

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!

ROLLO #9 “OBSTACLES TO THE LIFE IN GRACE”

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.