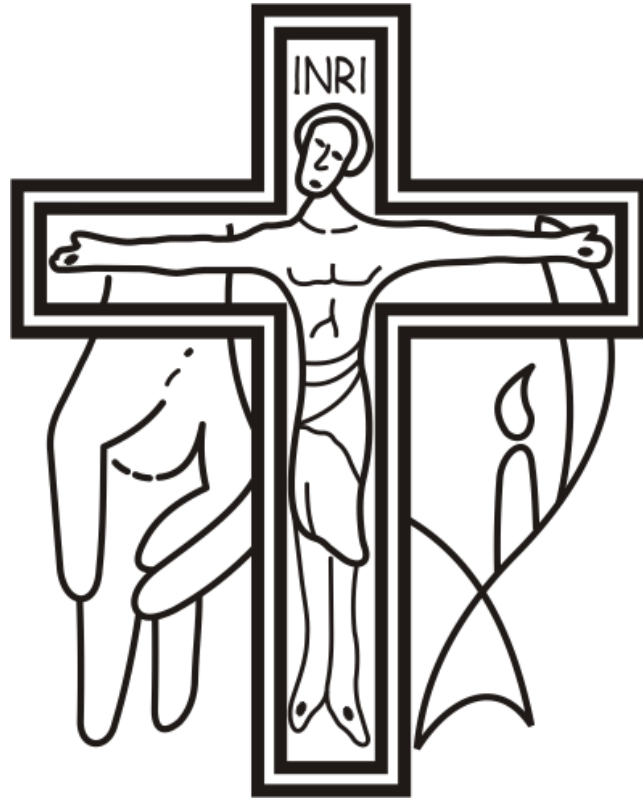


Via de Cristo



“Christ is counting on you”

Name: _____

Christian Community in Action

Rollo # 13

30 Minutes

CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IN ACTION

Time: 30 minutes. Content of this rollo is expected to take 22 - 25 minutes, allowing for 5 – 8 minutes of personal examples or testimony.

Orientation: In the preceding talk (Life in Grace) the participants will have been shown a source of strength in deepening their union with God but will probably be thinking of themselves as Christians individually. The speaker should take them from thinking of themselves as individuals to seeing themselves as a part of a larger, evangelizing community. Only if they see themselves in this light will the final talk on Total Security in Your 4th Day (Group Renewal/Ultreya) make sense

Style: The speaker should have lived the experience of being part of a group which is transforming the environment. Authentic witness is essential. The only witness pertinent to this talk is the story of an environment being transformed, preferably by or through the means of group support. *This story is to be interwoven throughout the points of the talk. Examples would show how effective apostolic action can be and give a glimpse of a real Christian community in action. A clear, enthusiastic approach is essential.

Objectives: To show the participants the need for Christian community; our mission, the Christian renewal of society, is not ours alone, but ours as a member of community. To prepare them to work as a member of a team, working together in groups (It is always the group that leavens the environment.); To build an attitude of community spirit and solidarity; To show them that we cannot head off in our own direction without the love and support of the community; The objectives of this talk are:

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

Preparation: Prepare to write your Rollo with prayerful consideration of the above orientation, style, and objectives. Remember, you are delivering God's message through your words. Studying the following verses will provide context and guidance.

Matthew 28:18-20

Matthew 10:16

Matthew 18:20

Luke 14:18-23 and 26-27

Ecclesiastics 4:9-10,12

Mark 6:7

Acts 2:44-47

Acts 4:31-32

1Thessalonians 5:17

Galatians 3:26-28

Ephesians 6:18

Luke 10:25-37

Matthew 10:20

Isaiah 42:1-4

Mark 9:23

1 Corinthians 12:12

Proverbs 3:5-7

Do not include all the verses in your talk. Pick two to four that speak to you and share them to emphasize your point. The Rector and Spiritual Director may also have verse selections to include.

1. INTRODUCTION

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

2. NEED FOR COMMUNITY

- A. Our society teaches us that in order to be successful we must be self-sufficient. However, reality is:

- People need people, it is God's plan for humanity. Loneliness and fear of isolation are two of humankind's greatest fears. The need for relationships with others is a basic human need.
 - People cannot fully develop in isolation. We inevitably form into different kinds of groups. Some groups are short-term, some are long-term and they have a variety of purposes. They all show our need for sharing life with others.
- B. Society is made up of groups such as family, vocational, cultural, social, recreational, political, etc. Each group has a purpose that influences the atmosphere of the group.
- C. Most of these groups (environments) do not provide for our basic needs. Even many church groups never become a close community. They tend to be centered on the specific purpose of the group rather than centering their lives and purpose in Christ.
- D. Briefly describe the environment you will use in your witness as it has been and continues to be influenced by the Christian community.
- E. To effectively bring Christ to the world, we must form small Christian communities in each environment. For true Christian community to form, Christ-like loving, self-giving, and prayer for one another must be present.

3. CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

- A. Christianity is based in community. God gave us a family. We are baptized into a church family and the family of God. Scripture confirms God's plan for community to accomplish our mission. Thus, to enter into God's plan, Christians form communities where the mission of Christ forms a common bond. The nature, purpose and spirit of a Christian community are unique and we cannot do it alone.
- B. Pastors and laity are partners in Christ's work. The pastor is the shepherd charged with enabling laity and guiding them in their walk with Christ and their attempts to reach out to others. Clergy and laity need to work together (Laity Talk)
- C. Characteristics of a Christian Community
- Only one center: Jesus Christ and His mission.
 - Living friendship with Christ.
 - Guided by the Holy Spirit.
 - Common idealism, spirit of self-surrender, trust, self-giving love.

- Desire to share Christ with the world.
- Praying together.

4. PROCESS OF BECOMING CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

Developing Christian community among believers and the world requires personal encounter, feeling understood and forming friendships based on the common love for Jesus. Through these friendships, forming a Christian Community together, we saturate the environment with a sense of the gospel by living out the Christian ideal. We must respect the personal freedom of each individual to respond to the gospel, all the while remembering that this is God's work.

- A. Working together in Christian Community transforms the environment. As each member shares and is aware of their gifts and the gifts others bring, we can influence our environment by living the Christian ideal and sharing others with Christ.
- B. An illustration of this concept: A coal away from fire will glow and remain warm for a moment but will struggle to stay warm. A coal in the fire will burn brightly. The collective witness of all Christians in a community are like a collective heat of all the coals in a fire, helping each other burn brightly and putting forth heat.

5. VIA DE CHRISTO PROVIDEES A MEANS TO FORM CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

- A. We must establish a Christian community in each environment if we are to bring the world to Christ. We cannot hide our faith. We have to share the treasure of God's grace with others. Make a friend, be a friend, bring a friend to Christ. This is our mission. It is not an option. It is a requirement of following Christ.
- B. The method to begin, help Christian Community share the Gospel as Christ calls us to do is to form and sustain small groups:
 - Get to know one another.
 - Share your joy, pain and concerns.
 - Grow in friendship centered in Christ.
 - Receive the love and grace of God.
 - Give your idealism, self-surrender and spirit of charity.

- Depend on the power of God.
- Pray together.

C. God-given characteristics needed to achieve this goal.

- Generosity.
- Dependence on prayer and the power of the Holy Spirit.
- Love and humility to work as a team.
- Sense of responsibility.
- Dedication and initiative.

D. Stages of community development: Forming authentic Christian community is not easy. Community develops as members learn to trust each other, become vulnerable and are honest about their feelings, even negative ones.

- Honeymoon stage. We are idealistic and committed and develop a bond with each other.
- Disillusionment stage. Problems among members emerge. Often the group falls apart at this stage. As a group, we must persevere in order to work through the problems that arise. We should reach out to each other in a spirit of encouragement and love.
- Reality stage. The group works through its problems together, with God's guidance true Christian Community begins.

6. CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IS APOSTOLIC

A. Christian community reaches out to others. It is not turned in on itself.

- Jesus sent his disciples out two by two.
- The first Christians knew the value of community.
- We must create our own communities as living witnesses of Jesus' love both locally and globally.
- Christian community exists as long as its love reaches out to the entire world.

- This example of Christian life answers humanity's deepest needs.
- B. The purpose of Christian community is to bring Christ to the world. To be witnesses to the Good News of Christ both in our words "talking the talk" and actions "walking the walk". It is through Christian Community, working together we can more effectively influence the world for Christ.
- We are called to be salt and light of the world (our families, workplaces, neighborhoods, and other groups we are a part of).
 - We are called to reflect and be a reflection of Christian ideals (love, mercy, grace and forgiveness).
 - In Christian community we are called to hold each other accountable to God and one another in the proclamation of the Good News and bearing witness through how we live our lives.

7. **CONCLUSION**

Christian Community in Action is living out the Great Commission to go and make disciples and living into the promise that God is with us always.

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age. Matthew 28:19-20