

**The Via de Cristo**  
**in**  
**Your Fourth Day**  
**For the New Participant**

**Produced by**  
**National Lutheran Secretariat**  
**of Via de Cristo**

**©2012 National Lutheran Secretariat**

# Forward

This booklet is intended for those who have just completed a Via de Cristo weekend. This experience has probably left you a little confused maybe even anxious. This feeling is normal for someone who has had a profound spiritual experience.

You have experienced a 3-Day Via de Cristo; it has led you into what we call the Fourth Day, which is the rest of your life. If you have a greater or newer awareness of God's love in your life and/or if you have experienced a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, you surely will want that to continue and grow.

The Via de Cristo Movement offers you a method to persevere in that growth, and this booklet will give you a simple explanation of that method. It will also give you some idea of what the Via de Cristo Movement is, where it came from, and how it functions. Hopefully, it will answer any questions you might have at this stage in your life.

We have only one interest in asking you to read the contents of "The Via de Cristo in Your Fourth Day" - to help you grow in the life and love of the Lord and fulfill your call to be a saint and an apostle for God.

# Contents

<i>Chapter</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Page</i>
1	The Via de Cristo Weekend	4
2	Recapping Your Weekend	6
3	Living the Fourth Day	12
4	History of the Cursillo®/Via de Cristo	17
5	The Via de Cristo: A Movement of the Church	20
6	Charismatic Renewal and Via de Cristo	23
7	Organization of the Via de Cristo Movement	25
8	Glossary of Via de Cristo Terms	27

# Chapter 1

## The Via de Cristo Weekend

Most people have a joyful and unforgettable experience during the three days. It is apparent that this is not something that is just thrown together without any plan. A weekend is the result of a lot of preparation.

The first Cursillo® (the model for the Via de Cristo) occurred after seven years of prayer and experimentation. The present weekends use a standardized format that is the result of a great deal of preparation by a team. All the elements of the weekend - the content, the talks, the order in which they're given, the celebrations of the liturgy, the psychology, the interrelation between the team and the participants - all are carefully planned. While it is true that there are minor variations and practices that are unique to different Via de Cristo centers, it is also true that the structure of the talks and the time schedule are similar no matter where in the world the weekend is given.

The most important ingredients in the weekend, after God's grace, are the participants; therefore, their uniqueness and dignity must be respected. The weekend attempts to give each participant an experience in Christian community. Thus, building community is a vital process of the weekend. The weekend is really a one-time community -- it will never be duplicated. While it is true that the community that is lived on the weekend is not that which is lived in the reality of our daily lives, it still gives us a vision and an experience of human love and charity that is centered on the Eucharist. The spirit of the weekend is intended to be re-lived, in a somewhat shorter version, in the group reunion and ultreya.

The talks given by the pastors and the lay persons may contain little that we did not previously know about our faith. If so, then what is the purpose of holding weekends? What is different is the unique presentation and the personal witness each of the talks contain. Each talk builds on the other and, based on the obvious sincerity of the person presenting the talk, can be very impressive, not because it appeals to the intellect, but because the speaker lives what he/she talks about. It is apparent that the Gospel truths are incarnate in his/her life. This kind of witnessing and dedication is probably new to us, since we are accustomed to an intellectual presentation of the faith.

To live as Christians in a very secular world is quite a challenge. Our society is not conditioned to Christian community and, no matter how well-intentioned and devoted a person might be, it will be difficult living out the Christian faith without the help, support and contact of other Christians.

That is why the Via de Cristo offers the forms of perseverance of the Fourth Day: ultreya and group reunion. These forms provide us with a means by which, with others like ourselves, we can share, support, and sustain one another in our daily environment.

A group reunion does not have "getting people to a weekend" as its goal. Instead, it grows out of the weekend as a means to keep faith vital. It is another step in the process of becoming the leaders we have been chosen to be. The reunion is a tool to empower our commitment to servanthood in our faith community and to others in the world around us.

# Chapter 2

## Recapping Your Via de Cristo Weekend

The weekend begins Thursday evening. People get acquainted with each other and participate in a service of Confession and Forgiveness. The next three days include: talks followed by discussion, worship, and fellowship. The weekend concludes on Sunday evening.

### *The Talks*

The main part of the weekend centers around nine talks given by laypersons and five by pastors. Some of the talks utilize personal experience as a living witness to the content of the talk. Each talk is followed by a discussion period. During the first two days the table groups also draw posters depicting the talk and the discussion. In the evening table groups share the content of their discussion and the meaning of their posters with the whole group. Usually there are four to six table groups of six or more persons each. Five meditations also are given by the pastors during the worship and devotional times of the weekend.

### *Thursday*

In Thursday's worship, two meditations are given: Know Yourself, an introspective look at our lives, what motivates us, and how we stand in relation to our God; the second is on the prodigal son parable in Luke, and how the Father sees his relationship to us, always happy to welcome us.

## ***Friday***

Friday morning's meditation is the "Three Glances of Christ" in which Jesus gazes at the Rich Young Ruler, Judas, and Peter in the midst of their denial with a look of love and longing. Five talks follow during that day:

**1. Ideal** (Layperson): We are encouraged to examine our priorities. What is our Ideal? What goals do we set to reach it? What steps do we take to achieve it? Is it attainable?

**2. Grace** (Pastor): God's "Ideal" is to love his creation. Grace is God's free gift of love to us. The Father is seen as always loving, always giving freely, no strings attached, always creating newness.

**3. Laity** (Layperson): The nature of the church is defined. The local community is the nurturing, sending Body of Christ. Pastor and laity work together to accomplish the mission of Christ - to "go and tell." Ministry is the vocation of every believer.

**4. Grace in Action** (Pastor): God's grace, showered on all, is also poured out in real, tangible ways in each of our lives - in relationships with spouse, children, and friends. God's spirit is in us to enable us to believe and to love. God's grace overflows our lives to touch other lives through our ministry to others.

**5. Piety** (Layperson): Various kinds of piety are presented, both false and genuine. We discover that we are practicing some forms of piety, even though not feeling "pious." Piety is seen as "directing our entire life to God" as we worship, study, grow, and serve.

## ***Saturday***

Saturday morning's meditation is "The Figure of Christ." Here Christ as both God and Man is presented. Jesus is the "word made flesh dwelling among us." Jesus is completely God, existing before he created this universe, completely human, born as any other child. He lived the life we live and he willingly died and rose from the dead, bearing God's grace to us in love. This theme is enlarged upon during the talks:

**6. Study** (Layperson): The role of, and need for, study in nurturing our spiritual life are explored. The goal and purpose of study with the obstacles to overcome are discussed along with the resources available to enrich our understanding of the faith. References to books, Bible studies, devotionals, tapes, etc., are provided.

**7. Means of Grace, Word and Sacrament** (Pastor): God's word is a living, active presence in our daily living and his word is also enfleshed in sacrament. Here Christ is seen to be the Sacrament. God's grace is imparted in the earthly elements of water, bread and wine, and God's grace is also made real and personal in the earthly body of Christ (the gathered people) "given for you." Baptism and Holy Communion are discussed at length. Some emphasis is also given to the special times in our lives in which we experience the love and grace of God in deeply meaningful ways, for example, birth, confirmation, marriage, and death.

**8. Action** (Layperson): The apostles' action in "going into all the world" is the model for examining our evangelical vocation. We are encouraged to act in a way that fits our personality to "Make a friend, be a friend, and bring your friend to Christ." (Friendship Evangelism)

**9. Obstacles** (Pastor): The things (sin) that keep us from being aware of God's grace and following him are presented: the devil, the world, our flesh. We are the ones who do not allow Christ's atonement to overcome the obstacles; God's grace is sufficient.

**10. Leaders** (Layperson): The definition and qualities of a leader are presented as well as the spiritual qualities of a Christian leader. No one possesses all of the qualities, but each possesses enough to be used in ministry to influence and lead others to Christ.

## ***Sunday***

Sunday morning's meditation, "Christ's Message to the Via de Cristo participant" begins with the account of the transfiguration and ends with the descent from the mountain back into life and ministry. Likewise we will descend from this mountain and go back to home, job, community, church and the nitty-gritty of our daily lives. The four talks that follow build on this theme:



**11. Environment** (Layperson): What individuals can do to relate to, enrich and/or change the environment in which we live, work and play. How we can become a leavening agent in our families, at work, at church, in small groups, or with our friends, and bring Christ into all our environments.

**12. Life in Grace** (Pastor): Sustaining our life of action takes regular feeding, encouraging and training - all provided within the community of faith, the church. Worship, prayer, family devotions and a weekly plan of action are presented. We are encouraged to be part of a small group to support, encourage and nurture each other while living in God's grace.

**13. Christian Community in Action** (Layperson): Here the content of the Action Talk is enlarged upon. The heart and soul of Christian Community is apostolic action, something we never do alone. There is strength in community which empowers us to act. Practical resources are offered.

**14. Total Security in the Fourth Day** (Layperson): How we find security in life is compared with the total security we have been promised by God. We tap that security through others of the Body of Christ in all walks of life by sharing our pilgrimage, encouraging, building up, strengthening and loving each other. How to form a small group is presented. After this third day, we resume our daily lives - in the fourth day. Our vocation (calling), issued in Baptism, moves us to mission. It won't be easy. We are encouraged to be a leaven, not a bomb, in our home community and to serve without being discouraged.

## ***The Closing***

The main purpose of the closing on the weekend is that the participants can realize that it is possible to live everything that has been presented on the weekend. It is possible to see in the lives of the team that they are living as evangelists and as a community of faith. It is an even greater witness to see this living faith in the lives of those who are using the Via de Cristo method but were not present at the weekend.

This gathering of friends is an opportunity for the new participants to share with the Fourth Day community the experience of the Via de Cristo weekend and their hopes for the future. Just as it was important for us to experience that support from the outside community at the end of our weekend, so it is important that we attend the closings and give support to the new participants in a similar manner.

The closing also gives the Via de Cristo community a chance to witness the participant's entrance into that wider community of faith and to listen as veteran participants share what they have gained from using the Via de Cristo method and from living the life of grace in the world. These testimonies are beneficial, not only for the new community but for the established one as well.

We have reviewed the contents of the weekend only in terms of the talks. There are many other experiences and elements to the weekend: the celebration of the Eucharist, the decuria gathering and poster presentations at night, the group reunions at the tables, and the opportunity for individual conversations with the pastors and lay leaders. All of these experiences are important and enjoyable. They help to form community, but the real center of the weekend is the Eucharist. That is why the basic criterion for attending the Via de Cristo is that the person must be baptized and able to share in the Eucharist. If not, he/she should not attend.

Just as we experienced the effect of the palanca letters, we have a responsibility now to offer palanca to other candidates attending other Via de Cristos in our own locality, around the country, and around the world.

Our main concern immediately after the weekend is: how do we retain the spirit of that weekend? That spirit will diminish in time, but it is not a question of keeping the glow of the weekend going. Rather, it is a question of keeping our faith in Christ growing. This can only be achieved in Christian community. The greatest advice that we can give is to find a group of friends who share the same ideal and to meet with them in reunion, sharing together the answers to the questions in the service sheet and in the order of reunion. The ultreya is the best place, after the weekend, to find friends with whom we will be compatible.

Each ultreya will always have on hand a few Via de Cristo leaders willing to help us find and form a group with whom we can make a reunion. In this manner we will be challenging each other to live the life of grace and planning our action, so others may be brought to Christ and conditions changed so the world is evangelized. This is what will keep our life in grace growing; it will also give new depth to our life, a new vision, and a way to achieve it.

There is also a tendency for those who have experienced a Via de Cristo weekend to become so enthused that they use bumper stickers, insignias, badges, and other external signs to indicate that they belong to something different. There are no official songs, signs or insignias, in fact, their introduction has proven to be counter-productive to the purpose of the Via de Cristo movement. Greetings and songs (such as De Colores), rooster pins and stickers tend to promote an in-group mentality which is not in line with the purpose of the Via de Cristo. The purpose of the Via de Cristo is to build up the Christian community of the Church, not to promote another organization called Via de Cristo. For instance, when attending various functions, those who have attended a Via de Cristo should not immediately cluster as an "in" group, but mix and be leaders within the whole group.

# Chapter 3

## Living the Fourth Day

The Fourth Day is a method of keeping alive the restlessness aroused on the weekend, so that the church and human communities will be leavened with and transformed by the spirit of the gospel.

As one leaves the weekend, one is reminded by the leaders to attend the next ultreya and to think about forming or joining an already existing group reunion. Both forms of perseverance provide an opportunity to be helped by others and to help others. Obviously the sharing experienced on the weekend is something we find valuable and wish to continue. This kind of sharing can be continued in the ultreyas and intensified in group reunions.

The purpose of the ultreya is to root the results of the three-day Via de Cristo in the soil of perseverance and foster the atmosphere of unity which the synodical, parish and small groups need if they are to be dynamic and radiate enthusiasm and zeal.

The ultreya is the gathering together of group reunions to share faith commitments, growth, and apostolic action. It is also a place for new participants to gather and for those not yet in a group reunion. Hopefully the ultreya can be a place for them to meet and make friends as a preliminary step in forming a reunion group.

Witness speakers at the ultreyas attest to their growth in loving union with Christ as a way of encouraging others to do likewise. Ultreya witnessing exposes participants to a great variety of witnesses, offering them a broad range of possibilities for Christian growth and action. The speakers share concrete examples of how to live the life of grace in family, neighborhood, place of work, or with friends. It is sharing in a practical way that inspires imitation.

A witness is delivered as a living experience of what the speaker is or believes. As in all Via de Cristo talks, a truth is presented, then a recent example from the speaker's life is given to demonstrate the validity of the "truth" in a concrete situation. It is important that those who share do so because of the testimony of the life they live, not simply because it is their turn to share. Skill in public speaking is not a requirement for a witness.

The brief comments made by laypersons after the witness talk should affirm the speaker in what he/she is doing. Those who comment use their own personal experiences to confirm what was said. Anticipated witness speakers give the spiritual advisor of the ultreya some idea of the theme and scripture reference before the ultreya, so he can prepare his summation and interpret the witness in the light of the gospel.

## **Participating in a Reunion Group**

As Christians, we are concerned about how we can help others. Through sharing we help others. Every meeting of the group reunion is different though the members may be the same.

There is a distinction between "group" and "reunion." The "group" is comprised of the personalities involved and the "reunion" is their act of coming together and sharing.

The Via de Cristo Movement is not a congregational organization, nor are group reunions and ultreyas. Ultreyas are meant to include participants from several other congregations. Group reunions are meant to be formed in an environment or friendship situation. Groups and ultreyas that are formed within a congregation tend to become an organization of the congregation, with vision and action limited strictly to local needs.

There are lots of "good excuses" not to go to a reunion group. However, the one we miss may be when we are most needed by a friend. So we attend a reunion and go to an ultreya because of the opportunity to contribute rather than the opportunity to take; it is a matter of giving rather than receiving.

The question comes up: "How long should I be in a reunion group?" We know of people in the movement who have been in a group reunion ever since they attended their Via de Cristo weekend. The use of the term "permanent reunion" does not mean it is eternal. A group may change its members, but the reunion group remains weekly.

People who find reunion valuable continue as long as they can; indeed, they never consider terminating it. When a group reunion fails, it is generally because the participants lack willingness or understanding to fully live out their baptismal commitment, and lack the openness to share with each other.

The best place for a reunion is an environment where each person shares the same apostolic commitments because they are active in the same place. This can be in a neighborhood, but it is generally at a place of work. However, reunions can be formed by people in different environments and "bear good fruit." It is more effective to evangelize and change environments when apostolic action is done by groups.

One leaves the three day weekend with the priority to form a reunion group. It may seem normal to gravitate toward those people with whom one is acquainted in the ultreya. One may even be invited to join them in an existing group or form a new one. However, if this happens, the group may fail to be "environmental." One of the challenges that we will face in the next year or so is to establish an "environmental" group, usually one found in our place of work. Hence, our objective now is to look around and see those believers in that environment who have the potential to be leaders, then work with them, make friends with them, and introduce them to our friend, Christ. Next, we must prepare them for the Via de Cristo and, after the Via de Cristo, begin an environmental group.

This group, then, will be challenged with transforming that environment to help it become more Christ-like in its practices and customs. It is also possible to form an evangelizing group within an environment with other Christians without any reference to Via de Cristo. The objective of the Via de Cristo Movement is to transform the world for Christ, not build up the movement.

In coming together and sharing, it is necessary that some format be followed, otherwise, it can too easily disintegrate into a social conversation. The service sheet is an instrument that helps us share during the reunion.

The promises on the service sheet, which are filled out on the weekend, are the result of understanding that to live a Christ-like life and grow in Christ's love and knowledge requires a commitment to grow and share in three areas of our life: piety, study, and action.

The Reunion Card (Green Card) is a concrete way for us to promise to do each week something that will help us grow in our living union with Christ, through our piety commitments, through a better understanding of Christ and his church, through our study commitment, and through planning our apostolic action. On the service sheet a person can plot his/her course in life and make concrete plans for living this ideal daily. Only an honest service sheet, which is suited to the capabilities and needs of each person, can reflect his/her relationship to Christ, the church and its mission.

The intention of a Via de Cristo weekend is to renew people who have come from their environmental situations, and prepare them to return to those same environments with new understanding and the challenge to be evangelizers among their friends and fellow workers. Thus, the Via de Cristo Movement does not try to regiment participants into groups according to geographic consideration or parish affiliation, or because they made the same weekend; instead, they are grouped according to friendship or environmental bases and/or because they have common interests (i.e., same profession, job or hobby).

The idea is to form groups of friends or those with friendship potential, since group reunions thrive best on friendship, common interests and a common apostolic action. The deepest form of living together is friendship. Group reunion converts this into a permanent actual grace that is an evangelizing force where it is located. The group reunion is not only a means of perseverance, but it is an ideal way for us to share the faith we live each week. The main purpose of these groups is to make possible the normal, lasting, joyful living together of our lives as believers. Then we are to project that life together into the people we know through our friendships and work environments so that they, in turn, become Christ-like.

Many people are disappointed in the post-weekend program because they believe it is meant to maintain the "high" of the Via de Cristo weekend. Group reunions and ultreyas only have the degree of life that each person contributes to them. This is multiplied by the Lord as the members try to become a more Christian community: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20). He will not reward our laziness, but he will reward our efforts.

In summary then, the post-weekend forms of the Via de Cristo Movement, ultreya and group reunion, have given many people a much greater spiritual experience than the Via de Cristo weekend itself. Why? Because it is a growth process that takes place during the Fourth Day and provides countless opportunities to grow together and be motivated in living the Christian life daily.



# Chapter 4

## A History of The Via de Cristo Movement

The Cursillo Movement was born on the island of Majorca, Spain, in the late 1940s. The Cursillo, as we know it, came out of the Little Courses for Pilgrimage Leaders which were instituted by the Catholic Action for Young Men group in Spain in the 1940s, to prepare leaders for a pilgrimage to take the young men of Spain to the Shrine of St. James at Compostela. One of its other objectives was to overcome the aftermath of the Spanish Civil War which had left the nation and the Church sorely divided and bloodied just before the beginning of World War II. The pilgrimage was continually postponed because of the intervention of World War II and the Spanish Civil War, and it was not until much later (1948) that it was finally held.

The Cursillos in Christianity came from these little courses for pilgrimage leaders, and the first Cursillo was held in the monastery of St. Honorato in Majorca. Originally, the little courses were training sessions for the young men's branch of Catholic Action and were only given to those who were joining Catholic Action, the organized apostolate. However, they were so powerful that it was decided to give them to other young men, whether or not they were going to join Catholic Action. It was then that the Cursillos®, as we know them, were born.

The Cursillo® Movement is widespread today. From Spain it went to Latin America where the first Cursillo® for women was held. It was brought to the United States by two airmen from Spain who were training in Texas. The first weekend in the United States was held in Waco, Texas, in May of 1957. Father Gabriel Hernandez and two airmen, Bernardo Vadell and Augustin Palomino, later put on a weekend in Mission, Texas. The movement then, began in Corpus Christi and, in 1959, spread through Texas into Arizona.

By 1960 Catholic weekends were already spreading to the Southwest and were held in the East in New York and Ohio, all conducted in Spanish. In 1961 the first weekend in English was held in San Angelo, Texas.

The National Catholic Secretariat was organized, and a National Episcopal Advisor named, at a Kansas City meeting in 1965 at which time the National Office was also established.

In 1972, two Lutheran movements began in Florida and Iowa after pastors and laity attended Roman Catholic and Episcopal weekends. The method, with only slight modifications, was adapted for Lutheran use and, with the help of Catholic and Episcopal brothers and sisters, the two Lutheran movements began to grow at about the same rate, still unaware of the other's existence.

In Florida, the movement held its first weekends in Miami. In Iowa, the movement held its first weekends in Atlantic on November 2-5, 1972 for men, and November 16-19, 1972 for women. Leaders from the two movements eventually discovered each other at a national church convention, and when a group of cursillistas in Chicago asked for help, a combined team from Florida and Iowa conducted the first weekends in Chicago in 1976.

In 1980, some of the Lutheran movements in the eastern part of the United States had expressed an interest in a national body of Lutheran Cursillo movements. An invitation was sent to all the known Lutheran Movements in the U.S. to gather at Cross and Crown Lutheran Church in Atlanta, Georgia for a meeting in January 1981 to explore forming a national secretariat. With the help of a new bishop in the ALC, David Wolber, a document stating the intent to form such a body was drawn up, and the first draft of the National Lutheran Secretariat Constitution was written.

In the early 80s the Roman Catholic National Secretariat began requesting that we change our name, because to use the name Cursillo® required us to sign an agreement ensuring that the team and participants on any given weekend were all from the same denomination. Gerry Hughes, Lay Director for the National Secretariat, met with the National Lutheran Secretariat in Coral Gables, Florida in 1983 to invite us to join. The NLS wasn't ready at that time. This decision was deliberated with great agony at the next four meetings of the NLS. At the Annual Meeting at St. Michael's Lutheran Church in Ottowa Lake, Michigan in February of 1986, the NLS finally decided that the commitment to ecumenism outweighed its attachment to the name Cursillo®, and adopted the name Via de Cristo. Although the name Via de Cristo is suggested, and most of the affiliated movements have also adopted it, the NLS does not require local movements to change their names in order to affiliate.

# Chapter 5

## The Via de Cristo, a Movement of the Church

Just as the Church is the response of Christ to the world, the Via de Cristo Movement seeks to be one response of the Church to the world. It is largely made up of laypersons, and seeks to extend the Kingdom of God.

The movement's theological and doctrinal content is in keeping with the evangelical Lutheran churches in America and attempts to fulfill their stated purposes. The movement confesses the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; confesses Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and the Gospel as the power of God for the salvation of all who believe. Jesus Christ is the Word of God incarnate, through whom everything was made and through whose life, death, and resurrection God fashions a new creation. The proclamation of God's message to us as both Law and Gospel is the Word of God, revealing judgment and mercy through word and deed, beginning with the Word in creation, continuing in the history of Israel, and centering in all its fullness in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

The canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the written Word of God. Inspired by God's Spirit speaking through their authors, they record and announce God's revelation centering in Jesus Christ. Through them God's Spirit speaks to us to create and sustain Christian faith and fellowship for service in the world. This movement accepts the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the inspired Word of God and the authoritative source and norm of its proclamation, faith, and life.

This movement accepts the Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds as true declarations of the faith of the church. This movement accepts the Unaltered Augsburg Confession as a true witness to the Gospel, acknowledging as one with it in faith and doctrine all churches that likewise accept the teachings of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession.

This movement accepts the other confessional writings in the Book of Concord, namely, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles and the Treatise, the Small Catechism, the Large Catechism, and the Formula of Concord, as further valid interpretations of the faith of the Church. This movement confesses the Gospel, recorded in the Holy Scriptures and confessed in the ecumenical creeds and Lutheran confessional writings, as the power of God to create and sustain the Church for God's mission in the world.

The movement accepts its responsibility to participate in the mission of the Church, and because of this, it assumes that local movements will cooperate with their Church leadership (Pastors, Bishops, District Presidents, Deans, etc.) and take an active part in the work of evangelization under the guidance of the National Lutheran Secretariat.

Those who experience a Via de Cristo weekend and use the method in their Fourth Day have a deeper understanding of the real nature of the Church. They realize that although there are different functions and roles in the Church, there is one mission to build the Kingdom of God on earth.

All sorts of talents, activities and apostolic action contribute to the Church's one mission. The Via de Cristo Movement does not desire to form its own church organization. All those who have attended Via de Cristo, like many other believers, have their own ideas and concepts of living out their Christian responsibility. These are as many and as varied as we have believers within the church.

Cursillistas come in all shapes and forms. They are Democrats and Republicans, conservatives and liberals, traditional and contemporary. They reflect those who like change, and those who do not. There are some who advocate more changes and those who would like to maintain the status quo. To classify the Via de Cristo Movement as liberal or conservative would be like classifying the church as such. The Via de Cristo Movement was not designed to promote either a liberal or conservative Lutheranism, nor does it endorse a particular campaign or crusade.

Those who would like the movement to take a stand on certain issues might remember that most of these issues are more appropriately supported by us as Christians, rather than as members of the Via de Cristo Movement.

The Via de Cristo Movement merely works to provide a method for Lutherans to develop whatever spirituality they choose, so they may become better Christians, better apostles in the world. Each person who experiences the Via de Cristo, therefore, is free to exercise his or her apostolic action in any way he or she sees fit, which may include joining an advocacy group, working for social justice. A family or neighborhood may exercise apostolic action together in a peace movement, or by evangelizing companions, family, neighborhood, or place of work. Whether on a large or small scale, it must be the choice of the person, and not the cause or endorsement of the Via de Cristo Movement. The Via de Cristo Movement does not work directly with the problems of the church or society, but it forms men and women as leaders who can work to resolve these problems.

For many of us who have experienced the fruits of the Cursillo® method and purpose, it is a great movement and an originator of many others. The leaders and foundations of such movements and renewal programs as Search, Happening, Teens Encounter Christ, Marriage Encounter, Charismatic Renewal, Kairos, Via de Cristo, Emmaus, Kogodus, etc., came from Cursillo. However, the purpose is not to form new movements or organizations but to mold men and women as leaders for the Church in their environments.

# Chapter 6

## Ecumenical Relationships

The Via de Cristo movement promotes the unity of the body of Christ. That unity is from Christ, not from us. We do not take away that unity by organizing into denominations, nor do we cause the unity by merging. Our unity exists because Jesus died for us and united us as one body of believers. Because of this, the National Lutheran Secretariat considers its weekends to be ecumenical. All who are baptized in Christ are welcome to participate in a Via de Cristo weekend. However, the Via de Cristo weekend is Lutheran in its theological and doctrinal content, style of worship and devotion, and the major portion of its constituency are from Lutheran congregations in the area. Christians from other denominations who participate in a Via de Cristo weekend are taking part in a Lutheran experience and no apologetic alterations in the weekend are made as a concession to the non-Lutheran participant.

## Inter-Faith Relationships

The Via de Cristo movement is a Christian program of renewal for baptized believers in Christ. As such it has nothing to offer, on the weekend, to persons of faiths other than Christian. The goal of the weekend is to train believers to evangelize their environments, and this will most certainly include making friends with non-Christian women and men and gently leading them to know Christ as God's Son and as the Savior of the world.

## **Charismatic Renewal and Via de Cristo**

The Via de Cristo Movement's position on its relationship to the Charismatic Renewal Movement is very simple. The two are separate and unique movements and should not be merged, particularly in the three days and post Via de Cristo functions. The introduction of Charismatic Renewal into the Via de Cristo method is not prudent. Charismatic prayer sessions should not be introduced into the three days.

This is in no way a reflection on the Charismatic Movement. The Church is being renewed in many ways and by many movements. There are many cursillistas who are also involved in the Charismatic Movement. It would be tragic for a division to exist between the two because of a lack of understanding.

The Via de Cristo format ensures that a sharing of life takes place among those who participate; this is not always true of non-Via de Cristo forms. The Via de Cristo method is only complete when authentic ultreyas and group reunions are available for participants coming off the three days. Leaders who are not willing to follow the entire Via de Cristo method should not be leaders in the Via de Cristo Movement.

The Charismatic Renewal Movement seeks to establish worshipping communities, and promote a spirituality that is centered on the Holy Spirit, while the Via de Cristo Movement does not promote any one particular spirituality, only a method to grow in whatever spirituality one chooses. The purpose of the Via de Cristo Movement is to establish evangelizing communities in environments, rather than through praise and prayer communities of worship.

From experience, this can be avoided if Via de Cristo leaders follow the Via de Cristo method, and do not try to introduce elements from other renewal movements.



# Chapter 7

## The Organization of the Via de Cristo Movement

While we define ourselves as a movement, the Via de Cristo Movement does have some organization in order for it to remain a movement and in order for it to achieve its purpose. There is a structure on local and national levels. The organization is meant to conduct and promote the movement and is considered essential in achieving its purpose.

On the local level, the secretariat, or council, is the unit which has the responsibility for the direction of the Via de Cristo in an area. The local secretariat is usually composed of a certain number of clergy and laity and is the implementing body for the movement in the area. There are usually a number of committees or sections operative within the secretariat which are comparable to the three stages of the Cursillo® method and strategy, namely, pre-weekend, weekend, and post-weekend.

The pre-weekend is charged with studying the environments that need to be transformed, the selection of people from those environments, and their preparation for the three days. The weekend committee is usually involved in preparing for the three days, training and forming teams, and the logistics involved in conducting a weekend. Post-weekend has the most important task of implementing the perseverance forms of the movement, particularly the ultreyas and the group reunions.

It is not the Via de Cristo Movement's function to produce leaders within the Via de Cristo Movement. Its fundamental aim is to produce evangelists who will transform their environments.

Nationally, the Via de Cristo Movement is organized to unify and assist the local secretariats by providing materials, guidelines and start-up help to fledgling movements.

The National Lutheran Secretariat is composed of the representatives from the local secretariats, the executive board, standing committees, and other appointed specialists. The National Lutheran Secretariat officially represents the Via de Cristo Movement in the United States. It is also responsible for relating the National Lutheran Secretariat and the Via de Cristo Movement to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and other Lutheran bodies. Its main function is to service the local secretariats by disseminating information and material dealing with all phases of the movement, including the outlines for the weekend talks and all official literature. It is also responsible for overseeing the publication division of the National Lutheran Secretariat. Besides publishing all Via de Cristo books and materials, a newsletter, Conexiones (pronounced KO-NAY-HEE-OH-NAYSS) is sent to all members of the affiliated secretariats, all bishops and other leaders in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, some leaders in the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, and leaders in other Lutheran bodies. The National Lutheran Secretariat is supported financially by the affiliated local secretariats.

The name Cursillo® is trademarked by the National Secretariat of the Roman Catholic movement and may not be used without its permission or license. That license restricts the recruiting of candidates and team members to that secretariat's denomination only. The affiliating secretariats of the Lutheran movement chose not to be restricted by that license because of their commitment to ecumenical participation on their weekends. Therefore, the National Lutheran Secretariat has suggested the use of the name "Via de Cristo" by local secretariats (even though the cursillo method has remained unchanged), but it is not necessary to use the name "Via de Cristo" to affiliate with the National Lutheran Secretariat.

# Chapter 8

## Glossary of Via de Cristo Terms

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

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

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

**Actual Grace:** see "Grace in Action."

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

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

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

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

**Assistant Rector:** a person who assists the rector.

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

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

**Candidate:** see Participant.

**Celebration:** see ultreya.

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

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

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

**Closing:** see Clausura.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Dominant Professor:** lead table professor.

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Fourth Dayers:** members of the fourth day community.

**Grace:** God's unmerited love and protection bestowed freely and abundantly on humankind. This is Rollo #2, the first rollo by a spiritual director, often called "Habitual Grace."

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

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

**Group Reunion:** see Reunion.

**Grouping:** see Reunion.

**Habitual Grace:** see Grace.

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

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

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

**Kitchen Cha:** see Head Cook.

**Kitchen Rector:** see Head Cook.

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Non-Dominant Professor:** Assists the Dominant Professor.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**President:** see Convener or Lay Director.

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

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

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

**Renewal Group:** see Reunion.

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

**Reunion Group:** see Reunion.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Speaker:** a rollista or professor.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Weekender:** see participant.