

TOTAL SECURITY IN THE 4th DAY (35-40 minutes)

Situation: The atmosphere is generally fervent and enthusiastic for the last talk of the weekend. Candidates are beginning to think of tomorrow, perhaps with some concern. The sense of commitment to transform their environments needs reinforcement and encouragement.

Objective: We want them to know that they have been called to the mission of bringing Christ into their environments. The extension and application of this weekend into a program for the rest of their lives (their fourth day) will help them persevere. This will insure the fruits of this Via de Cristo weekend.

The support provided by friends in a reunion group is the focus of this talk. If the candidates do not understand or are not convinced of the importance of grouping, they probably will not be able to effectively apply what they have learned on the weekend. If the points are not made clearly and the attraction is not seen, then we cannot expect them to form groups or to attend them regularly. But structure for structure's sake can become a major burden. (Holding a hammer in your hand is a major obstacle, unless you actually want to hammer something!) If the reunion concept fails, it may be because people use it without really wanting to accomplish that for which it is designed. This talk will be seen as a real success if the candidates move into lasting reunion groups which help them persevere and grow.

Technique: Enthusiasm and conviction are needed. This talk must be given by a person who is committed to the concept of reunion groups and who is a living witness to their value.

It is essential that the use of the "tripod" and Green Card in the reunion group is clearly understood. Groups without this focus can easily become social gatherings which neglect the need and opportunities for spiritual growth. Explanations of the elements

and method of the reunion group occur during this rollo and also at the tables.

The professors will go over these points after Life in Grace when they clarify the practices of piety, study and action. After this rollo they further explain and share about their reunion groups and ultreyas. These opportunities are only 20 minutes long and each table will hear different things or may concentrate more on one aspect. You need to provide thorough coverage with in-depth personal sharing during the rollo at III-C-3 so everyone understands how the Green Card is used by a reunion group and how they can benefit from grouping. Or Rectors may pause at this point to allow the professors to have a Òmini Reunion GroupÓ at each table. Just make sure that everything is covered and you stay on schedule.

Your witness should leave the candidates excited about reunion groups because you have shared the meaning and value of your own. You need to open up and share how your contact with Christ and with your Christian community has helped you to remain faithful in your walk. The sharing should include ways in which the group has helped nurture you, has helped you to become a stronger witness, and linked you to the apostolic community at large.

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. If this weekend is only a pleasant memory, it will have done little to advance the kingdom of God, either within yourself or in the world.
- B. God called you to this Via de Cristo:
 - 1. To direct your whole life to Him (piety).
 - 2. To reform your thinking, to develop a fully Christian attitude (through study).

3. To be a witness to the Gospel in your life (action).
 4. To be God's agents for change (leaders).
 5. To transform every situation you are in so that it becomes more Christ-centered (environment).
 6. To be the Church where you live. (Christian community in action).
- C. We need to persevere to live the life to which God has called us.

II. PERSEVERANCE

- A. We face three dangers in ourselves as we try to persevere.
1. Overconfidence; believing we are something (without God and His grace, we are nothing).
 2. Lack of confidence; believing we are nothing (with Christ, all things are possible).
 3. False Christianity; believing that doing "Christian" things makes us Christian; that doing "good works" makes us righteous.
- B. Remedy for these dangers is twofold:
1. Ongoing relationship with Jesus Christ John 15:5 (through Word, Sacrament, our prayer life).
 2. Ongoing relationship with our brothers and sisters (living the Christian life In union with friends) Matt 18:20; Heb 10:24-25
- C. The Via de Cristo method of perseverance consists of reunion groups and ultreyas.

III. REUNION GROUPS

A reunion group is a regular meeting of 3-5 Christians who share in their desire for perseverance and growth in their Christian commitment.

- A. The purpose of a reunion group is to be a means or tool for accomplishing our goal.

For ensuring the fruits of the Via de Cristo, for nurturing and maintaining that Christian love and support we all need to make us more effective disciples. Group reunion will not make much sense to us unless we have truly dedicated our lives to God and we are clearly convinced of the mission to which we are called.

1. The reunion group is based on friendship to promote the spiritual maturity of each member and an ongoing commitment to be evangelists in our families, neighborhoods, profession, etc.
2. The reunion group is a practical way to share our Christian life with friends and experience Christian community.
3. The Christian life is strengthened and deepened when it is shared. We can influence each other in the group by our example, love, prayers and encouragement.
4. Reunion groups give us the support and accountability we need to go beyond our present level of spiritual maturity. Obstacles can be overcome through the support of friendship. We are kept accountable.

B. Characteristics of the reunion group

1. Natural friendships
Make it with persons with whom you have a natural and easy friendship. Give it plenty of time to grow; be patient. Many change groups until they find one in which they're most comfortable.
2. Three to five persons is ideal.

3. Regularity and promptness. Meets weekly
4. Seriousness. Not lacking in humor, but having great importance to each member.
5. Discretion. Do not share what is heard in the group.
6. Sincerity. Must be completely honest and open in order to grow.
7. Prayer (For and within the reunion group.)
8. No group leaders. Each takes responsibility.

C. Method of the reunion group

1. Growth in any endeavor Is accelerated by sharing and planning in small groups.
We share, review, plan, and depend on each other to implement.
2. Sharing includes a review of the three aspects of our Christian life found on the Green Card.
 - a. Piety - our living union with Christ. As we share we are lifting and building-up, strengthening each other in our walks.
 - b. Study - our progression in knowledge of Him and strengthening our formation as Christian leaders
 - c. Action - how we are living out our vocation of witnessing
3. Explanation of the elements of the Reunion Group (give personal examples as you go down the Green Card).
 - a. Prayer to the Holy Spirit
 - b. Piety; the spiritual aids which have nourished and strengthened my walk with Christ; sharing those moments most aware of Christ's presence;

- c. Study; a "self-check point": Am I faithfully applying my mind, so I may be a better equipped, and more knowledgeable Christian?
- d. Action; What have I done to extend the kingdom of God this week? This is measured by:
 - 1. Successes – those apostolic actions which drew someone to closer friendship with Christ.
 - 2. Failures – those actions which did not work out as intended in my apostolic plans, long and short range. What can be learned from apostolic failures?
 - 3. Making apostolic plans; ÒTo stop is to go backwards.Ó

IV. ULTREYA: THE REUNION OF THE GROUPS

- A. The Ultreya is a visible sign of the mutual support of the community at large.

The word means Òonward, keep on going.Ó It was a cry of encouragement used by medieval pilgrims.

- B. Purpose and mission of the Ultreya

- 1. The purpose is to be a motivating force for all of us to live the ideal and evangelize the world by keeping alive the spirit and friendship of the weekend.
- 2. The mission is to develop Christian community and make possible the structuring of Christianity in the world;

- C. Content

- 1. Singing
- 2. Prayer to the Holy Spirit

3. Announcements
4. A witness talk about some facet of piety, study, or action in the Fourth Day
5. Small group sharing about some aspect of the talk
6. Sharing of the groups after coming together again
7. A time of prayer in the sanctuary
8. Refreshments

D. Local Ultreyas: Dates, times, encouragement to attend

V. CONCLUSION

- A. What's important is to persevere in our Christian witness and to live a dynamic Christian life, not simply to persevere in the Via de Cristo.
- B. Reunion Groups and Ultreyas are valid and effective for what they intend to do. They are not an end in themselves, but a means of extraordinary value.
- C. An isolated Christian is a paralyzed Christian.
- D. The warmth and security of Christ's love that is present here can be carried to the future. God's grace will enable us to persevere. Reunion Groups and Ultreyas are forms of God's grace.

Via de Cristo is not a "flickering light" or just a "mountain top experience."

Purpose to which we have been called CAN be achieved.