

THE STUDY AND EVANGELIZATION OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Recommended time: 40 minutes

I. Orientation

On the last day of a Via de Cristo weekend, the focus becomes the participants' return home. In the Leaders talk on Saturday we heard of the variety of groups in which we participate and have influence. In the morning meditation the participants heard, "Christ is counting on you." In this talk we hear how we can answer that call to share Christ with our world.

This first talk of the day introduces the Via de Cristo concept of environment--sharing Christ with those we encounter in our daily lives. The challenge is to identify our personal environments and to understand and evaluate them in order to infuse them with God's love. We do not hate the world, try to escape from it or defend ourselves from it, but are to be active in our environments to influence them toward God and Christian values. In this talk, the speaker encourages the participants be open to others and to be aware that they can not do this alone. She/he also proposes a method to follow which is consistent with the gospel. Each of us should bloom where we are planted. This means Christianizing leaders in our environments in order to change it. We begin with ourselves and reach out to others. This influences the entire environment.

Main points of the talk are:

- Christianity is lived in community.
- We need to study our environments in order to influence them to change.
- God gives us what we need to evangelize our environments--make them more Christ-like.
- This is accomplished by working with others who share our mission.

II. General Comments

It is the third day which presents the Via de Cristo method, the strategy of directing our whole lives to Christ and living a balanced Christian life of piety, study and apostolic action. On Sunday we take what we have learned the first two days and challenge the participants to use it to become effective witnesses in the world.

The primary purpose of Via de Cristo is not simply the renewal of the individual or of the church. It has a broader vision of renewal of all society. The Via de Cristo method of living this life of grace provides the backbone for the Christian life. Christians are called to be part of the world, penetrating and transforming it with the power of love that can only be found in a living relationship with a loving God. Only Christians working together can affect spiritual renewal in society. We do not create a para church, but we work within the church and within our environments supported by the Christian community.

Conversion of individuals is only the beginning of changing the environment. We must also consider the effect of the environment as a whole on the people involved. Environmental transformation refers to transformation of the group that makes up the environment. Because we are conditioned by the attitudes, customs and opinions of those around us, we are to be concerned about transforming the way people form their values, attitudes and beliefs and how they interact with one another. The key to this is the apostolic action of groups of people who are directing their whole lives toward God and

who are seeking to influence others in their environments for Christ. Via de Cristo provides a backbone for Christian life--a movement which provides an effective tool for renewal because it includes forming groups of Christians who encourage one another in actively pursuing transformation of their personal environments.

There are three steps to providing a backbone for Christian living:

1. Christian leaders are developed.
2. Christian leaders participate in their individual environments.
3. Christian leaders are linked together to encourage one another in deepening their Christian life and carrying out their apostolic action.

The first step, the development of Christian leaders, was explained in the first two days of the weekend. They are to be well grounded in their Christian faith, their ideal dedicated toward a life in grace (the first day). They are to continuously study and grow closer to Jesus to become equipped to influence others in the way of Christ (the second day).

The second step is outlined in this talk. The participants are asked to transform their current environments. They are not asked to get involved in different environments, but to influence their current situations to be more Christ-like. The final goal is to change the tone and direction of each environment.

The third step is discussed in the Developing Christian Community Within Our Environments talk.

This talk outlines three areas of concern. The effectiveness of apostolic action in each area depends on the others. They are:

1. Ourselves. Strengthening and deepening our own relationship with Christ.
2. Our family and friends. Encouraging them to follow Christ.
3. Our environment as a whole. Changing the tone and direction of the total environment to be more Christ-like.

III. Atmosphere

By the morning of the third day, most of the participants have been touched by God and see themselves from a different perspective. They may have deepened a long-standing relationship with God or formed a relationship with Him for the first time. They have also experienced Christian community in a way few have experienced before. Some are apprehensive, some are confused; most feel challenged to do something. At the close of Saturday's activities, most thoughts were probably directed toward commitment in their own prayer life and toward involvement in church activities but not toward the changing of society as a whole. The challenge in the morning meditation is "Christ is counting on you." It is very important that this challenge be the focal point of all the talks on this last day of the Via de Cristo weekend.

If non-essentials have been introduced into the weekend or if there was too much emotionalism, the participants are more apt to be tired and lose their concentration. Emotionalism often hinders true spiritual growth.

The third day must convert the participants to the Via de Cristo method. It is imperative to keep their attention and to challenge them with Christ's call "Christ is counting on you." Present them with a clear plan they can follow to share Christ within their environments and be a catalyst (be light yeast, salt) for a more Christ-like environment.

IV. Suggestions for Preparing this Talk.

This talk introduces the Via de Cristo method. It is the first talk to present a method for answering Christ's call and sharing the gospel with the world. The talk needs to be clear, systematic, specific and concrete, laying out a method. It presents specific examples of things to do when working with individuals and practical methods that produce positive results. The participants must be assured that the method they will use is viable, so the talk must include many examples of successful study and transformation of environments. Examples should be varied and relate to the environments of as many of the participants as possible. The witness and examples called for in various parts of this talk should be very specific and well chosen. In order to relate to as many environments as possible, it is necessary to give some examples that one cannot illustrate with a personal witness. The examples should be short, direct and positive -- successful examples of the Via de Cristo approach or method. Keep details to a minimum. If the speaker has personally been involved in a group which has actually transformed an environment, the use of that story should be the basic witness throughout the talk, providing concrete examples affirming the success of the Via de Cristo method.

Deliver the talk with optimism and confidence. All witnesses and examples should be directed toward outlining a plan for success.

THE STUDY AND EVANGELIZATION OF ENVIRONMENTS OUTLINE

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Continuous and progressive renewal and deepening of our relationship with God is important.
- B. Laity's mission is to love others and introduce them to a relationship with God. This process will transform all of society to a life in Christ. Christ is counting on you.
- C. The Via de Cristo method is a way of living out this mission.
- D. The environment is the sum of the ideas, persons and circumstances brought about when people are together.

II. CHRISTIANITY

- A. Christianity is community.
- B. Salt, light and leaven must be at work within our environmental groups. (Matthew 5:13-16, I Thessalonians. 1:4-10)
- C. We are called to be in the world.

III. ENVIRONMENT

- A. The basis of the strategy is that we live our lives as part of groups of people.
- B. In each group of people:
 1. Certain ideas and attitudes are accepted in the group, certain behavior is encouraged and various ideals are present.
 2. A group ideal is created as individual ideals and circumstances interact.

3. A certain spirit is generated.
- C. The environment has a vital impact on people.
 1. People tend to conform to the spirit generated by a group.
 2. People with ideals and drive will structure, change and influence the environment. Give examples.
 3. We must influence the environment more than it influences us.

IV. HOW WE CAN TRANSFORM OUR ENVIRONMENTS FOR CHRIST

- A. Study the environment. We must know the people, circumstances and nature of the environment to develop a plan to transform it.
 1. The nature and influence of the group spirit.
 2. The environment's effect on surrounding environments.
 3. The influence this environment has on me. (Romans 12:21, Romans 12:2)
- B. Study the spirit generated in the environment.
 1. What is the group ideal (motivating force)?
 2. How do these ideals affect relationships in the group? Give examples.
- C. Study the people and their place in the environment.
 1. In each environment we will find:
 - a. Followers
 - b. Impulsive people who do not hold strong convictions.
 - c. Leaders. (II Timothy 2:2)
 2. Study the ideal of the leaders.
 - a. How far are they from the Christian ideal?
 - b. How can we share Christ with them? (Romans 11:16)
- D. We need to respect the variety of beliefs and faiths in our society when planning apostolic action.

V. THE METHOD OF CHRISTIAN TRANSFORMATION OF ENVIRONMENTS (apostolic action)

Most environments lack loving relationships. Loving relationships develop only by the giving of ourselves. We must look at ourselves, our friends and our environments. We should be modeling and encouraging self-giving, loving relationships.

- A. Ourselves. We must first change ourselves.
 1. God works in our lives, equipping and empowering us to be effective agents of change only to the extent that we allow Him to work in our lives. This demands courage and effort--continually directing our whole lives to God and His will for us. In this talk "ourselves" also includes groups of Christians who direct their group activities to God.
 2. God gives us:
 - a. The Holy Spirit. (Philippians 4:13) The power that enables us to do His will.
 - b. Will. Determination and planning to share Christ.
 - c. Knees. The levers of the apostles. Talk to God about your friend before talking to your friend about God.
 - d. Intellect. God-given knowledge. Be conscious of doing Christ's business. (Romans 13:14)

- e. Heart. (John 13:34-35) This has two meanings:
 - 1). Hope. Knowing we will succeed because God wills it.
 - 2). Love. Being a part of the lives of others in order to share Christ with them and encourage their Christian growth. (I Corinthians 9:22)
- B. Sharing Christ with our family and friends.
“The fields are ripe but the harvesters are few.” (Matthew 9:37) We have been chosen by God and entrusted with sharing the Gospel with our daily companions. The steps are:
 - 1. Heart. Win their hearts to open their minds.
 - 2. Intellect. Help them understand who Christ is and the life He offers by sharing Christ with them. (Acts 8:26-40, Romans 10:17, II Timothy 4:1-2)
 - 3. Will. Encourage them to make a conscious decision to accept Christ and desire to follow Him.
 - 4. Knees. Pray with them and for them.
- C. Groups around us. (Our environments)
The world needs Christ. This means bringing individuals and groups of people in our environments to Christ.
 - 1. Our own deepening relationship with God and our on-going spiritual growth influence our environments. (Luke 14:34)
 - 2. Consider the situation as a whole. Pay attention to personal interactions in the group.
 - 3. Identify the leaders and influence them to change their lives and thinking. If leaders accept Christ, they will bring others to Him. There are three contributions Christians can make:
 - a. Self-giving.
 - b. Recognizing God’s work in the environment.
 - c. Being interested in others and their gifts.
 - 4. Bring salt, light, leaven into the environment.
 - a. Joy and happiness are the flavor of Christian life. (I John 1:1-4, John 15:11)
 - b. The spirit of truth sheds the light of the gospel on all activities. (John 14:26)
 - c. Encourage others to grow and deepen their faith and develop a plan for apostolic action that enriches the environment like leaven. Christians need to join with others who have the same ideal. It takes group effort to evangelize the environment.
 - 5. Proclaim the gospel through your actions and words. Respect others’ ideas and rights. Do not give orders or direction, but show the way.
 - 6. Prayer is a first priority. We are only God’s instruments in changing the tone and direction of an environment so people will share Christ with others.

VI. CONCLUSION

- A. My environment is wherever I live and deal with people wherever I find myself right now. My situation, for instance my family or my job, is the place to start. The environment will resist change. As we seek to draw people to Jesus Christ,

- we will encounter obstacles.
- B. Our task, changing our environment, is achieved by introducing new life into the environment, an authentic Christian life. It indeed changes things!
 - C. Tomorrow we will find the world as we left it Thursday. Nothing will have changed.
 - 1. The key to introducing new life into our environments is the apostolic action of groups of Christians deepening their life in Christ and radiating this life into their environments. The reflection of Christ's life in our life will lead others to the cross.
 - 2. The world has not changed, but I have. The changes within me can be the leaven that influences my environments for Christ.

CLARIFICATION OF THE OUTLINE - THE STUDY AND EVANGELIZATION OF THE ENVIRONMENT

I. INTRODUCTION

This is a very structured talk. The founder of Cursillo thought this talk presented information that was new for most participants. It is organized around the idea that we must be working in three areas simultaneously to bring the world to Christ: first, ourselves, deepening our relationship with God; second, others, seeking to draw them to Christ; and third, the environment as a whole, seeking to change the tone or spirit of the environment to be more open to receiving Christ. This talk ties these three things together into a plan of apostolic action.

- A. During the first two days of the weekend we experience the love and grace of God. It leads us to understand the need for a full commitment to Christ and continuous, life-long deepening of our relationship with Him.
- B. We are called not only to follow Jesus Christ but also to share Him and His salvation with the world. Our entire society needs this renewal. This radical solution for the world's problems is the only solution--Jesus Christ. Laity's mission is to transform all of society with God's love. Christ is counting on us. This call was first heard in the Layperson as Church in the World talk and repeated in the Sunday morning meditation. It should be repeated here. Just as our individual happiness lies in Jesus, so do the problems of the world. Transforming society is the mission Jesus gave us.
- C. Via de Cristo provides a strategy for living out this mission. As pastors and lay persons, our mission is to be the Church in the world. Today's talks will outline this strategy and method.
- D. Definition of environment.

II. CHRISTIANITY

This portion of the talk is intended to show that Christian community is the under

girding of the Via de Cristo strategy. This community carries out Christ's call to bring the gospel to the world in order to transform society. There is no Christian life without community. This community is the light, salt, and leaven to the world, giving divine life to all of society. It cannot be closed in on itself. The Christian community must be willing to take risks -- not only being in contact with the world, but also fully participating in it.

- A. Christianity is community. Christ came that everyone would know the Father. As Jesus' followers and as His body, the Church, we are called to share our faith with the world. This can only be accomplished by being involved in the lives of others and having the support of the Christian community.
- B. We do not do this work in our own strength. Jesus is the salt, light and leaven that works within individuals, groups and societies. He gives light to the truth, the flavor of grace in relationships, and raises persons and groups to their divine potential.
- C. Christians who have been changed by God's grace and love and who share this good news with everyone around them will transform their environments. We are called to be in the world, not to protect ourselves from it.

III. ENVIRONMENT

Having summarized the basic ideas previously presented during the weekend, the speaker now explains the key concept of the Via de Cristo method. In Via de Cristo, the word environment is used differently from the common understanding of environment. It refers to people, not physical surroundings. A person's environments are their family, workplace and social groups, etc.-- those groups with whom they spend their time. The environment includes the over-all tone, the climate, and the spirit of the different groups. What a particular environment is like depends on the members of the group. Also important is the concept that environment does not refer to the people individually, but the group as a whole. Certain types of groups form when people get together. For example, a person may react differently depending on which group s/he is in -- family, work or locker room. Acceptable attitudes and behavior change from situation to situation and influence the behavior of the group. The effect we have on others depends on the situation in which we meet them.

The basis of the strategy:

- A. We all live our lives as integral parts of groups of people (family, work or profession, friends, etc.) that in turn are part of the larger political, socio-economic, civic and cultural groupings in society.
- B. We are all members of several environments: family, work, congregation, neighborhood, social and recreational groups, etc. We must begin to think of each of these as an environment.
 - 1. We study each environment to determine its pervading spirit and its ideal. Some strong personalities have a greater influence in the group than others do. The group will give greater weight to their ideas.
 - 2. Customs and practices of the group will influence group members. We also need to understand that we are products of the environments in which we live. Our expectations of life here in the United States were shaped by the society in which we grew up and lived our lives. In the United States a great deal of importance is placed on education and material success. In other

cultures, greater value is given to such things as relationships, the extended family, living in harmony with the earth and finding one's place in God's plan.

3. Because of the purpose of the group and its activities, each group generates a certain spirit. For example, the spirit of a baseball team will be different from the spirit of a work group or a church committee.
- C. The environment has a vital impact on people.
1. Our environments influence and condition our lives. People tend to conform to the spirit and ideal that pervade the environment.
 2. All environments are capable of being transformed. Leaders with conviction and drive can do this. Give examples.
 3. We must influence our environments more than they influence us. This is possible only with the support of our Christian community. In order to influence our environments, we need to resist their impact on us and exert Christ's influence on the environments.

IV. HOW WE CAN TRANSFORM OUR ENVIRONMENTS FOR CHRIST

This is the heart of the talk. We need to study each environment and then develop a strategy to change it for Christ. We carefully examine all of the factors: the influence of the environment on us, the interdependence of environments, the human factors and all other circumstances that influence each environment.

- A. Carefully study a particular environment to develop a strategy for change.
1. What is the nature and influence of its spirit and its group ideal?
 2. What is its effect on surrounding environments? Environments are not isolated. Each person is an integral part of several environments. Consider the impact of broader social, political and economic environments that influence the basic environments.
 3. How much influence does this environment have on me? Once we have considered this question, then we can plan how to work from within to change it. Carefully weigh all factors. It is difficult to accurately study our environments. The personality of a group is greater than the sum of the personalities of its members.
- B. Study the spirit being generated.
1. What is the ideal of the environment? Determine the motivating force of the group, i.e., material possessions, power, pleasure, making money, professionalism, etc. Highly motivated people have a stronger influence on the ideal of the group and influence others.
 2. How does this ideal affect relationships in the environment? Depending on the ideal, it can have a negative impact on those involved. Give examples from your own life. Possible examples include: Parents who are so busy acquiring material things (their real ideal) that they do not take the time to nurture their children. Congregations that grow so inward that others feel unwelcome and/or they have no involvement in the community. Businesses so concerned with profits that employees and/or customers are exploited. A government organization so centered on maintaining itself and its structure that it does not provide the services it was created to perform or serve the

people it was meant to serve. A group of friends motivated by materialism or pleasure. Only by understanding these motivating forces and the personalities involved can we understand how the group will act. For instance, people in a cutthroat business probably act differently when they bowl together. It's the same people, but a different group goal or ideal.

Which person in the group is influencing others? It may not be the official leader in the group, but the person others follow. These people seem to have risen above the pressure of the environment. They subtly lead others and the environment to a different way of acting and thinking. Their behavior is internally consistent and independent of others in the environment. We must be aware of each person's place in the environment.

C. Study the people and their place in the environment.

1. In each environment we find:

- a. Followers. They lack strong convictions and usually follow the actions and decisions of others.
- b. Impulsive people. They do not hold strong or consistent convictions. They let their emotions carry them.
- c. Leaders. They use their abilities to accomplish what they see as worthwhile. They show the way. They are catalysts for change. If we can find the leaders in the environments and lead them to Christ, they will change their environments.

This is a key concept of the Via de Cristo method. If we can influence the leaders of the environment to accept the Christian ideal, these environments will become Christian communities. So, we determine who the leaders are, become friends with them, learn their ideal, and share Christ, the Christian ideal, with them.

2. What is the ideal of the leaders? (Power, possessions, influence, etc.) How far is this from the Christian ideal? How can you bring them to the Christian ideal? (Romans 11:16) Formulate your plan of apostolic action.

D. Respect the reality of religious pluralism in the United States.

We have to remember that the United States, in this post-Christian era, is no longer a "Christian" nation. Increasingly, there are multiple religious traditions in our communities, in addition to the variety of Christian denominations. Being attentive to this fact requires special care in planning the Christian transformation of our environments. For those who are churched or unchurched, but Christian in orientation, our goal is to lead them to Christ and/or deepen their relationship with Christ. In our contacts with non-Christians, we must respect all they hold to be good and holy. We can gently lead them only by understanding each person's unique background and belief system. We attempt to bring Christian values into the environment and introduce people to our friend Jesus. We allow everyone to grow as a person and as a child of God. We must be understanding and compassionate, not judgmental. It is possible to change the environment even if each person in the environment does not accept Christ.

The point of this section is that we recognize the prevalent ideal in the environment. How far is it from the Christian ideal? We then formulate a plan to change the ideal of the natural leaders in the environment. The goal of the

environment usually supercedes the ideal of any one person. It is possible for the environment to become more Christ-like even if some of the people retain their personal beliefs that are not Christian, but are, for instance, Muslim or Hindu.

V. THE METHOD OF CHRISTIAN TRANSFORMATION OF ENVIRONMENTS (apostolic action)

The basic ingredient in bringing our environments to Christ is relationships: personal relationships within the environment and the relationship between the environment and the outside world. One result of having a relationship with Jesus is being able to give of yourself to other people. Once people have a self-giving relationship with others, both within the environment and external to it, the tone within the environment can change toward a more Christian ideal. Most environments are missing loving relationships. Only the giving of oneself that is empowered by God's love produces these loving relationships. In forming a plan to change our environments, we should consider three aspects: ourselves, our family and friends, and groups around us (the whole environment).

A. Ourselves

1. In this context we are not thinking only of ourselves as individual people, but those of us in this room and even beyond this room who hold these same beliefs. Some may have participated in Via de Cristo or related movements, perhaps even making it possible for you to be here. They are people with whom we feel at one in spirit because we have the same ideal. This demands courage and effort because we will become close to each other. We are on a lifetime journey to become more Christ-like and each of us has a long way to go.
2. For this journey, God gave us the Holy Spirit, our will, our knees, our intellect and our hearts.
 - a. The Holy Spirit. God gave us the Holy Spirit to instruct us, lead us, teach us, and enable us to do His will. (John 16:13a)
 - b. Our will. Determination is the first requisite for action. We form groups to grow closer to God and closer to our sisters and brothers in Christ. The purpose is to plan and carry out our desire to share Christ within our environment. We do not wait for "apostolic accidents."
 - c. Our knees, the levers of the apostle. Talk to God about your friend before talking to your friend about God. We do not "go off" on our own, but pray for God's guidance and direction before reaching out to others.
 - d. Our intellect. "Put on the mind of Christ." (Romans 13:14) Successful apostolic action takes planning. It requires knowledge and a consciousness of what we are about -- leading others to faith in Jesus.
 - e. Our hearts. This has two meanings.
 - 1) Hope. We know that even if we have difficulties or if we fail, God can succeed when it is within His will.
 - 2) Love. Because God loves us, we can love others and give of ourselves. We participate in the lives of others in order to share the love of Christ with them. (I Corinthians 9:22)

Any environment will be transformed to the extent that: we personally are conforming our own lives to the will of God; we have committed ourselves to transform our environments for Christ; we plan specifically to become friends with others and share Christ with them; we spend time in prayer, dying to self and dedicating ourselves to God in order to be His instruments; we put on the mind of Christ through study so we can pass on the gospel message with authenticity; we plan a strategy for transforming the environment, giving as much attention to this as to the affairs of the world; and our hearts are filled with the love of God and love of others, which wishes the best of what we have for them -- our relationship with Christ.

B. Our family and friends.

This is the second aspect of the environment we are called to evangelize. We use the same tools as above, but in different order. The steps in working with others are:

1. Their heart. We first win the hearts of our friends by giving them constant, genuine love. We become friends through kindness, caring, help, understanding and a genuine interest in their problems. By experiencing Christ in us, our goal is that they become friends of Christ. If we don't win their hearts first, we speak to closed minds. Everyone has a basic hunger for God. They will open up and question us about our lives only if they see something in us that they want for themselves. This gives us the opportunity to share concretely what Christ has done in our lives and to proclaim the gospel to them.
2. Their intellect. They must understand who God is before they can come to Christ. Being a good example is not enough. We must share the gospel. Sharing the meaning of Christ in our own lives is a powerful tool. (Acts 8:26-40, Romans 10:17, II Timothy 4:1-2)
3. Their will. They must make a conscious decision to accept Christ and desire to follow Him. Everyone has a basic hunger for God. St. Augustine once said that every man yearns for God and never rests until he finds Him. In spite of that, many people remain closed and fearful because of pressures in society to lead the "good life."

As a true friend, we do not force our views on others. Instead, we work patiently, helping our friends question the world's values and the personal values that have been guiding their lives. They must see in us the life they desire. We must invite them to desire the true ideal that can bring them happiness. We can then invite our friend to make a decision for Christ.

4. Knees. We pray with them and for them. In God's time, our friends may come to know Christ because we are open channels of grace for them.

Renewal is a complex process and is a gift from God. We need not be overly concerned about success. We need to trust that God's love and grace will be poured upon our friends and to remember that they will come to Jesus in their own time. Because all people have free will, what we offer may be rejected. Our concern is not to judge but to stay focused on our desire to be in God's will and to grow in faith and service to others. God calls us to be obedient and faithful, not successful. Changing hearts is

God's work.

C. In the environment, the groups around us.

We must be concerned about the spirit of the entire environment in addition to our Christian growth and the Christian growth of the leaders who are our friends in the environment. The world needs Christ to solve its problems. This means bringing whole groups of people in our environment to Christ. It takes careful planning to change the tone and direction of the environment to the Christian ideal. When people come together in this spirit, they will be leading each other to Christ. We are not expected to do it alone.

1. Those who lead Christian lives affect environments. By intentionally and continually directing our lives to Christ, we affect the environment. (Luke 14:34)
2. Pay attention to people's interactions. Because it does little good to change the rules and regulations within the environment, we must first change the lives and mentality of key people in order to penetrate the environment as a whole. A nucleus of Christian leaders will affect the environment.
3. Lasting changes happen when the lives and thinking of the leaders change. When the leaders accept Christ, they will share Him with others. Three contributions the Christian can make to improve the tone of the environment:
 - a. Give to others. Be optimistic. Exude Christian joy and happiness. Arrange celebrations of life events in the group. Help people share their lives with one another to bring a spirit of unity to the group,
 - b. See God's work in all that happens in the group. Then help others see God at work in their lives and in the lives of others.
 - c. Be interested in others. Become aware of their talents and look for ways to use them for the good of the community.
4. Be salt, light, leaven
 - a. Joy and happiness are the flavor of the Christian life. (I John 1:1-4, John 15:11)
 - b. We need the light of the gospel to expose the confusion in the world. (John 14:26)
 - c. To raise the tone of the environment as leaven, we need to take time to help people to develop their specific talents, reach their potential, and grow in their faith and apostolic action. We do not do this alone, but join with others so it becomes a group effort to evangelize the environment.
5. Do not force or coerce anyone. Our task is to sow the seed, work and persevere. God will reap the harvest. We are simply to show the way to faith in Jesus and a fulfilling life. Following the Lord's example, a true apostle leads people to question their values, then shares the gospel with them. We must be a good example and show them the way. Respect their beliefs while helping them see that God's plan for them is greater than they now comprehend.
6. The basic ingredients in the life of an apostle are constant prayer and self-sacrifice. True humility is recognizing that we are His instruments, using

our talents for His service. People see us as different and also recognize why we are different. Only when we reflect Christ will we draw them to Christ.

VI. CONCLUSION

Changes will not take place in our environments just because we have been on this Via de Cristo weekend. It is only when our lives have changed in a way that attracts others that they will open themselves to us and make it possible for God to reach them.

- A. We all live in several environments. We need to consider how each of them could become more Christ-like. There will be obstacles, but we need to persevere.
- B. Our task is to bring our environment to reflect the Christian ideal more closely. We begin where we are -- at home, at work, with our friends. Environments are not easily changed. Even if most people in the environment do not accept Christ, the spirit of the group can become more self-giving (Christ-like). Be prepared for obstacles and challenges.
- C. When we return home, we will find the world unchanged from the way we left it Thursday. Our job is to study and influence the environment surrounding us. Those around you have not changed, but you have changed. Our change can be the leaven that brings new life, a fully Christian life, into our environment to change it.