realized.
  - 5. This example of Christian life answers humanity's deepest needs. It will not be scorned or rejected once people have felt and experienced the authentic power of God's love--first from the Christian community and then, as they reach out to God, from Him directly. We each need to live out this Christian community in our own environments and to encourage others to start Christian communities where they are.
- B. This section applies the Via de Cristo strategy to our mission in the world.
  - 1. It is God's desire that every environment should be a Christian community. In today's disconnected world, most groups are not even a community, much less a Christian community. With the emphasis on the individual in our society, we have lost the art of sharing our lives with each other. Most conversation is either social or business-related. We need to go to a deeper level of sharing in the Christian community. We can begin by sharing our piety, study and apostolic action with other Christians in the environment in such a way that they begin sharing their lives with us.
  - 2. This core group of Christians, then, becomes the salt, light and leaven in the environment as the witness of their lives influences those around them.
    - a. Our life of grace is complete only as we work to draw others to share in this life, beginning with our families and those close to us.
    - b. We all must share in Christ's mission to reach the world. The person who accepts Christ's love and grace must then share it with others. This



is the test of Christian community. No matter how much love is shown among members in a group, no matter how much they share how God is working in their lives and no matter how much they share love and joy among themselves it is not a Christian community if the group does not reach out to the world.

- c. The world's ideals are likely to be in opposition to the Christian ideal, but we need to work at helping others be more Christ-like, even among people who don't accept Jesus.
- d. We need to be genuine and actually live what we "preach."
3. We will have an evangelizing Church when we have small evangelizing Christian communities in numerous environments.
4. At some point we have to share God's Word. Our living witness of a Christian life is what provides the opening. What do you have that they want in their own lives?
5. Briefly witness about the Christian community described earlier that transformed the environment. Show how the Via de Cristo method of evangelizing an environment worked. How is the environment different now?

## VII. CONCLUSION

The pain of the world is real, deep and often despairing. People are crying for an answer, not even knowing that they cry. God has heard their cry and sent us to listen and love them. This is God's challenge. It may seem over-whelming to us as individuals, but through the support and encouragement of our Christian community, we have the power to do it.

The kingdom is here! Christ has overcome all! How will we respond?