

SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR MANUAL



Published by the National Lutheran Secretariat of Via de Cristo

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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 role of the local Via de Cristo Secretariat is to be responsible to the systems, procedures, and policies as modeled and outlined by the National Lutheran Secretariat. The secretariat is responsible for establishing resources and developing a program for the 4th Day Community. The secretariat shall model Christ's respect for the Law and passion for the Gospel. Most importantly the role of the secretariat is to identify, equip, empower and release leaders to continue the mission statement. We want to see Cursillistas return to their local church with an increased desire to serve Him. To accomplish this, it is essential that a formal policy be introduced to develop leaders.

INTENT AND PURPOSE OF VIA DE CRISTO

Via de Cristo is a ministry focused on the renewal of the Christian life. It is directed toward having the truth and grace of Jesus Christ proclaimed to each of the participants on a Via de Cristo weekend. This is effected through the power and work of the Holy Spirit of God, for we believe that we cannot by our own reason or understanding believe in Jesus Christ our Lord or come to Him, but that the Holy Spirit calls us through the Gospel, enlightens us with his gifts, and sanctifies and keeps us in the true faith (see Luther's explanation to the 3rd Article of the Apostles' Creed). All activity during a Via de Cristo weekend, whether by team members or the supportive community, is done so that the Holy Spirit may work more effectively in the lives of participants. The presence and work of the Spirit is vital to every dimension of this ministry and to all aspects of our weekends.

Our purpose and intent is to provide a specific spiritual method and framework for the ongoing equipping of the saints, thus building up the Body of Christ. Great care is taken that the focus be kept on what God has graciously done for us through Christ, and how it applies to the participants.

Via de Cristo is intended for baptized persons who already know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. It is true that the faith of many has been vitally renewed or awakened through this experience. For this, God is given all the praise. However, "conversion" is not a goal or focus. Participants are encouraged to persevere in their faith in order that they may become vessels of God's grace to others. It is assumed that there is a desire on the part of the participant to deepen their relationship and walk with Christ. All of the Palanca (prayer and sacrifice) in support of the weekend is directed primarily toward this end.

THE AUTHENTIC THREE-DAY WEEKEND OF VIA DE CRISTO

Introduction

Via de Cristo is a Christian renewal ministry, inspired by God. We do not claim to be the only way of renewal, but the years have testified to the ability of this method to provide healing, strength, an effective guide for Christian living, and a source for committed leaders in the Church.

Via de Cristo developed from the earliest Cursillo® method, and has remained committed to that process down through the years. This has enabled us to adhere to the essential elements of the weekend, and maintain the integrity of this ministry. A common expression among us is “the more you know of Via de Cristo - the less you want to change it.” It has been necessary for us to define what is basic to a weekend experience in order to preserve the method and insure its authenticity. This has been a unifying strength throughout our history.

Essentials of a Via de Cristo Weekend

An authentic three-day weekend requires an authentic 4th Day Community. We hold weekends *so that* participants may become part of a 4th Day Community. Because of the warmth and intensity of a Via de Cristo weekend, we will always be tempted to emphasize this experience for its own sake. A balanced approach will insure that each dimension of the Via de Cristo experience will contribute to the ministry’s mission and purpose. CHART 1 that follows illustrates how this approach contributes to the health and vitality of Via de Cristo. If we neglect any one of these emphases, the strength of our ministry is compromised.

Each weekend has a number of activities that are *essential*. There are other things which may be included so long as they do not interfere with the flow of the weekend or distract from its main objectives. These need to be prayerfully considered by each local secretariat.

For the weekend, we have a plan and a general awareness of what needs to be accomplished. Through long experience, we know what normally happens, so that, at any given moment, what should happen and how it should happen may, in fact, happen.

CHART 1

THE STRUCTURE OF THE VIA DE CRISTO METHOD

The Three Parts of the Via de Cristo

PRE-WEEKEND

WEEKEND

POST-WEEKEND/4th DAY

The Three Facets of the Post-Weekend/4th Day

SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

GROUP REUNION

ULTREYA

The Three Disciplines of 4th Day Living

PIETY

STUDY

ACTION

The Three Steps of Apostolic Action

MAKE A FRIEND

BE A FRIEND

BRING THAT FRIEND TO CHRIST

The following are the **essential elements** of an authentic Via de Cristo weekend:
***Palanca---Silent Retreat---72 Hours---Five Meditations---14/15 Rollos---Note Taking--
Discussions---Posters---DeCuria Sharing---Celebration of Repentance (Examination of
Conscience)---Daily Communion---Closing and Presentation of Crosses.***

Non-Essentials or “Adiaphorous”

Some may be surprised at the brevity of the above list. Through the years, many local secretariats have added other activities to their weekends. To name a few: skits, send-offs, foot washings, singing for meals, joke time, trinkets and serenades. These things are “*adiaphorous*.” That is to say that they are not inherently right or wrong, but are not considered essential to the purpose of the weekend. This can be a sensitive issue in local communities, where some of these extras have reached such a beloved status that they may be viewed as essential.

More is NOT better. It is not our intention to have a weekend full of “good things” only to miss what is essential. In an already highly-structured schedule, we want to be careful so as not to crowd out important time for reflection, rest and community building. As Spiritual Directors, we also want there to be adequate opportunities for participants to seek Spiritual Direction during their pilgrimage.

A word about Palanca. As Spiritual Director, we need to be advocates of this wonderful gift. It under-girds all that is done on a weekend. Genuine Palanca is deep, intentional, and selfless prayer; in a word it is “*sacrificial*.” It takes place before, during and after the weekend. Palanca letters are written to participants so that they will be aware of the many efforts on their behalf. Palanca is misapplied when an inordinate amount of time is spent providing trinkets or things. Gifts of love are nice, but in and of themselves they are not Palanca, nor are they essential. It is advisable for each local secretariat to examine weekend practices on a routine basis, to assure their validity and contribution to an authentic weekend.

An authentic three-day weekend will emphasize the essentials, limit the adiaphorous and eliminate what is detrimental!

Primary Positions and Roles for a Weekend

The following positions or roles are basic to every team.

RECTOR(A) - An experienced layperson who accepts responsibility for calling, training and leading the team for a weekend. This person is the only one empowered by the secretariat to be in charge of the weekend. He/she functions much like the captain of a ship. He/she operates under guidelines set forth by the National Lutheran Secretariat and local secretariats. A Rector prayerfully selects all lay team members or shares this responsibility with other leadership of the team and also provides for their training and formation as a Christian community. The Rector delegates specific duties and oversees their performance. He/she is sensitive to the needs of the pilgrims and the team by being open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

SPIRITUAL DIRECTORS – The Lead Spiritual Director must be ordained has been trained in and is in support of the Via de Cristo Ministry. Other clergy can be Chaplains and Associates in Ministry. Some secretariats have used seminary students with at least two years into their studies. The SD Team gives the five Grace Rollo and the Meditations during the weekend. They set the spiritual tone for the weekend, advise the weekend team on theological matters and counsel individuals when needed. They plan and conduct all worship services. Team members are advised to alert Spiritual Directors of pilgrims who are experiencing difficulties.

TEN ROLLISTAS - Team members who deliver Rollos to stimulate participants and promote discussion. It is urged that one giving a talk should have served on at least one other weekend and NOT in the Rollo Room. They are neither teachers nor problem-solvers. They are the *catalysts* for the sharing and discussing of the various talks at the tables. There may also be Table Leaders who do not give talks but assist in keeping table participation on track.

Team selection is a prayerful process. The number on the team varies from secretariat to secretariat, depending on the number of pilgrims and the nature of the facility utilized. No ONE task or role is more important than another. The weekend is God's gift but it also depends on each team member serving to the best of his/her ability. An attitude of servanthood will cover a multitude of eccentricities.

It is important for all of the Spiritual Directors to understand the purpose and vision of Via de Cristo and the vital role we play on a weekend. We need to be committed to full participation in team preparation, so that we may be an integral part of the community. Our Rollos need to stay within the flow of the overall weekend message. We need to be prepared to offer gentle Spiritual guidance to participants, realizing that in-depth counseling is not possible.

This new three-day community should be protected from outside distractions as much as possible and be enveloped in prayer. This is the job of both the team and the entire 4th Day Community. Free time needs to be worked into the schedule to allow “breathing space” for everyone. The regimented schedule is comfortable for some and problematic for others. Pilgrims need to feel the freedom to proceed at their own pace in grasping the message of the weekend. This requires sensitivity and understanding on the part of all team members.

The general atmosphere of the three-day experience needs to be prayerful, reflective and above all sincere. All pilgrims need to feel the openness and honesty that gives rise to an authentic Christian community. This is not to say that all will be on a serious level. Lighter moments will be experienced naturally in a climate of openness, trust and community.

The Dynamics of the Weekend

In this section, we will consider an overview of the atmosphere, the flow and the Rollos of the weekend, and what they seek to accomplish. Much that goes into a weekend has an influence on the participants, enabling them to open up and break down barriers to accepting God’s grace and love in their lives. For continuity, we will use the term *pilgrim* for those attending the Via de Cristo. Other terms, such as pilgrim or weekender or participant, are used in different parts of the country.

If there is any admonition that must be heard it is this one: *it is one long talk broken down into 14/15 sections*. Ideas build steadily, one upon another. The Rollos and meditations probe each person and help each one to examine their “world”, finding new ways to relate the Gospel and God’s Grace to everyday life. There is a progression through the entire weekend that is consistent through the meditations, the talks, the music and the discussions. This is why nonessentials need to be looked at closely to ensure that the flow is not interrupted or broken.

With the first Rollo on Friday, we start “low key.” This gradually builds up all the way to Sunday afternoon with the personal Palanca and the Clausura (personal Palanca is offered in some secretariats at other times). But we also start “low key” each day, building toward the end of that day. The lay Rollos reflect this. Ideal is very low key, no personal sharing at all. Laity has a little more. Piety, on Friday night has more sharing and more intensity. Saturday the same trend occurs from Study in the morning until Leaders that night. And on Sunday the same is true, with Environment moving toward Christian Community and the Total Security in the 4th Day. Each talk relates strongly to some, but not all. Each individual speaker will relate strongly to some, but not all. God uses each team member differently. But make no mistake, God uses each one.

During the three days of the Via de Cristo weekend, by the grace of God and the work of the Holy Spirit, we will become a community of the Living Word. Without pressure or coercion, without mentioning Via de Cristo per se, Christ will awaken within pilgrims a desire to embrace a grace-filled life. The team will slowly provide living examples of the

Christian life in three areas: Piety, Study and Action. By experiencing the faith of others and sharing worship and Holy Communion with them, pilgrims are encouraged to commune with Jesus himself.

All elements of the weekend are woven together; not just rollos, meditations and worship, but also music and meals, room ambiance and awareness of Palanca. In this framework, the Holy Spirit works in the hearts of pilgrims. See following Chart 2.

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|---|--|--|--|
| <p>FIRST EVENING</p> <p>Meditation: Know Yourself What am I doing here?</p> <p>Meditation: The Waiting Father What does God want of me?</p> <p>Silent Spiritual Retreat until morning chapel.</p> | <p>DAY ONE</p> <p>Meditation: The Three Glances of Christ What does Christ see in me?</p> <p>Rollo 1 – IDEAL What is a human being? One who lives by an Ideal.</p> <p>Rollo #2 - GOD’S GRACE What is a Christian? One whose ideal is...</p> <p>Rollo #3 – LAITY Where is this ideal to be found and lived? In the Church....</p> <p>Rollo # 4 GRACE IN ACTION How is the ideal lived out? By faith...</p> <p>Rollo #5 - PIETY How can I live in Grace? By offering my heart....</p> | <p>DAY TWO</p> <p>Meditation: The Figure of Christ What do I see in Christ?</p> <p>Rollo #6 – STUDY How can I live in Grace? By using my mind to gain knowledge of Christ.</p> <p>Rollo # 7 – MEANS OF GRACE How can I live in Grace? By hearing God’s call and receiving God’s Grace in the Sacraments.</p> <p>Rollo #8 – APOSTOLIC ACTION How can I live in God’s Grace? By offering my hands for service.</p> <p>Rollo #9- OBSTACLES TO GRACE What is likely to block my progress in my life in Grace?</p> <p>Rollo #10 - LEADERS How can I move beyond these obstacles? By acting with others as...</p> | <p>DAY THREE</p> <p>Meditation: Christ’s Message to You What is Christ saying to me?</p> <p>Rollo # 11 – ENVIRONMENT What do leaders do? Develop a plan and study the environment.</p> <p>Rollo # 12- LIFE IN GRACE Where do I begin? By developing a personal rule for life.</p> <p>Rollo #13 – CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IN ACTION Can these plans actually work? Yes!</p> <p>Rollo#14 – TOTAL SECURITY AND FOURTH DAY Where can I turn for help and support? (Reunion Group) Can we do this? Yes, if we do it together! (Ultreya)</p> <p>Items in bold are presented by Spiritual Directors.</p> |
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Thursday Night

The weekend starts with a meaningful experience, the Silent Spiritual Retreat. Its purpose is to move the pilgrim out of his or her world to be receptive to the message of the weekend. Pilgrims may respond to the silence in varying ways. Some may find this boring, tedious, or threatening---- or some may find peace, comfort, or an especially satisfying time with Christ. The opening meditation is “Know Yourself”, an invitation to openness. “The Prodigal Son” (“The Waiting Father”) reminds us of our wanderings, but also of the One who waits to welcome us home. The silent retreat is to awaken self-examination and a desire to be in God’s grace.

Friday

On Friday, the intention is to bring us face to face with ourselves. We try to answer the question, “Who am I?” A set of values and ideals for life, higher and more spiritual than the pilgrims may have held, is presented. In the meditation “The Three Glances of Christ” examples are given of three people on whom Christ directed his gaze. Each one responded differently. The implication for pilgrims: “How will I respond to the gaze of Christ?”

The content of the five Rollos on Friday present clearly the ideal of living a life in grace.

Ideal - This talk seeks to convince listeners of the need for having an ideal in life. It is not a “spiritual talk” per se and God is not mentioned. The point is made that we all have ideals of one sort or another, but that we have to examine our ideals to see what they are and where they are leading us. No attempt is made to point out any concrete ideal. The Rollo ends with the challenge to identify our guiding ideal in life. This prepares pilgrims for listening attentively to what follows.

The Nature of God’s Grace (Habitual Grace) Here is presented God’s supreme ideal: that all of God’s children might live in God’s grace and love. This Rollo provides the doctrinal nucleus for all the others. It is the truth of God’s habit of loving us. It’s a love that is undeserved, and is at the heart of God’s Divine nature. This is expanded in subsequent S.D. talks, while the lay talks show in detail how this life in grace is to be lived.

Laitiy (Laymen in the Church) - This Rollo seeks to initiate in pilgrims an active response to God’s grace. We learn that the Church is the family of God through which Christ can speak to the world today. Lay persons ARE the Church, the people of God, and have a mission of sharing God’s love with others as living members of the Body.

God’s Grace in Action - (Actual Grace) We are reminded in this talk that we are not left alone in our efforts to live a dynamic Christian life. The Holy Spirit lives and works in us, enlightening our minds and inspiring our wills. As the Body of Christ, we are all in this together, encouraging, building-up, nurturing, and exhorting each other through prayer and fellowship. Palanca is introduced at the end of this talk as the

spiritual “lever” of prayer and sacrifice that upholds the weekend as well as our lives. Palanca examples are shared to demonstrate the power of the lever.

Piety - This is a key Rollo of the weekend. Pilgrims are generally less defensive and more trusting by this time on Friday. This talk has the mark of “personal testimony,” and is presented in such a way that we can see in the speaker an embodiment of true piety. The introduction of the tripod of Piety, Study and Action is shared. False piety and true piety are explored. It is important here that pilgrims understand this aspect of a Christian’s life is dependent on God’s grace (as opposed to human determination). The testimony of the Rollista should emphasize this.

Normally a change in the atmosphere of the weekend will be evident after the Piety Rollo. Up to now, the weekend has been relatively subdued. Community has been building slowly. This talk sounds a more personal note, and pilgrims will begin to ask themselves about their own walk with Christ.

Friday evening is the first De Curia. Community has been building around individual tables. Now, we begin to shape a broader community through the sharing, the applause and the laughter in this summary of the ideas of the day. An activity centering on Celebration of Repentance/Examination of Conscience is held this evening. Some secretariats present *Stations of the Cross*, some give the *Rag Man* skit and others have similar activities. Spiritual Directors are available for counsel following this. Hopefully, team members have encouraged pilgrims in need of this to seek it out.

Saturday

By the beginning of the second day, the pilgrims may be asking themselves, “Can I attain this ideal? How can I become a dynamic, growing 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.

We start the 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 that attracts us. We are encouraged to consider a more personal, intimate friendship with him. At the morning worship, many are freer in sharing the passing of the peace. This may include hugs as a form of greeting, though no pilgrim should feel forced to participate in this.

The talks for Saturday no longer stress the ideals, the beauty of the calling, or the importance of one’s relationship with God. Rather, while still echoing the essential message of the first day, we move on to patiently explain how the pilgrims can live and maintain a life in Grace.

Study - This talk is not a dissertation on study. Its purpose is to make us feel the need to grow in and deepen our knowledge of Christ in our life in God’s grace. The Rollo intends to show that this life must be conscious and enlightened so that we can give testimony to

our faith. It should appeal to persons of varied intelligence. Study includes the Bible, Christian books and Christian music.

The Means of Grace: Word and Sacrament - This Rollo can be briefly introduced by describing the intervention of God in human history and in human lives. It may cover: 1) the wonderful works of God among the people of Israel; 2) the work of Christ in redeeming humanity; and 3) the work of Christ in his continuing presence, making himself present to us through His Church, and in particular through the Sacraments - and in particular through the Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion. The rollo should use tangible elements such as water, bread and wine and the cross to illustrate how these Sacraments feed our souls daily throughout all the events and experience of our lives all the way to our death.

Apostolic Action - This talk, along with the Leaders Rollo, serves as a transition to the third day of the weekend, where the emphasis is on our activities in the 4th Day. Its purpose is to show that the life in grace flows into a life of action, that grace causes action, and that apostolic action is a logical expectation of a grace filled life. Apostolic Action is faith in God which is active in love toward others. The Rollista should share personal examples. This Apostolic Action is in response to the grace of God which has been imparted to us.

Obstacles to Grace - This Rollo reminds us that there are genuine difficulties we all encounter as we live our lives in God's grace. It is presented in a realistic, but positive way. It deals with the **devil**, the **world**, and our own **flesh**, and how these obstacles manifest themselves in our own minds and hearts, to frustrate our life and spiritual growth. It calls for trust in God to live our lives triumphantly, overcoming obstacles by deepening our piety, study and action.

Leaders - The Leaders talk is a complement to the Action talk. It points out that in the Church, leaders are not only those who are overseeing organizations within a local church, but include everyone who bears witness to Christ in his or her sphere of influence in life. Each is called in Baptism to a life of service, leading others through their servanthood.

God's grace provides supernatural qualities to complement our natural qualities, enabling us all to exercise leadership in our Christian walk. Each person is a leader as the Holy Spirit assists them in giving witness to their faith in Jesus Christ.

Saturday is a full day. During the afternoon in some communities, each table is asked to share an altar/ chapel visit together, giving opportunity for each to pray, if they so desire. This can be a very emotional experience for some pilgrims. Saturday's De Curia is usually more free-wheeling than on Friday. Pilgrims often seem to feel freer to share since a deeper sense of community has developed by this stage of the weekend.

Sunday

By the beginning of the third day, most of the pilgrims are beginning to feel renewed, committed and filled with enthusiasm. The first day, we studied about ourselves and our ideal; and God's ideal. The second day, we entered a more intimate friendship with Christ. Today our thoughts are projected out into the world. The third day is a call to apostolic action. We are told how to bring Christ to the world in which we live, and how to hold on to what we have learned in the Via de Cristo weekend. We begin with the meditation, "Christ's Message to the Pilgrim". We hear that Christ has called us: "I have chosen you and have appointed you that you should go and bear fruit" (John 5:16).

This day's Rollos present instructions on how to maintain a healthy Christian life.

Environment - This talk explores the world, its people and its institutions, places where we can be of influence for Christ. We cannot be utilized by God to Christianize the world in which we live unless we understand the world. This Rollo helps us to examine specific areas in which we can live out our personal apostleship: in our family, our workplace, our community.

Life in Grace - This is the final Spiritual Director's talk of the weekend. It answers the growing concern of pilgrims as to how they can maintain, in their daily lives, the closeness with Christ that they have been experiencing during these three days. It explains each of the practices of piety, study, and action, showing how they can become a part of our daily lives. We are reminded that these things are not ends in themselves, but grace filled opportunities to gain a conscious and growing awareness of Christ. This is the time to explain and emphasize the need for Spiritual Direction in the 4th Day.

Christian Community in Action - In this talk, we get much more specific about the ideas presented in the Action and Leaders talks. We are given examples of what we can do and how we can do it. We are impressed with the idea that, though we are individuals, we are never individualistic. As Christians, we are part of the Body of Christ, the Church. Examples are given to show how, working in concert, Christians can participate in changing their world.

Total Security in the 4th Day - In many secretariats, the weekend ends with this talk as the 14th and final talk. It combines the thoughts of Total Security and Fourth Day into one talk. The individual talks can of course be retained. Basically, this Rollo is a call to action on the part of the pilgrims - to practice what they have learned. They are encouraged to get into reunion groups, attend Ultreyas and seek spiritual direction. They are urged to be sponsors of others for future weekends. They are encouraged to become the leaders God wants them to be in their churches, communities, families and workplaces.

By Sunday, everyone is tired. Though inspiring, the weekend has been intense. The tight structure begins to loosen. Everyone keeps taking notes and discussing the talks. The Rollo Room Team keeps encouraging. They reinforce the Rector's emphasis on a 4th Day strategy. They testify to the necessity and importance of group reunions.

As team members, we must remind one another that there may be a pilgrim or two that have not grasped the message of the weekend. We cannot and should not force an inauthentic response from anyone. We have to let the Holy Spirit continue to work, and even must respect each one's freedom to choose not to be a part of the community. Any spiritual encounter must always remain between a pilgrim and God. The message may not come to some until after the weekend, when they have had further opportunity to absorb Christ's call and have experienced the support of the Christian community.

The Clausura is both a celebration of the weekend experience for pilgrims and team, plus an opportunity for the entire 4th Day Community to welcome new Cursillistas. Opportunity is given for pilgrims to share what the weekend means to them and representatives from the community offer encouragement.

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CONDENSED OUTLINES OF LAY ROLLOS

Friday

IDEAL (The Call to Be Fully Human) - 20 minutes

- Humans as Superior Beings
- Consequences of Being Human
- Being Human - The Possibilities/Limitations of Self
- Giving as the Measure of Human Development
- The Process of Being Fully Human
- What is an Ideal?
- Qualities of an Authentic Ideal
- The Influence of the Ideal on Life
- Kinds of Ideals
- The Necessity of Knowing Our Ideal

ACTUAL GRACE: THE NATURE OF GOD'S GRACE (Spiritual Director) – 30 minutes

LAITY (The Layperson as the Church in the World) - 20 minutes

- God's Plan for the World
- What is the Church?
- The Mission of the Church
- The Specific Mission of the Layperson
- Characteristics of the Laity's Mission

GRACE IN ACTION (Spiritual Director) – 30 minutes

PIETY 20 minutes

- False Piety
- Authentic or True Piety
- Characteristics of Authentic Piety
- Practices of Authentic Piety

* Detailed explanations of these talks and expanded outlines may be viewed on the NLS website

Saturday

STUDY - 20 minutes

- Definition of Study - The Need for Study
- Objectives of Study Methods
- Study Obstacles
- Study Remedies
- Resources

THE MEANS OF GRACE: WORD AND SACRAMENT - 40 minutes

(Spiritual Director)

APOSTOLIC ACTION - 20 minutes

- What is Apostolic Action?
- False Concepts of Apostolic Action Authentic Apostolic Action
- Qualities of Apostolic Action
- The Method of Apostolic Action

OBSTACLES TO GRACE (Spiritual Director) –30 minutes

LEADERS - 20 minutes

- Definition of a Leader
- Natural Qualities of Leaders
- Supernatural Qualities of Leaders
- Christian Leaders
- Me, a Leader?

Sunday

ENVIRONMENT (The Evangelization of the Environment) - 20 min.

- Christianity as Community
- The Environment
- How We Can Be a Part of Transforming Our Environment for Christ
- The Method of God's Transformation of the Environment

LIFE IN GRACE (Spiritual Director) – 30 minutes

CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IN ACTION - 20 minutes

Need for Community

Christian Community

The Via de Cristo Method as a Means to Form Christian Community

Christian Community is Apostolic

TOTAL SECURITY (Group Reunions and Ultreyas) - 20 minutes

(This may be combined with FOURTH DAY as the final Rollo -

TOTAL SECURITY IN THE FOURTH DAY)

The Via de Cristo Method of Perseverance

The Purpose of the Group Reunion

Characteristics of the Group

Stages of Group Development

The Group and Its Reunion

Ultreya - The Reunion of the Groups

The Purpose and Mission of the Ultreya

Format of the Ultreya

FOURTH DAY –

Your Mission

Your Responsibility

Dangers Encountered in the Fourth Day

Solutions to Avoid These Dangers

What the Christian Should Be

What the Christian Should Know

What the Christian Should Have

Life is a Lasting Via de Cristo

If these two are combined, the time should be extended to 40 minutes.

GUIDELINES FOR SPIRITUAL DIRECTORS/CLERGY

Now that we have considered the purpose of our weekends, what constitutes an authentic three-day experience, the dynamics and flow of a weekend, and a basic outline of the laity talks; it is time to turn our attention to the details involved in serving as Spiritual Directors on a Via de Cristo weekend. “Sample” Rollos are not provided in this edition. The outlines provided should be more than adequate for a pastor to fashion a talk in his or her own unique style. Those writing Rollos for the first time will find a rich resource in those who have served on previous teams in their own secretariat or the National S.D. Meditations, text and/or outlines are provided. These may be adapted or modified as deemed appropriate.

It is important that Spiritual Directors are knowledgeable and supportive of the TOTAL Via de Cristo Ministry. This includes pre-weekend, weekend and post weekend aspects. As Spiritual Directors, we are not free to modify the method or any parts of it, based on our own theological preferences. If there are any potential problems in this regard, they should be discussed in advance with the Secretariat Spiritual Director or the National Spiritual Director. Where such things cannot be resolved, pastors should feel free to decline to serve on a weekend. We respect and appreciate any and all ideas which will enhance the goals of the Via de Cristo ministry. At the same time, we realize that our goals are limited and are not inclusive of all aspects of Christian faith and practice. We sincerely believe this specific, highly-structured experience has borne much fruit and will continue to do so. Our aim is not to make Via de Cristo ministry all things for all people, but to use this instrument of God as faithfully and effectively as possible for the continued spiritual growth and development of Christians.

The Selection of Spiritual Directors

- 1) The **Lead** Spiritual Director should have served in the Rollo Room least two times, be active in the Via de Cristo ministry, and be committed to serve on this specific team. They should be selected by the Secretariat’s Spiritual Director(s).
- 2) The Palanca Spiritual Director should have served on at least one team, be active in the Via de Cristo community, and be committed for the weekend.
- 3) Other team clergy must have been pilgrims, be active, and be committed to the weekend.

It is the Lead Spiritual Director’s responsibility to assure that all talks reflect a theological perspective consistent with our Lutheran tradition. This is necessary to insure that our weekends and our ministry maintain their integrity as the Lutheran entity we are.

- 4) ALL S.D.s must be committed to having Rollos prepared in advance for delivery at team meetings and subsequent critiquing by the Lead Spiritual Director. As pastors we need to set the example and lead the way in this regard. If we affirm that the weekend consists of ONE talk given in 14/15 segments, it is important that we participate in the integrative process.

- 5) All clergy on weekends should be able pastoral counselors.

Teams of Clergy are formed by the Secretariat Spiritual Director. Seek to attain a balance in pastoral team selection (old/young, male/female, outgoing/retiring, experienced/inexperienced, etc.), if possible. Mentoring is encouraged

Responsibilities of Spiritual Directors in Team Preparation

The Lead Spiritual Director will:

- 1) Make clergy Rollo assignments for the weekend before team meetings begin and pass on this information to the Rector. Assign self to present the “Know Yourself” Meditation and the “The Means of Grace: Word and Sacrament” Rollo.
- 2) Assign meditation and worship service responsibilities for the weekend. Plan worship for the weekend, including music (in consultation with music team).
- 3) Work closely with the Rector primarily as a spiritual advisor, realizing that Via de Cristo is a lay movement.
- 4) Exercise spiritual leadership with the team members both clergy and lay.
- 5) Promote a growing Christ-centered atmosphere during team formation. This can be reinforced through worship, communion and prayer at team meetings.

All Spiritual Directors will:

- 1) Pray for each team member, and pray for pilgrims as they consider their call to attend the weekend.
- 2) Attend at a minimum three team meetings, though more is encouraged. Help in leading worship and communion. Chapel/Palanca Team should provide communion elements for each meeting.
- 3) Study the Spiritual Director Manual in preparation for serving on the team to understand the substance and purpose of each talk, and the dynamics of the weekend. Spiritual Directors will be viewed as “theological experts.” Be prepared.
- 4) Commit oneself to the entire weekend, including staying on site evenings and on site Sunday morning (you may have to make arrangements).
- 5) View your participation on a team as an extension of your parish ministry.

Spiritual Directors on the Weekend

Inasmuch as the Rector is directly responsible for all external and scheduling aspects of the weekend, Spiritual Directors are in a supportive role to the Rector. The Rector has final authority in those matters. *Spiritual Directors, however, are responsible in the areas of spiritual direction, doctrinal soundness and matters of liturgy. Wherever questions of this nature arise, the Lead Spiritual Director has final authority. This authority, however, should be low-key and exercised in love.*

As for the three days, Spiritual Directors exercise a ministry of presence. If we prepare for all the Rollos, meditations, liturgies and Palanca in advance of the weekend, we can then be fully involved and sensitive to the dynamics occurring on the weekend itself, as well as individual responses to what is happening. Of utmost importance is our supportive ministry and availability to the Rector and all team members.

The primary focus for all team members is on the pilgrims and their needs and growth. As Spiritual Directors, we want to be open and accessible to them at all times. We want to get to know them by name and establish personal contact with them during the weekend. These three days may actually be the first opportunity some pilgrims have ever had to experience a pastor as a brother/sister and friend.

During the weekend, Spiritual Directors need to:

- 1) Pray for the pilgrims, the team and the Via de Cristo ministry.
- 2) Be natural leaders, embodying the Gospel of grace.
- 3) Be present at all functions (at least one Spiritual Director should always be present in the Rollo Room while pilgrims are present).
- 4) Join Rollistas in prayer prior to their talks, walk with them to and from the Rollo Room, and join them for prayers of thanksgiving afterward (as assigned by Lead Spiritual Director).
- 5) Attend all team meetings during the weekend.
- 6) Involve both team and pilgrims as lectors in worship (giving them texts in advance).
- 7) Be available for counseling on Thursday evening and throughout the weekend, being flexible in our style of pastoral care (e.g. Prayer for healing, active listening, confession and absolution, guidance).
- 8) Be available for assignment to preside at Holy Communion for the 4th Day Community before the serenade and/or before the Clausura.
- 9) Assist in the distribution of the crosses.
- 10) Be prepared to make a brief statement at the Clausura.

There may be additional things asked of Spiritual Directors in local secretariats. Review the above items with the Lead Spiritual Director of your weekend.

SPIRITUAL DIRECTORS' MEDITATIONS

Thursday Evening

MEDITATION #1

“KNOW YOURSELF”

Purpose and Setting

This meditation begins the process of preparing the pilgrims to let go of their anxieties so that they may listen to and accept the message that will be shared with them on the weekend. It does this by encouraging the pilgrims to be more aware of whom they are, why they have come, and to be honest with themselves about their potentialities and limitations. They are invited make themselves comfortable in their chairs, to look inside themselves and see what God already sees. This truth and self-knowledge can set them free to respond to God. It should be stressed that each person's situation is unique, and that there is no “expected response” to the Via de Cristo experience. Some have found it helpful to do some simple “centering” exercises to prepare pilgrims to listen to this meditation, and to transition into the silent retreat.

The Meditation

Good evening! I invite you to sit back, relax, and think for a few moments along with me. This is the first of several meditations we Spiritual Directors will share with you this weekend. A *meditation* is a sharing of some thoughts (usually based on a scriptural theme) for your personal and prayerful reflection. Try to un-cloud your mind while you are here this weekend, so that you can use this valuable time apart to dialogue with your God. “Relaxed” may not the word you would use to describe how you feel at this moment. You are probably wondering what you've gotten yourself into here. You may be asking yourself, “Will I be asked to do things I don't want to do? The answer is no - you will not be forced to do anything. It is our deep desire that each of you will use the time here to relax, to listen, to ponder, to think, to pray and to enjoy this experience along with others.

So ponder then with me as we consider these words from the 6th Chapter of the Gospel of Matthew, verses 25-34:

²⁵ “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or I drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothes?”

²⁶ Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? ²⁷ Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?

²⁸ And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. ²⁹ Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed

like one of these. ³⁰ If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you-you of little faith? ³¹ So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ ³² For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. ³³ But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. ³⁴ Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”

These words are part of Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount. It was his first recorded instructions to his newly formed bunch of disciples, the twelve. Imagine the wonder and confusion they must have felt. Jesus, the carpenter’s son from Nazareth has invited each of them to “Follow me.” And they did it in faith, not knowing what to expect. Sort of like your response to someone’s invitation to attend this Via de Cristo weekend.

So here they were, unsure of what lie ahead. As they looked around, they must have seemed a strange bunch. Mostly fishermen, one a loudmouth named Peter, two brothers’ people had nicknamed “sons of thunder”, and of all things a hated tax collector. Such a mixed collection of individuals must have just added to their anxiety. It is in this atmosphere that Jesus speaks to them. He tells them that worry isn’t necessary. God will provide for them everything they need, especially for their spiritual and emotional needs. What he asks of us on this Via de Cristo weekend is what he asked of them on that occasion- to *trust* him. He wants us to lay aside our cares and worries for a time and, maybe for the first time in our lives, to understand what it means to follow him.

Listen to Jesus’ words again:

Reread Verses 32-33

³² For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. ³³ But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

You and I need these times for reflection just as Jesus himself needed occasionally to withdraw to a quiet place by himself or with his friends. We need to ask the fundamental questions of life, such as:

Who am I?

Where am I going?

What are my priorities in life?

What holds greatest meaning for me?

Without some basic structure, life for us is something like trying to assemble a jigsaw puzzle on a shag carpet. Nothing will fit together without something solid to lay the pieces on. Life is like that for many these days. It has so many different facets, so many activities, and so many demands. Often it seems that we are so busy that we live only on impressions, never really stopping to think of what is most important. Have you been too busy for reflection?

Our Lord's words to his good friend Martha, are also important for us:

Read Luke 10: 41-42

⁴¹ "Martha, Martha" the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things,
⁴² but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

Activity, business, no matter how good it is, cannot crowd out time for reflection. You see Mary chose to sit at Jesus feet to learn from him instead of the business of working in the kitchen. That is why Jesus said that she chose the better part. Life is too fragile to let it fall apart in business. So tonight we begin to put our lives in order by asking some of those fundamental questions. We can begin to envision our priorities for living.

We can build wisely. Remember the story of the man who threw himself into building a castle, only to discover he didn't have the resources to finish it; it was so sad and embarrassing. Is it possible that *we* have been building dream castles we were never intended to build? Without purpose and a sense of direction we can just be spinning our wheels. Purpose and a sense of direction give us peace.

How do we begin this process? Socrates suggested, "Know Yourself" - Know Yourself! We start by taking an honest look at ourselves, allowing the Holy Spirit of God to reveal our strengths *and* our weaknesses. No one else can do it for us. Each of us is unique - God broke the mold after each of us was created. We need to know our own potentialities and limitations, so that we can put order into our lives. In reflection, you will find many good qualities; things for which you can give thanks to God. Of course, you'll also discover other qualities you would wish no one, not even God, would know about. An honest assessment of ourselves requires we recognize the true person we are or have become.

To benefit fully from your experience here this weekend, you will need to take on a sense of humility in this process. Humility is a good word. It comes from the Latin word *humus* which means "earth". Humility has that quality, like the earth, of being open and receptive to the seed. That's what we ask of you. In many ways you will hear and experience God's grace these three days. We ask you to be open. We ask you not to "prejudge" the Via de Cristo. There is no preconceived or expected responses; remember we are all individuals. Make the best use of this opportunity and you will experience the same joy as the thousands who have traveled the journey, the Way of Christ before you.

So I say again, "Relax and enjoy", and let the quietness of this night be a gracious gift from God to you. Take time to *know yourself*.

Thursday Evening

MEDITATION #2

“THE PRODIGAL SON”

Purpose and Setting

This is one of Jesus’ most popular parables. Many have come to know it more as the story of the Waiting or Forgiving Father. It truly is a lesson of God’s mercy and love for his children. It illustrates the freedom and the healing found in God’s forgiveness and love in the midst of our brokenness.

Through the first meditation and the Rector’s opening remarks, many pilgrims will have already begun their spiritual retreat and introspection. This meditation furthers that pursuit by introducing the idea that in identifying with the Prodigal we may recognize our own efforts to fulfill or “find” ourselves in life, apart from the Father. The theme can be developed in many ways, also by employing the relationship with the older son, who doesn’t appreciate what he has had all along.

The parable should be shared rather than analyzed – *Tell the story!* As it is shared, pilgrims will identify it as their own, since it really is everyone’s story. Above all, let them see the Father’s unconditional love.

The Meditation

Have you ever wondered what Jesus was really like? How he spoke? How he thought? How he felt? How he reacted to the brokenness of people everywhere he turned? Well, Christ gives us a glimpse of himself in his telling of the parable of the Prodigal Son - or maybe we should call it “The Waiting Father”? Let’s look at the struggles of a young man and at the feelings of Christ to his situation. It’s recorded in Luke 15: 11-24.

There was a man who had two sons; and the younger one said to his father, “Give me the share of the property that belongs to me.” In other words, “I want what would be mine if you had died.” The old man looked into his son’s eyes and they said to him, “Father, I am bored. I can never be fulfilled as long as I remain here. I have to find meaning for my life. Actually, I think the cause of my frustration is you - your rules, your regulations, your limitations. I need freedom. I have to find myself!”

The Father thought, “I can’t force him to be my son. A forced son is no son at all. He obviously prefers *things* to me. He believes they will make him the man he wants to be; so I will not stand in his way.” With tears running down his cheeks, he gave the young man his share of the family estate. The boy on the other hand was excited. “There’s no stopping me now. I’m free. Life is going to be different.”

A few days later the son gathered up everything and went off to a far country. It actually wasn’t that far in miles, but very far in relationship. The son had decided that as far as he was concerned his father was as good as dead. He would live his life completely apart from his father, enjoying himself, his gifts, and his money. So he began his quest for *meaning*. “I know I can do it,” he thought happily.

But life somehow refused to cooperate - it didn't turn out how he wanted it to be. So he started using props - money, music, relationships, sex, you name it. He couldn't get along without them. His excitement waned and life was feeling emptier than ever. He was driven to seek more ways to fill it. He wasn't looking to be bad. All he wanted was happiness, and he was compelled to use everything he had in order to find it.

He literally spent everything he had - not just his money, but also all the love he had, all the emotional energy he had, all the friendships he had cultivated. Everything he thought that made him a man, he spent. And when it was all gone, a great famine arose in that region. "What terrible timing!" he thought. Just when you need to call upon all your gifts and find control so you can turn things around, there is a famine in every department of your life. Self-image? Empty. Desire? Gone. Self-control? Run wild. "How did all this happen?" he thought, "I never intended for this to happen."

The farther away the son got from the father, the farther he got away from himself and from any meaning. He was confused, hungry, tired, lonely, shattered, and feeling guilty. The distance from his father now seemed unbridgeable.

One last try. He goes and attaches himself to a landowner and takes the only job available to him - tending pigs. They were better off than he was. They were having a feast, but he was starving. Alone, he was surrounded by utter silence. No music, no comfort, no friends, no money, no home, no father, no life, only pigs. Was this the end of the line? Parenthetically, Jesus who gave us this story is the same one who said, He who loves his life (like this young man), will lose it." (John 12:25)

But this is not the end of the story. Jesus tells us, the young man "came to himself" - an interesting use of words. It was not simply that he came to his senses. There was something more that drew him. It was the memory of love. A father's love. Love brought hope to a hopeless situation, and impelled the son to make one simple decision. "I will return to my father, and I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned'." His plan was to explain to his father that he didn't deserve to be a son, but would be content to be a field-worker, a slave if you will, for that would be better than dying of hunger away from home.

That journey home must have been a hard one. A devilish voice inside says, "How will I be received? I went away arrogant and rich and here I am, broken and starving. Maybe I shouldn't bother. I am no good. I don't deserve a thing." But there was another voice too, a voice of love, which kept saying, "Come home!"

The story continues. While he still was quite a way off, his father saw him (had he been looking all along?). He ran out, threw his arms around him and embraced him. In the arms of love (this is the real place for repentance) the wanderer began his practiced confession, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, I am no longer worthy to be your son." But the father wasn't even listening to the words. His son was home. He was already addressing the servants, "Quickly, bring the best robe, bring shoes for his feet and a ring for his finger. Bring in the fatted calf, it's time to party. My son was dead, but is alive again; he was lost, and is found."

The message of Jesus' story is clear. The father is God. He waits to welcome his children home.

Friday Morning

MEDITATION #3

THE THREE GLANCES OF CHRIST

Purpose and Setting

This is the morning meditation of the first full day. The pilgrims have spent the night in silent retreat. For some it has been a satisfying, even enlightening experience. For others, it has been a troubling process, perhaps adding to their anxiety about coming on the weekend. Being open (transparent) to God can make us feel vulnerable.

The purpose of this meditation is to show that exposure to the glance of Christ is not a new experience. The disciples and others saw in the eyes of Christ a mirror into their own minds and hearts. Most of them learned that his glance was not condemning, but loving. Some missed it, while others like Peter, found out the truth the hard way.

We want the pilgrims to see the One who “looks upon the heart” as one who understands us and our struggles because he’s been here, incarnate, with us.

It should be noted that traditionally this talk has focused on Jesus’ encounter with the Rich Young Ruler (Mark 10: 17-22), Judas (John 6: 66-71), and Peter (Mark 14: 27-31). These are three strong examples of the glance of Christ on individuals during his ministry. They are also all men. On a Women’s weekend, or coed weekend it would be good to substitute other examples, such as the Woman at the Well (John 4: 5-26) or the Woman Caught in Adultery (Luke 8: 3-11), or others.

The Meditation

The eyes - powerful instruments of communication. Think of it. With the eyes alone we can express wonder, awe, fear, amusement, disdain, anger, lust, understanding, curiosity, boredom, sleepiness, love, forgiveness, and much more. In just a glance there is often more information communicated than in a steady gaze, or a hundred words. We move our eyes to search and to communicate.

There are many occasions in the Bible in which the glance of Christ was experienced by people. As we look at a few of them and their responses to Christ’s glance, perhaps we’ll see a bit of ourselves.

READ MARK 10: 17-22

17 As Jesus started on His way, a man ran up to Him and fell on his knees before Him. “Good Teacher”, he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” 18 “Why do you call me good?” Jesus answered. “No one is good-except God alone. 19 You know the commandments: “You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, you shall not defraud, honor your father and mother.”” 20 “Teacher” he declared, “all these I have kept since I was a boy.” 21 Jesus looked at him and loved him. “One thing you lack,” He said. “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” 22 At this the man’s face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.

Now, here's your better-than-average citizen. Very respected. Went to church every Sabbath - the adult class too. And he had learned his lessons well, even from childhood. This was why he passed Jesus' first "test" with flying colors. But was there a limit to his commitment to God? What if it required a willingness to put his hard-earned resources on the line?

The text says that Jesus looked at him and loved him. Perhaps you have known people who look at you in a certain way, like they're actually looking inside you. It is uncomfortable and also assuring at the same time. That's the kind of look Jesus directed to this young ruler. And seeing into his heart Christ asked him to remove the last obstacle to an abundant life. He could not.

Possessions! How much space do they occupy in our lives? Well, for this young man, they had filled his core, and they were an obstacle he could not, or would not, overlook. It makes you think. What obstacle or obstacles might WE have that hold us back from giving ourselves totally to God? Jesus glances our way. He knows our thoughts and our motives. Why is it so hard to have the courage to trust God with *all* the details of our lives?

A second encounter. Listen:

John 4:5-26

⁵So he came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. ⁶Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon. ⁷A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." ⁸(His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) ⁹The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) ¹⁰Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." ¹¹The woman said to him, "Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water?" ¹²Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?" ¹³Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life." ¹⁵The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water." ¹⁶Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come back." ¹⁷The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; ¹⁸for you have had five husbands and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!" ¹⁹The woman said to him, "Sir, I see that you are a prophet. ²⁰Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem." ²¹Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. ²²You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. ²³But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. ²⁴God is spirit, and those who worship him

must worship in spirit and truth.”²⁵The woman said to him, “I know that Messiah is coming” (who is called Christ). “When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us.”²⁶Jesus said to her, “I am he, the one who is speaking to you.”

I wonder what she thought as she came to the well and saw him sitting there.

"Who is that sitting at the well? No one I've ever seen before. The whole point of coming here at noon in this ungodly heat is to avoid meeting anyone. Why does he have to be here? At least he is no one who knows my secrets. Maybe he'll go away if I wait long enough. But I can't stand out here in the heat a moment longer and it doesn't look like he's going anywhere anytime soon."

Our Samaritan woman is not the only secret keeper. Everybody Jesus meets has a secret they think he doesn't already know. We all fall in step with her as she approaches Jesus at the well, each clutching our own personal secrets.

It was a beastly hot day, hotter than you know where, and dry as a bone. She had gone to Jacob's well as she usually did, when no one else was there. She was not the most popular woman in Sychar. She was everyone's excuse for gossip, if you know what I mean. She saw Jesus sitting there exhausted and dusty. Obviously he was hoping someone would come along and help him get a drink from this well.

She assumed he would not speak to her; much less ask her for help. It was clear that he was a Jew and she was a Samaritan. So right there you've got oil and water. Samaritans and Jews do not mix. So imagine her surprise, when this Jewish man dared to ask her for a drink!

And to add some spice to her dilemma, because of her rather notorious reputation, this man spoke to her. For Jesus to be speaking to her at all was a scandal any way you look at it. Against the odds, he looked into her eyes and asked her for a drink. Not being the least bit shy and naturally curious she asked him, “How is it that you who are a Jew ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?”

He did not answer her question, but instead, his eyes met hers and he said, that she should be asking him for a drink of living water. She was stunned by his caring glance and his answer.

There was something about his knowing glance, and there was something about the way he said, “Living Water.” Living water. Living water was running water as opposed to well water that just sits there. But his glance and the way he said living water seemed to mean more. She tried to enter into a religious discussion but none of this seemed to matter to him. He ignored her question, pointed down toward the well, and said, “Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; but whoever drinks of the water that I will give, will never be thirsty. The water that I give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.”

So to humor him, she said, “Give me this water so that I will never be thirsty again and will not have to walk to the well day after day.” But the way he looked at her with such compassion, she realized he meant every word and that he was not talking about everyday

water, but something much more, something that would quench her inner thirst, that thirst that had never been quenched.

Living water. He was speaking of her soul, your soul, my soul. He was speaking of that thirst every human being feels, the thirst for meaning in your life, the thirst for God, for the living God. It is a deep longing God has placed in our soul. Oh, how we forget where this thirst comes from.

Then, out of the blue, he told her to go and get her husband and come back to the well. Now for some reason she felt she could be totally honest with this man. So she told him straight out that she had no husband. But, get this! He already knew that – and he knew even more about her! How could he see all of her life in his one glance?

She tried to avert that glance by changing the subject when she said, “I know that the Messiah is coming and that when the Messiah comes, all things will be proclaimed.” Then Jesus said, quite calmly, “I am the one.” And without any hesitation, she believed him. She knew, in her heart that he was speaking the truth. She also knew that knowing him was a lot more refreshing than any common drink of water. It was living water. He knew her secrets and he did not turn her away. His glance had convicted her and won her all at the same time.

When his friends came along they were shocked - to find him talking with her, a woman and a Samaritan. It seemed like a good time for her to bow out, and all the way home, she thought about his deep glance into her soul, what she had said to him, and what he had said to her and her heart was filled with love and joy and excitement. He was the first person in her whole life to see her as she really was and, he did not condemn her. He took her seriously, her – a Samaritan and a woman, and a person who has never had peace in her soul before she met him. He had given her living water. It was his first glance at her that made her know he could be trusted.

Can this be our story too? Can we be freed from our secret lives like this woman? Is there something in us that prevents us from viewing Jesus’ loving glance, or keeps us from drinking his living water?

(If you choose to end the meditation here, close with the following.)

Dear friends, Jesus is glancing our way! What does he see in our hearts? What does he see in our minds? What do we see in his glance? How do we respond? Do we walk away with sad hearts? Do we let our own preconceptions or our sins blind us to Christ’s love? Or can we be imperfect-but-willing persons, returning the love we have received, because we know without a doubt, and no matter what, that he loves us?

Prayer of the Woman at the Well

O God, you are full of challenging surprises. You choose to meet us in unexpected places and you offer us strange gifts. You refresh our spirits with the living waters of

love and acceptance. You do not judge who we are but rather, what we do with who we are. You are able to take even the most irritating features of our personalities and fashion them into tools for the shaping of your wisdom on earth. In Jesus Christ, you sent a teacher of grace. Help us to learn from him. Grant that we may worship you in spirit and in truth. Remind us that, in your eyes, we are all sisters and brothers in one family, your family. We are all descendants of your generosity. We all thirst for you. Thank you for loving us in spite of our best efforts to make a mess of our lives. Thank you for taking us seriously, especially when others do not. Thank you for ignoring the gossip and for listening to our hearts. Thank you for never abandoning us. Amen

A Third Encounter: Listen

READ JOHN 6: 66-71

⁶⁶ From this time many of His disciples turned back and no longer followed Him.
⁶⁷ “You do not want to leave too, do you?” Jesus asked the Twelve. ⁶⁸ Simon Peter answered Him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. ⁶⁹ We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God.”
⁷⁰ Then Jesus replied, “Have I not chosen you, the Twelve? Yet one of you is a devil!”
⁷¹ (He meant Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, who, though one of the Twelve, was later to betray Him.)

Jesus chose 12 disciples, not eleven and “also Judas.” He chose Judas just as he did the others, though he may have had some premonitions about him.

READ JOHN 13: 10-11

¹⁰ Jesus answered, “Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet; their whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you.” ¹¹ For He knew who was going to betray Him, and that was why He said not everyone was clean.

The other disciples had their own reservations about Judas and the kind of person he was.

The Apostle John tells us:

READ JOHN 12: 4-6

⁴ But one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray Him, objected, ⁵ “Why wasn’t this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year’s wages.” ⁶ He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it.

JUDAS! This name has come to mean “vile”, “rotten”, “and traitorous”. But isn’t there a bit of Judas in each of us? No one abandons God in a moment. It just sort of happens, gradually. A slip here, an indiscretion there, perhaps some harmless choices along the way. Gradually we find ourselves erecting barriers between God and us.

When Judas first responded to Jesus’ call, he was undoubtedly just as enthusiastic as the others, and maybe more so. He had high hopes of sharing Jesus’ ministry. High hopes perhaps that Christ would emerge as a conquering hero of his people. He never intended to separate himself from Jesus. But perhaps Jesus didn’t “measure up” to Judas’ expectations of the Messiah. It became more and more obvious that he wasn’t going to challenge the power of Rome. So there developed a vacuum in Judas that gradually became filled with pride, dishonesty, and even greed. It blinded him to the real truth about Jesus.

Judas thought he had everyone fooled, and for the most part he *did*; everyone but Jesus. Even though Jesus saw through his facade, he still continued to search Judas out. On the very night of the betrayal itself, he washed Judas’ feet along with the rest, including him as a member of the family. But the moment came anyway - he was like one who was possessed.

READ MATTHEW 26: 48-50

48 Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: “The one I kiss is the man; arrest Him.” 49 Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, “Greetings Rabbi!” and kissed Him. 50 Jesus replied, “Do what you came for, friend.”

It wasn’t until the betrayal kiss in the garden, that Judas finally saw the glance. Jesus was not enraged; he loved Judas. But Judas quickly diverted from that look. He had seen enough, and the horror of his actions soon hit him with full force. It could have led him to repentance, but instead it sunk him in despair. Matthew tells us:

READ MATTHEW 27: 3-5

3 When Judas, who had betrayed Him, saw Jesus was condemned, he was seized with remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders. 4 “I have sinned,” he said, “for I have betrayed innocent blood.” “What is that to us? they replied. “That’s your responsibility.” 5 So Judas threw the money into the temple and left. Then he went away and hanged himself.

How about it? Is there a little bit of Judas in each of us? Could this be our story? Can we be blinded to the truth about Jesus’ love and mercy by our own preconceptions, cares and sins? What might there be in us to block our view of Jesus’ loving glance?

A third example of one who experienced the loving but searching glance of Christ.

READ MARK 14: 27-31

²⁷ “You will all fall away” Jesus told them, “for it is written: ‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.’ ²⁸ But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee.” ²⁹ Peter declared, “Even if all fall away, I will not.” ³⁰ “Truly I tell you,” Jesus answered, “today-yes, tonight-before the rooster crows twice you yourself will disown me three times.” ³¹ But Peter insisted emphatically, “Even if I have to die with You, I will never disown you.” And all the others said the same.

Peter. The *rock*. To say he was an avalanche or rock-slide is more like it. Old foot-in-mouth Peter. You always knew what he was thinking, because he would blurt it out - without thinking. Peter was a very genuine human being. He was totally dedicated to Jesus. In some ways, he felt like Jesus’ protector. He did have one serious flaw which emerged many times in the 3 years he spent with Jesus: he was fiercely independent and overly self-confident. He trusted in his *own* efforts to live the God-life. So he was prone to make rash statements. Things like, “Lord, even if ALL lose faith, I won’t!”

When his self-reliance and bluster were put to the test in the courtyard of the High Priest house, we see a very different Peter.

READ LUKE 22: 54-62

⁵⁴ Then seizing Him, they led Him away and took Him into the house of the high priest. Peter followed at a distance. ⁵⁵ And when some there had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and had sat down together, Peter sat down with them. ⁵⁶ A servant girl saw him seated there in the firelight. She looked closely at him and said, “This man was with Him.” ⁵⁷ But he denied it. “Woman, I don’t know Him,” he said.

⁵⁸ A little later someone else saw him and said, “You also are one of them.” “Man, I am not!” Peter replied.

⁵⁹ About an hour later another asserted, “Certainly this fellow was with Him, for he is a Galilean.”

⁶⁰ Peter replied, “Man, I don’t know what you are talking about!” Just as he was speaking, the rooster crowed. ⁶¹ The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him: “Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times.” ⁶² And he went outside and wept bitterly.

Peter completely disavows Jesus. Some rock. Now he was the source of scandal to the followers of Jesus. If it hadn’t been for the fact that all the disciples ran too (all but John that is), he’d never have lived it down. Peter did have one redeeming factor in his favor - he humbled himself enough to repent, and to change. All it took was a glance from Jesus. In that single, fleeting glance Peter realized two important things: 1) that he too had betrayed Jesus after promising to be faithful, and 2) from the look of love he saw in that glance, he knew that he was still loved and was forgiven.

Peter learned that Jesus understands human failings, that failing is forgivable, and that Jesus forgave him. He discovered that as long as he was loved by Christ (that is *always*),

he could let his “tough guy” exterior go, and give of himself to serve him. This was affirmed in one more encounter with Jesus, after the Resurrection. John tells us:

READ JOHN 21: 15-17

15 When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you love Me more than these?”

“Yes, Lord,” he said, “You know that I love You.”

Jesus said, “Feed My lambs.”

16 Again Jesus said, “Simon son of John, do you love Me?”

He answered, “Yes, Lord, You know that I love You.”

Jesus said, “Take care of My sheep.”

17 The third time He said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love Me?” Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him a third time, “Do you love Me?” He said, “Lord, you know all things; you know that I love You.” Jesus said, “Feed My sheep.”

Peter became the leader of that motley crew of disciples, not because he had a forceful personality, but because he loved the Lord with all his being. Others in the group may have had better human qualities, perhaps (like tact), but Peter had learned not to rely on his own abilities.

Dear friends, Jesus is glancing our way! What does he see in *our* hearts? What does he see in *our* minds? What do *we* see in that glance? How do *we* react? Do we walk away with sad hearts? Do we let our own preconceptions or sins blind us to Christ’s love? Or can we be imperfect-but-willing persons, returning the love we have received, because we know without a doubt, and no matter what, that he loves us?

Saturday Morning

MEDITATION #4

“THE FIGURE OF CHRIST”

Purpose and Setting

On the morning of the second day, the pilgrims are realizing that God does love them and has redeemed them through Jesus, but they may be unsure how to relate to him. How can almighty God possibly understand how we feel? How can God understand our human weaknesses? The purpose of this meditation is to make this vital connection. We want the pilgrims to relate to Jesus as a person, as our brother, and as God *and* Man. He is the perfect revelation of the Creator’s love.

In this sharing, we want to express how both divinity and humanity were fully realized in the person of Jesus. But because of the traditional emphasis most of the pilgrims have experienced on his being the divine Son of God, it is necessary for us to put a greater stress on Christ’s humanity here. Because he was also *fully* man, he understands and shares our struggles. This may introduce a whole new way of perceiving Jesus for many.

The presenter of this meditation may express this picture of Jesus drawing on whatever events from the Gospels that appeals to him or her. Many are mentioned here. Use them and/or others as you fashion this meditation as your own.

The Meditation

Good morning sons/daughters/children of God. This morning I’d like to talk with you about the figure of Christ. He is someone we may think we know so much *about*; but knowing *him* - that’s perhaps a greater challenge; perhaps even a bit mysterious. Martin Luther sets the issue before us in his explanation of the 2nd Article of the Apostle’s Creed: “I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of his Father from eternity and true man, born of the virgin, is my Lord.” So to talk of Jesus as God is to speak the truth - but only part of it. And to talk of him as a man is also the truth - but only part of the truth.

The Apostle John begins his Gospel with stirring words about Jesus who he refers to as the *Word*. Listen!

READ JOHN 1: 1-5, 14

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was with God in the beginning. ³ Through Him all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made. ⁴ In Him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

¹⁴ The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

John tells us that the one we know as Jesus, the Christ, was in existence before the world was even made - he was part of the Godhead. But he took on human flesh - no, he *became* flesh (it wasn’t just a masquerade). The *Son* of God became a human being - completely!

Paul underscores this in Philippians when he says, (Christ Jesus) “being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking on the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness (2:6-7).”

Think of it. He became a man. He was subject to all the same things that we experience in life, and in death. He was born. He went to school. He worked with his hands. He partied at a wedding in Cana. He loved and cared for his family and friends. He had the whole range of human emotions and experiences, like us. Many things recorded in the Gospels testify that he was our brother in all respects:

- *He got tired and thirsty -remember how he asked for a drink of water from the woman at the well
- *He was tempted - remember his struggle in the wilderness with Satan.
- *He got angry - pity the money-changers in the Temple

- *He felt disappointment – he said to the disciples after the storm, “O you of little faith”; or “you are not going to leave too, are you?”

- *To Philip: “You’ve been with me all this time and you still don’t get it!”

- *He could get anxious and worry - can we forget the agony he experienced in Gethsemane?
- *He knew physical pain - he was beaten and abused

- *He had close friendships - even seemed to have special friends (Lazarus, John, Mary and Martha)
- *He had great empathy for those who were hurting - there are many examples
- *He saw beyond others’ deeds - like the woman caught in adultery

- *He grieved - his tears on hearing of Lazarus’ death speaks volumes about his friendship

- *He had to ask for help at times

- *When he was crucified, he bled and gasped for breath, his heart broke
- *After the Resurrection we know from his appearances that he was still flesh and blood, that his wounds showed, but that he was/IS alive again! A new body maybe, but still human.

The list can go on and on. Jesus, true God from eternity, who became truly human, and is alive now and forever. And he has not ceased being human - or being God - fully!

Because he is human Jesus Christ *UNDERSTANDS* the limits of our existence. He knows our weaknesses and frailties, as well as our potential. And because he is God, he forgives us perfectly. God knew what he was doing. Because he is both God and man Jesus is the one link between God and us. Paul puts it this way: “For there is one God and one mediator between God and man, the *man* Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all” (I Timothy 2: 5-6).

How can you know that God cares for you? Look at Jesus. How can you know that God understands what makes you tick? Look at Jesus. He’s our brother. He’s one of us and knows us. A real human being - that Son of God.

Sunday Morning
MEDITATION #5

“CHRIST’S MESSAGE TO YOU”

Purpose and Setting

This meditation is for the morning of the last day. It is brief and to the point. It returns to some of the basic questions raised or implied on Thursday evening. Why did you come? For what purpose are you here? We asked the pilgrims, as best they could, to lay their cares and responsibilities aside for these valuable three days. On this last day, however, the circle of care and concern will be expanded to include the world and environments from which they have come. The questions they may be asking themselves now might be different. What expectations do I have about how this will affect my life? What does God ask of me? Where can I find the support and strength to carry on? These are questions which will be addressed this day. This sharing anticipates some of these concerns, and ushers in the third grace-filled day of the weekend.

The Meditation

Good morning, brothers/sisters/children in Christ. It is a new day God has given us. Let us relish every moment of it. I ask you to listen now, briefly, as our Savior, Lord, and brother Jesus Christ speaks to us.

“It is the third day of our special time together - your Via de Cristo. The other night you were told that you were called here to be in my presence for three days. Let me repeat it in the words I spoke to my first apostles: ‘You did not choose me; I chose you and appointed you to go and bear much fruit, the kind of fruit that endures.’ Yes, there was a purpose for your coming here - to bring you closer to me, to experience the joy of my family, and to see your life in a new way.

I had such an experience with Peter, James and John long ago. It was for them an intense, enriching time. If it were up to them we would have stayed on that mountain forever when I was transfigured before their very eyes. Such experiences are precious, but they always have a purpose; a purpose that cannot be frozen in time. You, like them, my friends, have been in training for valley duty. When I came off that mountain that day there were people everywhere in need of love, and grace, and healing. You will find that too - people who have lost their way, been crushed by life, or just been fooled by the constant drumbeat of the world. They need to know also that they are eternally loved, and are recipients of God’s grace. But how will they know...unless...

Listen, you will never be alone in this. ‘I am the vine, you the branches’ Get it?

If you rely on me for your sustenance you are going to do amazing things. Without me, it is simply not possible. Despite all your good intentions, you will have nothing to offer in the valley unless you understand this truth. Everything depends on your constant contact with me. My first disciples found this out the hard way, by trial and error. They had to learn to

trust, and so will you. But make no mistake; I will never let you down. I will never leave you or forsake you. And my grace will be sufficient for you in any situation.

Disciples of mine are in the fruit-bearing business. What else are branches for? And so you will find contentment, peace and deep satisfaction as you discover that love is much sweeter when it is given away - that is your assignment. You will have more opportunities than you ever realized, in your family, your church, your work, your friendships, to say and do the right thing in my name. Just say it and do it and I'll do the rest.

One more thing. In this time we have all been together, you have been a part of a loving community of faith. Strangers have become brothers and/or sisters. Differences that may have divided are now totally unimportant. You have laughed and cried, sung and prayed, you have attended to one another's needs, and you have listened, really listened to one another's hearts. You have seen me in the eyes of one another. This love has led to trust and what we have here is what I prayed for the night before I died. 'Father, I pray that they may be one.....May they be one, so that the world will believe that you sent me.'

So why stop here? In the valley are other believers, millions of them. Will your world know that they are disciples of mine through the fellowship of love you share with them too?

Don't go it alone. Seek out my followers everywhere. Gather together as often as you can. Pray together. It will empower you. This is my strategy for reaching the world.

Much is yet to be done. Many still do not know of my love. Many around you every day still believe they have to carry their burdens alone. Many still think that religion is about pleasing God - as if they could. A simple word, an act of kindness, a willing ear may be all it takes for them to find hope and peace. You, my disciple, can do that.

Your living faith will do that. It will cast out fear. It will take on the world. Yes, the world. You have more power in you than is in the world, because you and I *ARE* an overwhelming majority!"

SPIRITUAL DIRECTORS' ROLLO GUIDELINES

ROLLO #2 "THE NATURE OF GOD'S GRACE" (Habitual Grace) (God's Habit of Loving Us in Christ)

Situation and Objective

This is the second Rollo on the first day. Having been challenged to consider their own *IDEAL*, and having discussed this dimension at their tables, the pilgrims are now introduced to God's Ideal: Jesus Christ, and the life of Grace he offers us. If the first talk was received well, this *spiritual* talk will be welcomed like water in a dry sponge. It will set the tone for the weekend. Grace will be the benchmark through which we look at our relationship to God, and a cornerstone on which to build the foundation for the life of grace. For many this may awaken "old material" learned in catechetical instruction, where God's unending and undeserved love for his children and creation may have first been brought into sharp focus.

Think of this talk as a chat with the pilgrims. In as relaxed a manner as possible, tell the good news that "God loves us, always has, always will." You will be tempted to bring out all the theological ammunition at your disposal in this talk. Remember, this is the *first* Grace talk. Stick to the basics here - the extent of God's love and grace will unfold as the weekend progresses. Avoid being systematic or using jargon that requires a lot of explanation. You may *touch* on the means of grace, but remember that this will be covered more extensively on Saturday morning. To appreciate God's Grace, you may want to contrast it with the sin of humanity, but remember again that the Obstacles talk will go into this in some detail. In other words, it is best to keep the whole weekend in mind (this is the 2nd part of a 14/15 part Rollo) as you prepare this talk. Keep the presentation positive, warm and as basic as possible. This is a great opportunity to clearly portray this relationship that God has chosen to establish with us in Christ. The following outline is offered as a guide to your sharing. The allotted time for this talk is 30 minutes.

Since this is the first talk given by a Spiritual Director, a helpful suggestion is passed on, based on feedback from pilgrims and team members alike. We have been asked to provide more "write-downs" in our talks. When we are finished sharing, important points or quotes asked to be recorded will aid everyone in table discussions. An example of such a write-down in this talk may be the simple acrostic of Grace (i.e., "God's Riches at Christ's Expense").

THE NATURE OF GOD'S GRACE

30 Minutes

I. Possible Introduction

This talk is about another Ideal, God's Ideal, which can also be ours as well. It is titled, "The Nature of God's Grace." Grace is a wonderful word, but it is not one we use every day, except possibly when someone suggests we give thanks for a meal. We do hear it a great deal more in church:

"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God....."

"Grace to you and peace from God our father....."

".....the Lord be gracious to you, and give you peace."

Although the word is used often in the Bible, you won't find a concise definition of it there. But you will find it described - everywhere. In the 1st chapter of John's Gospel, Jesus is referred to as being full of *grace* and truth, and that we all from his fullness have received *grace* upon *grace*. Later (1 John 4:9), God's Ideal is spelled out this way: "In this the love of God was made known among us, that God sent His only Son into the world, so that we may have life in him."

Let's explore together, God's Ideal, *GRACE*.

II. Grace - God loves us, always has, always will.

A. History reveals it - God is the Initiator, God keeps promises

- 1) Creation/Fall - "Adam, where are you?"
- 2) Abraham's call and covenant
- 3) The Prophets - calling God's people back to God's mercy
- 4) The Incarnation - Jesus models God's gracious invitation, and confronts humanity at its worst ("Father, forgive them")

B. The Scriptures proclaim it

- 1) Grace in the Old Testament (Some possible examples) - God's Covenant(s) with His people - Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph
 - God's Deliverance/ The Exodus
 - The story of Hosea and Gomer
 - God, Jonah and the people of Ninevah
 - The story of Daniel
 - The trials and tribulations of David (Psalm 51)
 - Preservation of the Remnant of Israel
 - The promise of the Messiah

- 2) Grace in the New Testament (Some possible examples)
 - The Woman of Samaria (John 4: 7-26)
 - The transformation of Zacchaeus (Luke 19: 1-10)
 - The parable of the Generous Householder (Matthew 20: 1-16)
 - Jesus healing/forgiving the Paralytic (Matthew 9)
 - Raising of the son of the Widow of Nain (Luke 7: 11-17)
 - The Lost Sheep, Coin, Son (Luke 15: 7ff)
 - Jesus and Bartimaeus (Mark 10: 46-52)
 - The account of Pentecost (Acts 2)
 - The Conversion of Saul (Acts 9: 1-19)
 - The Philippian Jailer (Acts 16: 25-34)

III. Grace - What It Is: God's gift - An Invitation to a New Relationship (John 3:16)

- A. A definition - The undeserved love and favor of God
 - free and unearned (Ephesians 2: 8-9; Romans 5: 6-8)
- B. Grace is supernatural - unconditional (Isaiah 30: 15-18) - habitual (Romans 8: 35-39)
 - unending (John 1:16)
- C. Grace is sacrificial - priceless (Matthew 13: 44-46) "God's Riches at Christ's Expense"

IV. Grace - What It Does: Imparts New Life

- A. Awakens faith within us (Acts 16: 31-34)
 - B. Imparts forgiveness (Isaiah 1: 18; Romans 8: 1-4)
 - C. Gives us a new status (Galatians 4:4)
 - D. Enables us to love (Ephesians 2:10; I John 4:9)
 - E. Gives us hope - God in Christ has written the final chapter (I Peter 1: 3-4)
- V. Conclusion - God loves you, and so do I!

Situation and Objective

This is the fourth talk on Friday. The pilgrims are now, through discussion and interaction, widening the circle of their concern and interest to include others at their table. The previous Rollo on Laity has confronted them with a call to action which likely has elicited a *Who, Me?* response. This challenge to begin living the life of grace, which is given before the concepts of piety, study and action are even introduced, will probably cause the pilgrims to feel inadequate to the task. Now, through this talk, we have the privilege of expanding their understanding of Grace beyond that of a new relationship (noun) with God, to a dynamic force that is present and active (verb) in our lives, giving us insight and courage to live in response to God’s love.

Historically, Lutherans have not put a lot of emphasis on the 3rd Article of the Creed. Now is the opportunity for us to elaborate on how the Lord and Giver of Life works, not only to initiate faith within us, but to inform, guide, and sustain us in our day-to-day living.

Luther’s explanation to the 3rd Article is a wonderful summation of the role of the Spirit in Christian living. This is also the time to explore the working of the Spirit in our prayer life, to deepen our walk with Christ. This Rollo should be 30minutes. Be sure to leave enough time to introduce Palanca as the spiritual “lever” of prayer and sacrifice that undergirds the entire weekend. This is a precious time as pilgrims begin to fully realize how much prayer and sacrifice is being offered *just for them*. Take the time for this to sink in by reading letters of encouragement, sharing posters and /or prayer banners. The circle of love and concern now widens to include a prayerful, loving, and supportive Christian community outside the rollo/conference room.

GRACE IN ACTION (Actual Grace)

30 Minutes

I. Introduction

Picking up the theme of Grace as shared in the first clergy talk, it will be helpful to the pilgrims from this point on to understand the relationship that God has established with us in Christ (justification) AND the support, enrichment, and growth we can experience in union with Christ, through the work of the Spirit (sanctification).

II. Actual Grace - What is it?

A definition: *“A spiritual, inner, and transitory aid, with which God enlightens our understanding and strengthens our will to accomplish spiritual acts”*
Bishop Juan Hervas

- A. It’s free - an extension of God’s habitual Grace
- B. It has to do with the intervention of God in our lives to help us

- C. It flows from our intimate relationship with Christ
- D. It can be momentary - given to us in specific circumstances
- E. It sheds light - imparting insight and understanding
- F. It gives strength which enables our will to want to do God's will
- G. It leads to gracious action on the part of the believer

III. The Need for God's Active Grace

- A. Our intelligence and will, left to their own *devices*, will not seek God's purposes
- B. "Apart from me, you can do NOTHING" (John 15:5)
- C. Our response-ability is from God (2 Corinthians 3: 4-5)

IV. When God gives This Actual Grace

- A. At "opportune" moments, when needed (not necessarily when wanted)
- B. When necessary to carry out his will
- C. To enable us to overcome temptation

V. How This Grace Comes to Us

- A. Through the work of the Holy Spirit (Creed Article Three)
- B. Directly - to our mind, our heart, our will in the context of our daily walk with Christ
- C. Indirectly - through external circumstances or persons in our worship life, our family life, or our work environment
- D. The Via de Cristo Weekend - a veritable *shower* of actual grace.
The Lord is not limited in ways in which to communicate God's gracious will to us.

VI. The Place of Prayer

- A. Our *touchstone* with God
 - B. Communication that leads to a deeper relationship with Christ. Not a "secret code", but familial conversation
- C. The path to peace (Philippians 4: 4-7)
- D. Effectual in human affairs (James 5: 13-16)

VII. Palanca

- A. Literally, "lever" - the power to lift
- B. In the context of the weekend - Prayer and Sacrifice. Share examples

VIII. Conclusion

This entire weekend is Grace in Action. God has brought us here to talk to us, to enlighten us, and to encourage us. Have you been hearing him? Have you been warmed by his gracious presence? And, how are you going to respond to this Grace from this time on?

Remember God loves you and so do I.

ROLLO # 7 “THE MEANS OF GRACE: WORD AND SACRAMENT”

Note: Since the emergence of Cursillo in the Lutheran tradition, there have been two approaches to this talk. One, coming out of Iowa, took the strong sacramental approach of the Roman Catholic Cursillo. The Catholic Church has seven sacraments; Lutherans have two. The Lutheran tradition maintains a balance of Word and Sacrament by giving a strong emphasis on the proclaiming of the Word and its effect on the Christian’s life. The other Rollo, coming from Florida, took the approach of tracing the Grace of God active in a believer’s life from “cradle to grave.” Baptism and Holy Communion are given ample emphasis here, too.

However, the Via de Cristo ministry is devoted to a clear understanding of Grace that a person receives from God through Christ’s sacrifice on the cross, His death and resurrection. The emphasis needs to remain on the Means of Grace through Word and Sacrament that Christ has provided for us through the church. It is through these means that all of life is focused each day, from the cradle to the grave.

The Means of Grace: Word and Sacrament

This can be a two-part talk

Situation and Objective

This is the second Rollo of the day and it can be given in two sections. The first section is followed by Holy Communion, and the second is followed by a chapel visitation. Or it can be presented as one talk and followed by Holy Communion and renewal of Baptism.

This is the third of five clergy Rollos, all focusing upon the grace of God. Previous Rollos have established the priority of grace for the Christian life. Apart from grace there is no world, since all that exists has come to be through the self-giving love of God. Apart from grace there is no redemption, for the world experiences rebirth through the death and resurrection of Jesus Messiah. Apart from grace there is no participation in the glorious future of the Kingdom of God, the goal of human history.

The person-character of grace has also been discussed. The covenant of grace is the creative and sustaining force of our lives. The God who said, “Let there be light” (Genesis 1:3), is the One who illumines us. God says to us, “I give you My word (promise). I am with you and for you. I will stand by you.”

Note the morning meditation, “The Three Glances of Christ,” prepares the weekenders for the reception of this Rollo. The meditation emphasizes the person of Christ. God gets our attention through Jesus, the divine presence “in the flesh.” The Rollo then builds on this theme by perceiving Jesus as THE Word and THE Sacrament of the encounter with God, with the means of grace as the incarnate presence of Jesus to us.

Objective: The problem for human experience is the hiddenness of God. “No one has seen God” (John 1:18; 6:46; 1 John 4:12); therefore, what assurance do I have of God’s creative and sustaining grace in my life? What are the effective visible and audible signs of God’s gracious activity toward me and my brothers and sisters?

The objective of this Rollo is to locate the nearness of grace and its effect upon us. We assert that the grace of God has appeared among us in Jesus Messiah, and Jesus’ presence for us is affirmed again and again through Word, water, bread and wine. Through the means of grace the crucified and risen Christ is present to forgive, give life, comfort and strengthen us for the work to which he calls us in the world.

The Rollo also sharpens the heart and soul of the weekend event. It is God’s gracious activity which creates and inspires the actual community being formed around Word and Sacrament this particular weekend. Thus, it’s a talk to awaken trust in the presence of God, not a theological “Tome” on Sacraments.

Technique: The technique of the Rollo is strongly Christological. The talk relies upon the dynamic character of the means of grace: the effective power of the Word and Sacrament lies in the One who commands us to “do this” and promises His grace. Thus, the Rollo directs the weekender to Christ Himself. The water of baptism reminds us that our sins are washed away. The bread and wine are physical extensions of the life blood shed by Jesus for our sins. The cross helps us recall our death. And the lighted candle leads us to living a life that shines for Christ.

In addition, the Rollo needs to be shaped by the incarnational principle: God binds the divine self to creation, coming to us wrapped in the “stuff” of creation. Thus, we don’t move the weekender to some higher spiritual plane; rather, we point to the God who chooses to be among us, who come to us to meet us where we are.

MEANS OF GRACE: WORD AND SACRAMENT

40 Minutes

- I. INTRODUCTION: Centrality of the Means of Grace in the Life of the Church
For over 2000 years, on the first day of the week, groups of people have gathered to share the same events: someone reads from a book, a person addresses the group which has gathered, bread and wine are shared, and perhaps one or more persons

are bathed in water. It really hasn't changed very much over the centuries. The events don't sound very extraordinary, so why this continuing activity done over and over again? Why is there such a hunger for the Word, wine and bread? Why insist on the importance and necessity of being washed with water? Those within the gathered groups would probably respond that it isn't so much a hunger for bread and wine as it is a hunger and thirst for the living Christ, the One who is grace for us. He is the "living water" (John 4) and the "bread of life" (John 6).

II. Jesus is the Means of Grace

A. Jesus bears the Good News by which God illumines the world (John 1).

B. Jesus enacts the Good News in His death and resurrection.

1. Jesus' death is the means by which the world is reborn (John 3:6).
2. His death is the cup He must drink (Matthew 20:22) in order that we might have the cup of blessing (Matthew 26:27).
3. He is the grain which has been planted (died) in order to bear fruit (John 12:20ff) as the bread of life (John 6:51)

C. Jesus is God "in the flesh," God coming to us through human word and action to offer us new life (1 John 1:1-4; Hebrews 1:1-14; 2 Corinthians 4:5-6).

III. Word and Sacraments as a Means of Grace

A. Though Jesus ascended, He has not abandoned us as orphans. He promises His continued presence.

B. Like the disciples at Emmaus (Luke 24:13ff), we recognize His presence in His Word and the breaking of bread.

C. Word and Sacraments are the assured means of His continuing presence

1. The audible event of sharing the Good News through the reading of Scripture and preaching we identify as "Word of God."
2. The events which center on sharing the Good News of Jesus through material signs of water, bread and wine we identify as sacraments.

IV. What makes a Sacrament, a Sacrament?

A. Other churches, notably Roman Catholic, Episcopal, and Greek Orthodox have seven Sacraments. Though they mark significant events in the believer's life, they do not all fit a strict definition of the Lutheran understanding of Sacrament.

B. There are also other churches who have no Sacraments but refer to those special events as Ordinances

C. Lutherans identify two sacred acts as sacraments: the bath (Holy Baptism) and the meal of bread and wine (Holy Communion, the Lord's Supper, Eucharist)

1. The criteria for limiting to two is summarized as follows
 - a. Ordained by God
 - b. Rooted in Christ command - "Do this..."
 - c. Uses a visible means (water, bread and wine)

d. Offers forgiveness of sins

V. The Word of God

- A. The Word comes in power to effect what it promises even though it is wrapped in the limitations and weaknesses of human speech (Hebrews 4:12; Isaiah 55:11).
1. It is experienced as proclamation, a word given and received.
 2. Examples might be: “God hates sin, but loves the sinner”, “You have been given power over death,” or “The guilt which has bound you up and rendered your life powerless is taken away.
- B. The Word teaches us who we are, to whom we belong, and our destiny.
1. The scripture is a story, the story of a people (Israel) leading up to the story of Jesus, son of Mary, who is confessed as Son of God. In retelling the story we being to see and find ourselves. It tells our story in relation to God.

VI. Holy Communion

- A. It is a meal which has a basic four-fold shape: the taking of bread and wine (at offertory), giving thanks over the bread and wine (at the Great Thanksgiving), the breaking (at the invitation), and the sharing of the bread and cup (at the distribution).
- B. It's a family meal shared by Jesus' gracious invitation and command
- C. It's a communal event (fellowship, participation, unity, friendship).
1. “Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf” (I Corinthians 10:16-17 NIV)
 2. One might also note the many occasions where Jesus ate with publicans and sinners and claims them for His friends (Luke 19:11ff). At mealtime Jesus offers His friendship to many. We see Him bringing grace and mercy to broken and despairing lives. To be in His presence is to be in touch with wholeness, divine fellowship, and the promise for a new future.
- D. It is the sacrament of love.
1. This is especially clear in a passage like John 15:13 - ‘Greater love has no one than this---that he lay down his life for his friends.’
 2. “My body given for you,” and “My blood shed for you,” are together a gift of sacrificial love.
 3. His love shapes our life together in the form of sacrificial love (1 John 4:19) - “We love because He first loved us.”

- E. It is the Banquet of the Lord.
 - 1. Holy Communion is also “the feast of victory for our God,” a celebration of the Easter event.
 - 2. It has the character of joy
 - 3. It anticipates when all God’s people shall be gathered to share the Messianic Banquet.

- F. It is repeatable.
 - 1. We do it often, for often do we need God’s healing, forgiving, and renewing touch.
 - 2. Recall that the early church, and also the reformers, celebrated Holy Communion weekly.

The first section now concludes in some form which leads into the actual celebration of Holy Communion. Its benefits, after all, come to us not by talking about it, but by doing it.

After celebrating Holy Communion the Rollo continues. This is still the same Rollo, so the Rollista simply continues with the next point (perhaps summing up briefly what was discussed earlier and how it was experienced in the breaking of bread before continuing.

Part 2 - Holy Baptism

- I. Infant baptism and /vs. “Believer’s” baptism of other traditions - the difference between being “drafted” into the military or “enlisting” into the military.

- II. Baptism is a human rite, but a divine action because it is not simple water only, but it is the water comprehended in God’s command and connected with God’s Word.

- III. Baptism is what God does for us - not what we do for God.

- IV. Baptism’s external form is of washing or bathing with water. The Greek word for the biblical word “baptize” is “baptizein” and means to wash, pour, sprinkle, or immerse. Simply put: to baptize means to apply water by washing, pouring, sprinkling, or immersing. The amount of water does not matter, whether it is a handful or a river, nor whether it is running water or still water. Our Lord said, “Baptize,” apply water, without specifying the quality, quantity, or the mode of application, leaving all this to Christian liberty. Most important is the water being applied in the name of the Triune God.

- V. Baptism is not simple water only, but forgiveness-water, Spirit-water, water used by God’s command and connected with God’s Word. The Word, that Word of which Paul says is the power of God for salvation, that Word which is able to make us wise unto salvation, is linked to the water and is its energizing power. Baptism is water and the Word

- VI. What does Baptism give or profit?

- A. It offers forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38)
- B. Delivers from death and the devil
- C. Gives eternal life to all who believe it (Mark 16:16)

VII. How can water do such great things?

- A. It's not the water, but the Word of God in and with the water, and faith, which trust the Word of God in the water.
- B. Without the Word, the water is just water and no baptism

Illustration: Here is a piece of paper which reads, "Pay to the order of John (or Jane) Doe One Hundred Dollars."

How much is that piece of paper worth? Nothing.

But now, I affix my name, and, let it be understood, I have the amount in the bank and I possess the power to back up my promise. How much is the piece of paper then worth? \$100.00

But if the recipient does not believe that I am able to do what is promised, and does not go to the bank and cash the check, it is not worth \$100 to him.

So with Baptism. Here is water. Simple water, worth no more than that piece of paper. But Jesus says, "If you use this water in the name of the Triune God I will forgive you all your sins." So, the power lies, not in the water itself but in Jesus, who is, so to say, "backing it up."

VIII. Additional actions which have helped to unfold this beautiful Sacrament of grace.

- A. Laying on of hands with prayer for the gifts of the Holy Spirit
- B. Signing of the cross, with anointing oil both on the forehead and the heart
- C. The giving of a candle and white garment

IX It is a rebirth

- A. The primary biblical image for interpreting baptism is death and resurrection (Romans 6:4)
- B. With the death of the old self in bondage to sin, death and the devil, a new self might then arise to serve and glorify the Father.
- C. This is why baptism is only done once and not repeated - you don't keep getting reborn.

X It is the water of adoption as sons and daughters of God and as members of the family of God

- A. Christ becomes as "brother" to us, in order that we might know and love the Father.
- B. We are bound to one another in the family of God as sisters/brothers.

XI. It is a sealing by the Holy Spirit.

- A. The Holy Spirit is the dynamic of the coming Kingdom of God.
- B. Through the power of the Spirit we are gifted for mutual service in the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12) and empowered to do the will of God as God's people in the world.

- C. Martin Luther was in the habit of reminding himself, “I am baptized! I am baptized!”

XII The Mark of the Cross

- A. The shape of the Christian life is the cross of Christ.
 - It has vertical and horizontal dimensions.
 - It is marked by servanthood.
 - It is a daily dying and rising.
- B. To begin and end each day with the sign of the cross is to remind ourselves we were bought with a price. Through Jesus Christ we know to Whom we belong and to where we are going.

Dear brothers/sisters in Christ, we have an awesome God. There isn't a day, or even a moment of your life when you have been out of the range of God's love and grace. From the very beginning he called you by name, loved you, redeemed you, rooted for you, and surrounds you with opportunities to know him better, fed you with heavenly food and drink. You may not have realized all of this during some of the stages of your life, especially in times of struggle. May you know with certainty when you leave this place, that every day of your life from now until eternity, and beyond, will be Grace-Filled Days! Remember: God loves you and so do I!

Situation and Objective

This is the fourth Grace talk given by a Spiritual Director on the weekend. The pilgrims have now been presented with each leg of the tripod: Piety, Study, and Action. They will soon be hearing that they are called to be leaders in their environments. The presence of God’s grace is now understood and has been experienced as we move toward the evening of the second day. Pilgrims may now be questioning whether or not they have the nerve or the ability to pursue this kind of life in the face of real or imagined difficulties that they will face after the weekend.

This should be a realistic and positive talk, maybe even humorous at times as we realize our human foibles and fragility (pastors too). Yes, there are some fundamental obstacles in the life of grace, and we want to deal with them here. We want the pilgrims to see that sin, for which we bear responsibility, permeates our thoughts and actions. The devil, the world and our own flesh seek to trip us up. We want them to be assured that Christ has overcome these forces, that we have forgiveness when we stumble, and he has promised to give us victory over them.

OBSTACLES TO THE LIFE IN GRACE

30 minutes

I. Possible Introduction - The title of this talk is “Obstacles to the Life in Grace”. We have seen that God’s love for us is habitual - it is part of God’s nature. God has revealed in Christ this permanent, personal, unconditional love relationship with you. Our piety and study can deepen this relationship each day. We have considered how God continues to make his grace available to us to strengthen our resolve to live as Christians. We have realized that to remain vital our faith has to be active in love.

All this grace talk! If God really loves us so much and literally showers us with so much grace, why isn’t it a reality in *everyone’s* life? Good question - and that’s what this talk this afternoon is about. Obstacles - Obstacles to Grace.

According to Webster’s, an obstacle is “anything that gets in the way or hinders”. It need not be insurmountable, but it can discourage and distract from moving ahead”. Think of some of the obstacles some familiar figures faced: Don Quixote’s windmill; Abraham and Lot trying to settle Palestine (water, pasture, dividing of territory); Moses, and the people of Israel facing the Sea; Noah and his ark (naysayers, animals, sewerage).

In this talk we will face the ultimate obstacle, for which we ourselves are responsible: SIN.

II. God's Plan

A. God's ideal

- 1) A perfect creation (Genesis 1 - and it was "good")
- 2) Humankind, created in God's image: free, thinking, caring, compassionate, loving, spiritual, rational (and it was "very good")

B. God gives the creation into our care and safe-keeping

- 1) God gave everything - existence, personality, the world
- 2) God placed us into the world to enjoy it - not to assume its ownership
- 3) God gave natural, physical laws to which *all* creation is subject

C. God's intent was to live in relationship with humankind

- 1) Genesis - God "walks in the garden"
- 2) Established some "spiritual" laws to govern our relationship with him - they were gifts, not burdens; life in grace depends upon them
- St. Augustine understood it: "My heart is restless, O God, until it finds its rest in Thee!"
- 3) What stands in the way of this satisfying relationship and life?

III. Our Sin

A. Definition

- 1) Disobedience to God
- 2) Doing what *we* want to do rather than what God wants
- 3) Placing ourselves at the center of the universe - wanting to be equal with God (goes right back to the garden)

B. Sin as Obstacle: whatever keeps us from being what we truly are

- 1) Forgetting that we are creatures of God - Adam forgot, Cain forgot, Judas forgot, as did Peter
- 2) Being unwilling to be who we are - the Pharisees tried to live life so perfectly they built walls around themselves
- 3) Being afraid to be who we are - "I tried, I failed, and it's no use." Paul: "The good that I would, I do not"
- 4) Not caring who(se) we are

C. Sin's environment (The Terrible Trinity)

- 1) The Devil - the personification of the forces of evil that tempt us. We still decide. We cannot say, "the Devil made me do it"
- 2) The World - the mores and ethics of society are opposed to the Word - Give examples
- 3) The Flesh - that rebellious part of us rejects God's claim upon us

D. Our sinful self as the obstacle

- 1) Personal sin is real. It is part of our rebellion
- 2) Evil in the world results from ours and everyone else's sin magnified
- 3) God didn't create sin, but has given us the answer to its power over us.

IV. God's remedy

A. Jesus Christ's life-giving death and resurrection

- 1) Cleanses us from all sin
- 2) Frees us to be ourselves, sinful or good - we are both saint and sinner
- 3) Allows us to take ourselves less seriously

B. Repentance (Matthew 4:17)

- 1) Jesus came to call us to genuine repentance - not just "feeling guilty"
- 2) This is metanoia - a changed mind (it may not be emotional at all)
 - a. Causes us to reconsider our purpose and strategy for living
 - b. Brings us to change our thinking - being transformed by renewing our minds (Romans 12:2)
 - c. Stirs us to change our living patterns and choices
- 3) This is not our work - it is the work of the Holy Spirit

C. Confession

- 1) We sin but we also have an answer
- 2) There is freedom in confession and power in absolution
- 3) Our sins are removed "as far as east is from the west" and "to be remembered no more"

D. Living a grace filled life

- 1) Live each day in an increasingly closer relationship with Christ (Piety)
- 2) Enrich your understanding (Study)
- 3) Step out in boldness to make a difference in the lives of others (Action)

V. Conclusion

Obstacles? What obstacles? Christ died for us and took our sin upon him when he died. As a free gift to us, he removed the only true obstacle we have to living an abundant, grace filled life - our sinful self. We can now truly love ourselves, we can overcome our stumbling in the light of God's forgiveness, and we can be a part of the ministry of reconciliation for others. Sounds like a great life to me.

God loves you my friends, and so do I!

Situation and Objective

We have come to the final Grace talk of the weekend. This Rollo, together with the other Sunday Rollos, is directing the pilgrims to life back home. It seeks to deal with the unspoken (or perhaps spoken) question: “How can I keep alive and vibrant this joy and enthusiasm of living in Christ?”

This talk is to help the pilgrims for the “long haul” of the Christian walk. They have already begun this preparation through the Environment Rollo. This sharing should be as practical as possible, but also as inspirational as possible too. A stronger emphasis is placed on the Piety section of the Spiritual Aids card as a way of tying in disciplines that have already been practiced on the weekend itself. Study and Action have received healthy emphasis in other talks, but can be underscored here. Living boldly and positively with Christ and other Christians is a challenge. They will be learning today how this is possible.

Though it may be mentioned at other times during the day, this is an excellent opportunity to affirm a solid commitment to congregational life and active membership in the Body of Christ as a means of increasing one’s own faith and the faith of others. The local church is the primary avenue through which our faith is exercised - not Via de Cristo.

LIFE IN GRACE

30 minutes

I. Possible Introduction

This will be the final Spiritual Directors’ talk of the weekend. We have been taking a Grace walk with you these three days. We have seen that God is a God of Grace and loves us, no matter what. We have realized that this is not only a neat idea or philosophy, but that God personalizes, actualizes if you will, this grace for us. We have found that God makes this grace concrete and “incarnational” in and through physical and circumstantial means. And finally we found that even though there are obstacles to grace in this world, even those can be used for our building and God’s glory (Romans 8:28).

This talk is called, Life in Grace. Or, as some like to call it, “How to keep on keeping on.” Someone has to ask the question, so it might as well be me? “Is this Via de Cristo a sort of temporary insanity? Have the team members (angels, servants, those who have been serving us) been spiking our coffee? Will we wake up sober tomorrow morning? And, if it has been real here, what’s the real world out there going to do with people like us?

Many of us have felt the Holy Spirit tugging on us deeply this weekend. The Word of God, the wonderful Holy Communion services, the prayers of people all over the world,

love everywhere we turn - all of this and more has made this an intense experience. So, now what? Is it all downhill from here?

Earlier our Rector (use name) shared that for everything you need while you are here this weekend, God has made provision. I have good news. You are going to be given some “tools” of faith today, to help you maintain your life in grace tomorrow, and every day thereafter. In fact, you have been using many of these tools already this weekend. Let me explain.

Often the Spiritual Aides Card is distributed before the talk

- A. This is a guide for staying alive in your faith
- B. Not surprisingly, the “rhythm” of the Christian life revolves around three elements: Piety, Study and Action
- C. There is a list of Spiritual “aids” to deepen our walk with Christ - Our Piety
 - 1) Worship/ Holy Communion
 - a. Do not attend church! Go to worship!
 - b. Receive the meal (communion) as often as you can
 - 2) Morning Offering/ Evening Thanks
 - a. Begin the day by offering it to God (we have been doing it each day) - Invite the Lord to be present in your relationships and situations
 - b. End the day with a short word of thanks
 - 3) Devotions/Meditation/Prayer
 - a. There is nothing like a warm and personal time with God each day
 - b. Read a bit of Scripture and/or from a devotional book
 - c. Form prayers are OK, but also be intuitive - pray what occupies your mind and heart (Remember, this is your best friend)
 - 4) Examination of Conscience (Friday Evening)
 - a. Do this periodically - it does not have to be laborious
 - b. This often leads to some action (for example, healing a relationship)
 - 5) Altar /Chapel Visit
 - Spend a few moments kneeling at the altar of your church, alone or with a friend. Spend some time in silence so that God can speak to you.
 - 6) Family Prayer
 - a. If this has not been a practice in your home, introduce it gradually (Teenagers have been known to “freak out” at the sudden introduction of this practice)
 - b. The family that prays together, *does* tend to stay together
 - 7) Blessing Before Meals (see advice above)
 - 8) Spiritual Direction
 - a. Make an appointment to sit down with your pastor once or twice a year to assess your growth
 - b. He/she will be honored to share this time - that’s why we’re here.

As a pastor, I must say that these are all possible aids to your walk with Christ. Just doing them (like a check list) will not guarantee a deeper relationship. Any and all of them, however, can be means through which you and your Lord can express your love for one another. Believe it or not, if you did all of them, it probably wouldn't add more than 30-45 minutes to your day. What a wonderful spiritual investment that accrues so many benefits!

D. Our Study Life (refer to the Study rollo)

- 1) Much has been shared already this weekend about the need to deepen our faith through some concentrated study of the Scriptures. This can be done by utilizing Bible courses, Adult education classes and Bible Commentaries.
 - 2) There are numerous Christian periodicals, inspirational books and books specifically dealing with aspects of the faith or theology along with as Christian music.
 - 3) Ask your pastor for a good approach to your continued study in the faith
- Making a Difference with Our Lives (Action)
- 4) God has places for ministry for each of us - they may be in the day-to-day routines of our lives, or in special areas of gifts, interest or concern.
 - 5) It is absolutely necessary that we find our ministries and pursue them (Note Genesis 11:28, Matthew 25, Romans 12: 1

III. Life in the "Body" - the Church

- A. The *primary* faith community in your life is your church community- not Via de Cristo
- B. Be a positive blessing in your congregation's growth in faith and witness
- C. Pray, pray, pray - for your Church, your pastor, your fellow church members
- D. Make an appointment to meet with your pastor
 - 1) Share the joy of the weekend
 - 2) Ask how to be most supportive of him/her and of the life of the church
- E. Utilize your pastor as a "Spiritual Director" in your life
- F. No secrets! Feel free to share about the substance and schedule of the weekend (minus the surprises)
- G. No cliques! Treat all brothers and sisters in Christ in your congregation the same. Don't exchange expressions of affection (hugs, etc.) you aren't willing to share with anyone. No one is to feel different because they haven't attended a weekend. Christ is the great equalizer. Keep a servant heart.

IV. Conclusion

There you have it - a prescription for a balanced Christian life. Meeting in small groups regularly will deepen your Piety, Study and Action. You will be encouraged in that area later today. A good rule of thumb for exercising your faith on a weekly basis (apart from your personal devotional life) - *FIVE FOR FAITH: One hour for worship -One hour for large group Bible study- One hour for small group sharing- Two hours devoted to specific ministry action*

Dear friends, the best is yet to be! The experience of many thousands before you testify that the Via de Cristo weekend is only the beginning. You will grow, your faith will deepen. Life can be lived in Grace - the Grace of God in Jesus Christ. God loves you and so do I.

Sample Via de Cristo Weekend Schedule

Clergy Assignments

(This is a **representative** weekend schedule and is meant as an example to build the appropriate timetable for your weekend - to encourage clergy to know when and where they should be at each stage of the weekend and their responsibilities.)

| Via de Cristo # _____ | | | | | |
|---------------------------|------|-------------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|
| Thursday Evening Schedule | | | | | |
| | Time | Event | Pastor | Pastor | Pastor |
| | | Meditation "Know Thyself" | | | |
| | | Meditation "The Prodigal Son" | | | |
| | | Silent Retreat | | | |
| | | Thursday Night Team Meeting | | | |
| Friday Schedule | | | | | |
| | Time | Event | Pastor | Pastor | Pastor |
| | | Chapel: Worship & Holy Communion | | | |
| | | Meditation "Three Glances" | | | |
| | | Community Communion | | | |
| | | Palanca Chapel: Pre Ideal | | | |
| | | Ideal Rollo | | | |
| | | Palanca Chapel: Post Ideal | | | |
| | | Palanca Chapel: Pre Habitual Grace | | | |
| | | Habitual Grace Rollo | | | |
| | | Palanca Chapel: Post Habitual Grace | | | |
| | | Palanca Chapel: Pre Laity | | | |
| | | Laity Rollo | | | |
| | | Palanca Chapel: Post Laity | | | |
| | | Palanca Chapel: Pre Actual Grace | | | |
| | | Actual Grace Rollo | | | |

| | | | | | |
|-------------------|------|--|--------|--------|--------|
| | | Palanca Chapel: Post Actual Grace | | | |
| | | Palanca Chapel: Pre-Piety | | | |
| | | Piety Rollo | | | |
| | | Palanca Chapel: Post Piety | | | |
| | | Confession and Examination | | | |
| | | Chapel: The Way of the Cross (Rector) | | | |
| | | Chapel: Prayer & Counseling | | | |
| | | Friday Night Team Meeting | | | |
| Saturday Schedule | | | | | |
| | Time | Event | Pastor | Pastor | Pastor |
| | | Chapel: Worship & Holy Communion | | | |
| | | Meditation: "Figure of Christ" | | | |
| | | Weekend Photo | | | |
| | | Palanca Chapel: Pre Study | | | |
| | | Study Rollo: | | | |
| | | Palanca Chapel: Post Study | | | |
| | | Palanca Chapel: Pre-Sacraments | | | |
| | | Sacrament Rollo Part 1 | | | |
| | | Break | | | |
| | | Sacrament Rollo Part 2 | | | |
| | | Palanca Chapel: Post Sacraments | | | |
| | | Palanca Chapel: Pre Apostolic Action | | | |
| | | Apostolic Action Rollo: | | | |
| | | Palanca Chapel: Post Apostolic Action | | | |
| | | Palanca Chapel: Pre Obstacles to Grace | | | |

| | | | | | |
|-----------------|------|---|--------|--------|--------|
| | | Obstacles to Grace Rollo | | | |
| | | Palanca Chapel: Post Obstacles to Grace | | | |
| | | Palanca Chapel: Pre Leaders | | | |
| | | Leaders Rollo: | | | |
| | | Palanca Chapel: Post Leaders | | | |
| | | Saturday Evening Dinner | | | |
| | | Chapel: Prayer & Counseling | | | |
| | | Saturday Night Team Meeting | | | |
| Sunday Schedule | | | | | |
| | Time | Event | Pastor | Pastor | Pastor |
| | | Chapel: Worship & Holy Communion | | | |
| | | Meditation: "Christ Message" | | | |
| | | Palanca Chapel: Pre Environment | | | |
| | | Environment Rollo | | | |
| | | Palanca Chapel: Post Environment | | | |
| | | Palanca Chapel: Pre Life In Grace | | | |
| | | Life In Grace Rollo | | | |
| | | Palanca Chapel: Post Life In Grace | | | |
| | | Palanca Chapel: Pre Christian Community | | | |
| | | Christian Community In Action Rollo | | | |
| | | Palanca Chapel: Post Christian Community | | | |
| | | Palanca Chapel: Pre Total Security | | | |
| | | Total Security In The 4 th Day Rollo | | | |
| | | Palanca Chapel: Post Total Security | | | |
| | | Rollo Room: Final Palanca (Letters) | | | |
| | | Closing Ceremony (Clausura) | | | |

Appendices

Additional Helps for Spiritual Directors

1. Weekend Worship Service Notes
2. Secretariat Spiritual Director
3. Post Weekend Spiritual Director Responsibilities
4. Sample Letter to New Cursillista's Pastor

Weekend Worship Service Notes

Presiding clergy should vest for worship only. The style of the homily is dialogical, based on the lessons for the day. The task of the homilist is to facilitate the reflection of the community on the Word. On Friday there may be limited sharing by pilgrims. By Sunday, it may be a challenge to shut off sharing; team members by this point should allow pilgrims to take the lead.

The Passing of the Peace can be awkward for those who are unfamiliar with it. Team members should refrain, especially on Friday, from overt expressions of affection (i.e., hugging). Since Holy Communion is offered each day, the invitation should be explained (since pilgrims from many backgrounds may be attending) sometime on Friday. No one should feel pressured to receive the elements - by Sunday all participants likely will be sharing the Sacrament. Grape juice should be available for those unable to consume wine, as well as gluten-free bread or wafers. Since all will be wearing name tags, it is appropriate to distribute the elements using individuals' names.

Elected Secretariat Spiritual Director

Purpose of Ministry: The purpose of serving as Secretariat Spiritual Director for Via de Cristo is to glorify God by guiding the spiritual life of the governing body of the ministry.

Objectives:

1. To oversee the spiritual life of the Via de Cristo Community
2. To help discern the will of the Spirit in all matters through prayer
3. Partner with other 4th Day ministries as is possible

Responsibilities:

1. To call Spiritual Directors to serve on weekends
2. To develop and maintain a list of prospective Spiritual Directors to serve
3. To train Spiritual Directors for each weekend
4. Regular attendance at all meetings of the elected governing body and Ultreyas
5. Regular attendance at as many Via de Cristo gatherings as possible
6. Pray regularly for the elected leaders serving the secretariat
7. Serve as or secure a Celebrant for all gatherings and Ultreyas
8. To attend the Annual Gathering of the National Secretariat, if possible
9. To visit Pastors of churches that have had a member either attend or want to attend a Via de Cristo weekend. Explain that they, too, did not see the need of their attending a weekend, but that it is as relevant to them as Clergy, as to a lay person, and that we want them to see and understand what Via de Cristo is and can do for their congregation

Related Gifts: Visionary and managing leadership, shepherding, discernment, nurturing leadership.

Other Qualities: Good facilitative and organizational skills, ability to work with people.

The elected governing body of the secretariat sets criteria for Clergy that qualify for serving as Spiritual Directors for a weekend. The following are few potential criteria:

1. Look for Clergy that have attended a Cursillo-based three-day weekend, such as Catholic Cursillo, Walk to Emmaus, Tres Dias, Episcopal Cursillo, and Presbyterian.
2. The preference is to find Clergy that are Lutheran, however they do not need to be as long as they agree to respect and teach the Lutheran Doctrines while serving Via de Cristo.
3. The Clergy need to be ordained and in good standing with their credentialing body.

4. Clergy that serve on weekends need to have at least one year experience in paid full time ministry at a church or Para-church ministry. They may also have served for at least one year full time as a paid chaplain.

Post Weekend Spiritual Responsibilities

Each Via de Cristo Spiritual Director needs to be involved in the Spiritual life of the entire Via de Cristo community by helping to develop a means of finding Spiritual direction for those looking to add that component to their life – as well as attending Ultreyas.

SAMPLE LETTER TO NEW CURSILLISTAS' PASTORS

Dear Pastor _____ ,

Recently, _____ , from your congregation attended a Via de Cristo weekend. The Via de Cristo is a renewal ministry, the purpose of which is to equip Christians to serve more effectively in their home congregations. To help accomplish that purpose, we hope that you, as pastor, will take the initiative to visit with _____ about the impact this has had upon his/her life and faith, and to explore ways they may serve more effectively in the church. It is our hope that, in this way, Via de Cristo can be a further blessing to your congregation.

Should you have any questions or comments about Via de Cristo and how it can better serve you and your congregation, please let me know.

Sincerely in Christ,

*Lead Spiritual Director, Men's/Women's Via de Cristo Weekend #
(Phone number/e-mail address)*