

## **THE FOURTH DAY**

Recommended time: 10-15 minutes

### **I. Orientation**

The final talk of the weekend is a personal testimony of someone who is living the Via de Cristo method. It is a witness of the speaker's life following his/her Via de Cristo weekend and shows the importance of perseverance through Group Reunion and Ultreya. No new material is presented, but the participants see, through personal witness, that they too can persevere in the weeks and years to come. It is important for all of us to maintain our dedication to Christ, to grow spiritually and to become more effective in our apostolic action as outlined on the reunion card. The previous talk presented Group Reunion and Ultreya as the concrete means to persevere in the life of grace.

The main points of this talk are:

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

### **II. General Comments**

Two things remain to be done. First is to stress the importance of the final lessons of the Via de Cristo which were presented in the Group Reunion and Ultreya talk. These concepts are new, yet they are the keys to living out the ideal presented throughout the weekend. It makes the participant realize that in order to persevere, it is necessary to have an on-going relationship with Christ and on-going relationships with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Second, the talk presents the importance of perseverance. Until now, the talks have been realistic enough in considering problems, but the focus has been on sketching out a positive program. We now honestly face the problem that some people don't persevere in Christ's service. It is important to discuss this as well as to give some direction in how to handle it. They will then be prepared for their own struggles and gain some understanding of those who do not persevere.

Along with Developing Christian Community Within Our Environments and Group Reunion and Ultreya, the Fourth Day talk shows what is meant by "on-going relationships with your sisters and brothers in Christ." Beginning with the Developing Christian Community Within Our Environments talk, Via de Cristo becomes concerned with Christian relationships leading to effective apostolic action. Christian community is centered on the idea of teamwork. Christians working together can accomplish much more than if they worked in isolation. It gives the participants the desire for on-going contact with other dedicated Christians. The Group Reunion and Ultreya talk sketches the "how" of maintaining this contact, Group Reunion and Ultreya. The Fourth Day talk concludes the talks by considering some of the dangers and stressing the Via de Cristo method as a means to persevere.

### III. Atmosphere

This talk is both sober and enthusiastic. It considers some real problems and difficulties in an open, honest way. It is enthusiastic because of the central truth that “Jesus Christ and I are a majority.” It is a personal testimony of someone who has come through the difficulties and has seen Christ at work. The stage was set in the Developing Christian Community Within Our Environments talk to send the participants back into a hostile world with a desire to evangelize their environments. The Group Reunion and Ultreya talk has given them some new tools for accomplishing the Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20) and a way to hold onto the joy they may be feeling at this point in the weekend. Now is the time to provide a strong witness of the effectiveness of the Via de Cristo method.

The participants don’t need wordy, philosophical pronouncements. What they DO need is enough insight into the Via de Cristo method to see that it can truly work for them.

### IV. Suggestions for Writing this Talk.

The Fourth Day is primarily a witness talk. It presents a person who attended a Via de Cristo weekend, dedicated or rededicated his/her life more fully to Christ and has seen the results of that commitment. The speaker should share what s/he has seen God do in bringing others to Christ. It does not explain but inspires.

This talk is both realistic and enthusiastic. It considers realistically that everything is not rosy after Via de Cristo. There should be some discussion indicating that all former participants did not persevere, so they know it can happen to them or others. This should be done in a general manner without revealing anyone’s identity. If the talk is realistic, participants will face the fact that perseverance is not automatic but takes much concentrated effort.

The talk should enthusiastically convince participants that it is possible to persevere and be effective apostles. The tone of the whole talk should be one of confidence--confidence in Christ and what he will do through us. The talk should contain stories of apostolic successes of the speaker and other Cursillistas. It should especially contain the kind of stories that show how participants have returned to environments, how they persevered at working patiently over a period of time, and how they are seeing results. The stories do not have to be spectacular. They should show that results are possible.

In stressing the need for perseverance, the speaker should be specific. Perseverance involves prayer, spiritual direction, and participating in Group Reunions and Ultreya. A participant will not persevere if s/he does not work at becoming a dedicated Christian leader. The speaker has to stress the importance of these concrete means of perseverance.

The force of the talk will come from the speaker’s confidence in the value of the Via de Cristo message in his/her own life. S/he transmits the conviction that Christ does work in us and through us. If we are faithful, we will see results. This will do a great deal to encourage the participant to give enough of his/her own idealism, dedication and spirit of love to let God work in his/her life.

## THE FOURTH DAY OUTLINE

### I. INTRODUCTION

- A. On the first day we asked for your idealism, self-surrender and a spirit of charity. God has been present and has poured his grace on you.
- B. Many people, without even knowing you, prayed for you this weekend, and their prayers have been answered.
- C. Grace is a gift from God.

### II. YOUR MISSION

- A. While you may have changed this weekend, your environment remains the same. It may be cold, lonely, hostile or indifferent when you return to it.
- B. You have responded to Christ's call, and in following this call, you will bring others with you--those who do not know Him, and those who think they know Him but don't know Him well.
- C. Your head has been filled with ideas, your heart with fire, ideas and fire that you feel compelled to communicate to your sisters and brothers until all are brought to Christ! Like the disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration, you want this experience to last, to stay on the mountaintop. (Luke 9:28-43)

### III. YOUR RESPONSIBILITY

Responsibility is being accountable for something.

- A. The Lord called you to this Via de Cristo weekend and entrusted you with the mission to witness and to win friends for Christ.
- B. The world is not lost because there are too many unbelievers but because too few Christians live and act like Christians.

### IV. DANGERS ENCOUNTERED IN THE FOURTH DAY

- A. Over-confidence. Believing you are something.
  - 1. By feeling deeply about the mission that you heard this weekend, you may come to think that you are important and irreplaceable, that you are doing "good works" or accomplishing things.
  - 2. You must not forget that you are only an instrument in God's hands. It is humility that makes you an effective instrument. As long as you know this, God can accomplish His goals through you.
- B. Lack of confidence. Believing you are nothing.
  - 1. If you feel that you failed in your first attempts at talking to others about Christ, you may become discouraged and feel you can do nothing. Jesus and the disciples did not succeed with everyone they talked to either. The only failure is the failure to try.
  - 2. We are nothing, but with Christ, we are everything.  
"Jesus and I are an overwhelming majority!"
- C. False Christianity. Believing that doing "Christian things" makes us Christian.

## V. SOLUTIONS TO AVOID THESE DANGERS

### A. On-going relationship with Jesus.

Prayer, God's word and the sacraments give us strength. We live in grace in an intentional way, growing and sharing with others. (John. 15:5)

### B. On-going relationship with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Group Reunion and Ultreya are good ways to do this. Living in Christian community with others who share the same goals and ideal stimulate us in our apostolic action, sustain us in moments of hesitation, raise us when we fall, and keep alive the spirit of love. Two friends are stronger than one. (Matthew 18:20, Hebrews 10:24-25)

The speaker should witness how s/he has accepted the responsibility of changing an environment by maintaining a personal relationship with Christ and relationships with his/her brothers/sisters in Christ.

## VI. WHAT THE CHRISTIAN SHOULD BE

A. Persevering in Christ's cause, continuing His work, using His methods, and leaning on Him to continue His work. Build on the cornerstone of Christ living and working in us through grace. If we don't, everything will topple when obstacles arise.

B. Use the example of Christ to show what we must become. He had a small group of loyal followers who, at the hour of trial, became smaller and smaller. There was a larger group that followed at a safe distance, and an even greater group that fluctuated according to circumstances. Because Jesus understands what it is to live with temptation, He can sustain and equip us for the struggles we will encounter. He also experienced rejection by many people. He understands what we face and will be there with us. (John 15:20)

## VII. WHAT THE CHRISTIAN SHOULD HAVE

A. A clear concept of the ideal -- know what it is.

B. A clear concept of reality -- know what God's ideal is.

## VIII. WHAT THE CHRISTIAN SHOULD KNOW

A. We have different gifts. God calls us to do different apostolic work. We can and must do something, but we should not measure ourselves against what others are doing. Everyone should feel responsibility, but not all will feel it in the same way. (I Corinthians 12)

B. We will experience prejudice and misunderstanding. If we keep our eyes on Christ, we can grow through these experiences.

C. We live in God's grace, fully using the gifts we have been given in the environments in which we are.

D. We must retain the true concept of piety, directing our whole life to God.

## IX. LIFE IS A PERENNIAL VIA DE CRISTO

A. Live what we found here this weekend. If the power of the Spirit is the leaven in every environment, it will give a Christian tone and life to all society. Wow!

This optimism, this joy, this triumphal concept of Christianity and the Church that we are feeling now will extend and spread to all environments. These ideas will be brought to life and will help bring life to all.

- B. Our lives will be transformed to what they should be--Christian life deeply felt, lived and shared.

## CLARIFICATION OF THE FOURTH DAY OUTLINE

Fourth Day is a loosely structured talk centering on the idea of perseverance. After a short introduction, it considers what the participant is to do by reviewing the message of the action talks. (The Lay Person as the Church in the World, Apostolic Action, and The Study and Evangelization of the Environment) Then it considers two of the main dangers facing the participants when they return home and develops the solutions: an on-going relationship with Jesus and on-going relationships with our brothers and sisters in Christ. This is the heart of the talk. Next it presents what the participant should be and discusses the problem of opposition. Finally, it develops some of the common mistakes that a participant could make, ending with a view of what the future could be if the participants persevere.

### I. INTRODUCTION

The introduction does not need development. The Holy Spirit guides each weekend, and if the participants opened their hearts, they have experienced grace. They are reminded of two things:

- A. They were asked to give their own idealism, self-surrender and a spirit of charity (love).
- B. Other people have been praying for them. The prayers and palanca of other people were important in what happened during the weekend
- C. Nothing could have happened if the participants had not sufficiently given themselves to what was happening. Grace is a gift from God, something he wants to give to each of us.

### II. YOUR MISSION

- A. At this point the participants need to be reminded that they have changed and their environments have not. They are going back to the same families, friends, co-workers, etc. and they need to be ready for that. This section is a short summary of the message of the Study and Evangelization of the Environment talk. Each participant should work in his/her environment to bring others to Christ. Almost without realizing it, a change has come over the participants. When they return home, their families, neighborhoods, congregations and work environments will seem different. They may perceive that people seem ready to turn on them, or, worse yet, be apathetic. The participants need to be reminded that **they** have changed. An enormous challenge awaits them as they try to

change their environments to match their ideal.

The following sections are good places to share some experiences of how Christ worked through people to change some environments and to bring people to Himself.

- B. A clear statement of the central focus of the Via de Cristo is bringing others to Christ. Reference could be made to The Layperson as the Church in the World talk (We are the church.) and the Apostolic Action talk (Make a friend, be a friend, bring that friend to Christ.)
- C. It is traditional, both in the United States and Spain, to use the story of the Transfiguration (Luke 9:28-43) at this point to compare the way the participants feel to the way the apostles felt. They saw Jesus transfigured on Mt. Tabor along with Moses and Elijah. The temptation was to want to stay there, just enjoying the glorious experience. But they had to leave and do the work that God had planned for them to do. In the same way, the participants have to leave the special Christian community that formed this weekend. This disappointment is usually mixed with a sense of urgency to be about the task of evangelizing.

### III. YOUR RESPONSIBILITY

Participants are being sent into the world as apostles. This section emphasizes the enormity of the responsibility involved in this mission.

- A. As apostles we feel our responsibility strongly because we have an invaluable gift. It is the pearl of great value, worth selling everything to possess. (Matthew 13:46) We are dealing with something that could be a matter of eternal life and death. We have received something that entails a great obligation.
- B. Many people feel Christianity is a losing cause. The biggest obstacle is internal, not external. There are too few Christians who take their responsibility as apostles seriously. The world is non-Christian by default. We need to do something about that.

### IV. DANGERS ENCOUNTERED ON THE FOURTH DAY

This section begins to consider the question of perseverance. There are two main dangers that are a problem to a great number of participants. They are closely related, and the answer to them is the same. The following section provides the answer.

The two main dangers are attitudes that have already been dealt with in the grace talks. It should have been made clear that: 1) nothing good can be done without Christ and 2) with Christ all things are possible. This summary prepares the way for presenting the concrete means of dealing with these dangers: an on-going relationship with Jesus and on-going relationships with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

- A. Over-confidence. Believing you are something.
  - 1. Some participants believing they are someone special, more important than others, because they participated in a Via de Cristo weekend. Via de Cristo can be so successful in giving the participant a sense of his/her worth as a Christian and an apostle that it causes him/her to value the Via de Cristo

movement itself instead of valuing his/her relationship with God. When that happens, a person can be hard to take after the weekend. They may go home and turn people off talking about the Via de Cristo weekend or make others feel that they belong to a special elite group who are the only true Christians. Because of this attitude, some participants become less effective apostles after the weekend than they were before. This section should deal with this danger emphatically, helping the participant to see the danger and avoid it. We are a special breed because we are Christians, not because we attended a Via de Cristo weekend. The purpose of the Via de Cristo method is to support Christians who are loyal, active members of the Church. The participant should act like one Christian among others. S/he should not constantly be making it seem that s/he is a member of a special group at home, at work, in the congregation, or in an apostolic organization.

2. We are useless instruments when left to our own devices. The antidote to this over-confidence is humility. Humility is the realization that all good comes from God, and we are nothing apart from Him. It is not our desire to call attention to ourselves or seek personal glory. Christians should not only be humble about themselves, but also realize it is Christ working through them. We should also be humble about the Via de Cristo movement. It is not for everyone.

B. Under-confidence. Believing you are a nobody.

1. In the attempt to witness, you may become discouraged and allow your dreams of being a witness for the Lord to crumble. You may believe you cannot do anything to cure the problem. The danger is that you will lose confidence when you do not experience immediate and continuing success. Some will see success quickly, while others will not see much success for awhile. Even if you see success right away, you may go through periods of reverses and difficulties later. You may be discouraged by the fact that in your environments, non-Christians do not seem to be open to Christianity. New participants commonly feel that all they should have to do is tell people about Jesus and they will believe. For some people this is the case, but for most it is a long process. We can learn from our failed attempts, but if we do not try at all, our environments would not be changed for sure. Other participants will be much more discouraged by the state of the church. They expect other Christians to respond to what they have learned and experienced on the weekend. Instead they discover many Christians are indifferent, including some supposed "good Christians," even some pastors and church leaders. They also find other "Christians" who do not believe at all. This realization may cause the participants to become disillusioned and discouraged, perhaps even bitter. The speaker will have to warn the participants about the shock of this clash between what they have learned about the Christian ideal and the reality of their old environment. Briefly share a couple of short stories of people who went through this difficulty.
2. We are nothing, but with Christ we are everything. We learned that Christ and I are a majority. There is a false humility that claims to be nothing. It is

actually fear or insecurity masquerading as humility. With Christ we have full confidence that we can be effective witnesses. We may not have immediate results. Jesus didn't either. He rarely works through us without our cooperation. Jesus may test us, but we can count on Him.

- C. False Christianity. This was discussed in the Piety and Apostolic Action talks. Doing Christian acts makes people think they are Christians. Many church members fall into this category. Hopefully, the participants have had a genuine experience with Jesus and recognize the shallowness of this life-style. It is not necessarily that the action changes, but there has been a change of heart and the motivation has changed.

## V. SOLUTIONS TO AVOID THESE DANGERS

The solutions: An on-going relationship with Christ and on-going relationships with our sisters and brothers in Christ will give us both humility and confidence as apostles. This section summarizes the Life in Grace and Group Reunion and Ultreya talks.

- A. On-going contact with Jesus through living a life in grace. "Without me, you can do nothing." (John 15:5) The most important thing to do to be successful apostles is to stay in close contact with Jesus. If you don't, you won't grow in faith or in the ability to witness your faith to others. Ways to develop your relationship with Jesus include prayer, worship and the sacraments. The speaker should share some of his/her acts of piety from the Group Reunion card as ways to maintain a friendship with Jesus. Spiritual direction, study and staying in contact with Christian leaders seem like indirect ways of maintaining contact with Jesus, but He works in these ways to deepen our friendship with Him. You do not have to explain things in this section, but emphasize them and give personal testimony to their importance.
- B. On-going relationship with our Christian brothers and sisters means keeping in contact with dedicated Christian apostles. It is difficult for us to persevere alone. We need the support of others who want the same thing we want and who are also striving for it. We are much stronger as a team than we are trying to survive by ourselves. An isolated Christian is a paralyzed Christian. This contact is assured with Group Reunion and Ultreya. They open new apostolic horizons, encourage us in our evangelizing, support us in moments of hesitancy, pick us up after a fall, accept in us the spirit of love and encourage us to use our gifts effectively in spreading God's kingdom. They help uncover all of our potential. Participants need to hear what Group Reunion and Ultreya can do for them. They need another impetus to take part in these activities. This section should encourage them to value the Group Reunion and the Ultreya.

This would be a good place to talk about your own experiences with Group Reunion and Ultreya, especially going back to the stages of group development and how that played out in your Group Reunion experiences.

## VI. WHAT THE CHRISTIAN SHOULD BE

This section sketches the kind of person the participant should be: an active apostle, someone who works in a dedicated way for Christ, being a witness for Him, and continuing His work using His methods.

- A. Even though this is the shortest part of the section, it is the one that should get the greatest development. The participant should be a witness for Christ and continue His work. If the participant does not understand what s/he should be, the Via de Cristo has been a failure. This section should be an exhortation to really follow Christ and work for Him.

A success story of leading someone to Christ or changing an environment would be appropriate here.

- B. Don't be surprised when the same thing happens to us that happened to Jesus. A small group of totally dedicated followers grew smaller when the moment of truth arrived. A large group followed at a safe distance, and an even larger group vacillated ("hosanna" or "crucify him") according to the circumstances. The scribes and Pharisees tried to trip Him up "tearing their garments" in false indignation while cynically asking for miracles.

Jesus said to His disciples before he died, "Remember the words that I spoke to you, 'No servant is greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also; if they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also." (John 15:20) If the participants really follow Christ and work for Him, they can expect to receive the same treatment Jesus did. There will be some who will be totally dedicated to Christ, yet some of these will fall away when real difficulties come. There will be those who will go along as long as it is safe. There will be an even larger number who will be hot and cold, sometimes enthusiastically for Him and sometimes against Him, depending on the circumstances. Finally, there will be those who from the beginning will be lying in wait for Him. The participants need to know that when they come out in the open for Christ, they can expect mixed reactions from others. They can expect to have difficulties, to encounter people who are disloyal, even underhanded. Through it all, Jesus is there with us, loving us, encouraging us, and supporting us. We just need to be in relationship with Him in order to receive what he has to give us.

Relate an experience that would help make the point.

## VII. WHAT THE CHRISTIAN SHOULD HAVE

- A. A clear concept of the ideal -- knowing what it is. Only fools sacrifice themselves for an unknown cause. Our ideal is great, sure and attainable! God wills it! We are called to be fishers of wo/men. We have been taught by the Master.
- B. A clear concept of reality. Often we try to fool ourselves and substitute our own will, whims and conveniences for the will of the Father. Sometimes we fool ourselves into believing we are fulfilling the will of God when we clearly are not. Do we run ahead of the Lord and say, "This is what you wanted me to do, isn't it Father?" Only by staying in relationship with God can we know His will for us. Remember Jesus said, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father."

(Matthew 7:21)

#### VIII. WHAT THE CHRISTIAN SHOULD KNOW

This section contains a few final admonitions to help avoid making some of the classic mistakes.

- A. Not everyone has the same spiritual gifts or the same apostolic capabilities. We are not all able to do everything, but each of us can do something. Everyone must be aware of his/her responsibility, but not all will feel it in the same way. One of the most common problems is the tendency to think that everyone should do the same thing. Some people's circumstances do not leave them as free to do things that others do. People's abilities point them in different directions. Participants should be open to all the different ways and places individual Christians can witness. Paul's teaching about the body of Christ in I Corinthians 12 is helpful. The body has a variety of parts and each part has a different function. All are indispensable, and one is as important as the other. Each part of the body must respect and care for the others.
- B. Christians will experience prejudice and lack of understanding. After all, we are not greater than the Master. Participants should not leave the weekend expecting an easy time. They should be prepared to encounter people who are prejudiced against Via de Cristo or Christianity. Don't be surprised to find you are misunderstood. The same thing happened to Jesus.
- C. We are to live in God's grace, fully using all of our natural talents and spiritual gifts to further the Kingdom. We are to be people of our times. We are asked to remember that there is something eternal in each of us. The consciousness of our life in grace and our destiny should be a source of joy and optimism.
- D. We must retain the true concept of piety. Authentic piety expands life to its fullest. Some people came to Via de Cristo with a negative, legalistic approach to Christianity. They thought that Christianity was primarily a set of dos and don'ts that limited them. At this point most of the participants want to live as Christians although they may not fully understand what that means. The solution to the limited concepts of Christian living is our relationship with Jesus and our relationship with our brothers and sisters in Christ. As we persevere in the Via de Cristo method, our relationship with Christ and our apostolic action become more and more important in our lives. We will find ourselves naturally changing our life style to be more Christ-like.

#### IX. LIFE IS A PERENNIAL VIA DE CRISTO

- A. Living the Via de Cristo experience in our environments is living a triumphant Christianity, believing that "Jesus and I are a majority." We appreciate the victory that is ours in Christ. In each environment we are to be effective leaven that gives the group life and vitality. Take these ideas into the world to bring all people to life and able to live up to their true potential.
- B. We are the leaven, permeating and transforming the environment. Christians should be in all parts of society, in every environment, changing the world. Participants should take the ideas they found this weekend into their everyday lives. If all Christians were leaven in their environments, Christianity would

become what it was meant to be: Christian life deeply felt, lived in daily life and spread with love. It would be dynamic and attractive. It would fulfill the deepest needs of individual Christians as well as give them the courage and ability to transform their world for Christ.