

Clergy Talks ~

Sharing the Message

RELATIONSHIP EVANGELISM RECONCILIATION

SHARING THE MESSAGE

THE CURSILLO SPIRITUAL ADVISOR

Clergy fulfill a variety of roles within the Cursillo Community. They are often part of the leadership, but are not the sole leader. Thus, they are called “Advisors,” not “Directors.” Their liturgical and spiritual support is always essential and helps to focus the Community on the Christian life and serving Jesus.

The title “Spiritual Advisor” can refer to two different positions:

1. The Weekend Spiritual Advisor — Someone who serves on a Cursillo Weekend team specifically to support that Weekend.
2. The Cursillo Diocesan Spiritual Advisor — Someone who supports the Cursillo Community over a period of time as an appointee of the Diocesan Bishop.

For both positions, there are a few musts when selecting a Spiritual Advisor. First, the person under consideration must be an Episcopal deacon, priest, bishop or a member of a religious order. Second, the person must have participated in an Episcopal or Roman Catholic Cursillo Weekend and be practicing the Cursillo Method. However, clergy of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) who have participated in a similar Fourth Day program under the auspices of their denomination and with permission of both bishops may be selected.

Besides the outlines for the Clergy meditations and talks given during the Cursillo Weekend, this booklet will provide a general description of each position.

ONE TALK WITH FIFTEEN PARTS

The most visible role of the Weekend Spiritual Advisor is to offer the five Clergy Talks and the five meditations. They also offer daily Eucharists and other worship opportunities.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN...

The information in this booklet is designed to provide information about the role of clergy in a Cursillo Community and for an Episcopal Cursillo Weekend. It is a companion to “*Lay Talk ~ Sharing the Message*.” This is the fifth edition of this material and is the result of decades of dedicated work by the Episcopal Cursillo Ministry Committee and many Cursillo communities.

As the Ministry may have evolved in style and structure, the essential message has remained the same. As long as the key components of the Talks and Meditations are followed, the Cursillo Weekend will be an effective part of the Cursillo Method.

Before beginning, it is important for each team member — **INCLUDING CLERGY** — to fully understand the Cursillo Method and the role of the Weekend within the full process. Each should read: “*What is Cursillo*,” “*The Cursillo Path*,” and “*Cursillo ~ Our Story*.” “*Building the Path*” and “*Living in the Fourth Day*” would also be helpful. These and other important booklets can be downloaded free from the Episcopal Cursillo Ministry website under the Publications and Resources tab (episcopalcursilloministry.org.)

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The fifteen lay and clergy talks given during the Episcopal Cursillo Weekend are seen as really one talk in fifteen parts. These presentations are also referred to as Rollos and the presenters are called Rollistas. The use of these terms are at the discretion of each diocese and are used interchangeably in this booklet.

Each talk builds on the ones that precede it, and each one's message sets up the next one. The goal of the Weekend is for the hearers to be able to make sense of what they've heard so that they will go home with an understanding of the Cursillo Method that will inspire them to enter the Fourth Day. Thus, it is vitally important that each talk be prepared with that goal in mind.

REVIEW OF THE CURSILLO METHOD

The purpose of Cursillo is to convert Christians to a deeper relationship with God by putting Jesus Up Front in our Fourth Day. Its theology and application provide tools to Christianize our environments through Apostolic Action in all areas of human activity.

There are three equally important parts of the Cursillo Method.

1. Pre-Cursillo is a time when those who have participated in a Episcopal Cursillo Weekend are active in identifying persons for the Weekend. Ideally, these persons are already leaders in their parish or are identified as potential leaders.
2. The Episcopal Cursillo Weekend is a time when candidates are exposed to the Cursillo Method of Piety, Study, and Action. This is accomplished by a series of fifteen talks, five meditations, music fellowship, worship, and daily Eucharist. Depending upon the Cursillo diocese, the Weekend may last for three days or two days. The choice of format is up to the particular Cursillo community and its bishop.
3. The Fourth Day, sometimes called Post-Cursillo, follows the Weekend and includes Group Reunion, Ultreya, and Spiritual Direction.

In the Pre-Cursillo stage, those who participated in previous Cursillo Weekends are engaged in identifying environments which need to be Christianized. Potential leaders for these environments are identified and Cursillistas begin praying as to the right time to invite them to participate in Cursillo activities. When the time seems right, these potential leaders are invited to participate in a Three-Day Weekend and are assisted in becoming involved in Fourth Day activities.

The second part is the Cursillo Weekend where a team of lay leaders and spiritual advisors present a series of fifteen talks on the basics of Christianity and the concepts of piety, study, and action. Away from the everyday pressures of life, the Candidates or Pilgrims* form a Christian community through learning, praying, singing, sharing, and living together.

The third part of the Cursillo Method also includes three primary elements:

1. Frequent small group meetings with a few close friends for mutual support, encouragement and accountability in the life of Grace, called Group Reunions.
2. Frequent meetings, called Ultreyas, involve others who have participated in a Episcopal Cursillo Weekend or those interested in a Weekend.
3. Regular Spiritual Direction.

The Cursillo Weekend, which may be life transforming, fulfills its purpose when Candidates return to their regular lives supported by fellow Christians in their Fourth Day.

Special terms such as Pre-Cursillo, Cursillo Weekend, Fourth Day, Ultreya, and Group Reunion stem from the roots of the Ministry. These terms provide efficient communication for those who understand them. Some Cursillo communities have opted to use other terms with the same meaning. Whatever terms or phrases are used, they may provide instruments of separation when used outside the Ministry. Thus, Lay leaders, Spiritual Advisors and all participants of a Cursillo Weekend should be careful that these terms do not become divisive. The Ministry needs to continue to be a creative and renewing force in the Church.



* Some regions use the term "Candidate" and others use "Pilgrim." The choice is up to the diocese. For consistency, "Candidate" is used here, but both terms are appropriate.

SERVING ON A WEEKEND TEAM

The Weekend Spiritual Advisor serves as a member of the leadership team for the Weekend and should be prepared to participate fully in all phases of its development from Pre-Cursillo through the Fourth Day. Other clergy should also be asked to support the Weekend Spiritual Advisor and offer liturgical support as members of the Weekend team. Clergy need to understand the time commitment involved in this ministry and be able to fully participate in the team training, the full Weekend, and the Fourth Day.

Ideally, several clergy will participate with a Weekend to share the responsibilities. They serve under the direction of the Lead Spiritual Advisor and Weekend Rector.

Each Spiritual Advisor prior to the Weekend has responsibilities to:

- ☐ Discuss with the Rector plans for team formation and meetings; in particular, decide who will give the Flow of the Weekend presentation; make arrangements for Eucharists, and help the Rector with any special problems.
- ☐ Assign the clergy talks and meditations, Eucharistic responsibilities, and help the Rector with any special problems.
- ☐ Work with Music Team members to select music appropriate for planned worship services.
- ☐ Work with assigned team members (Palanca or Cha) to assure adequate bread, wine, linens, etc., are available.
- ☐ Confirm that the chapel will be set up for the Weekend and other Eucharists as pertinent to the Weekend (i.e., Kitchen Mass, Thursday Team Mass).
- ☐ Ask lay team members to participate in worship services — lectors, Eucharistic Ministers, etc.
- ☐ Listen to all talks to ensure that all essential points are covered and connections between talks are made.
- ☐ Be the Rector's spiritual chaplain.
- ☐ Maintain communications with the Diocesan Spiritual Advisor and refer questions or concerns.

Each Spiritual Advisor on the Weekend has responsibilities to:

- ☐ Be available for spiritual counsel as needed by the Rector and team before and during the Weekend.
- ☐ Give theological presentations in accordance with the outlines provided.
- ☐ Share in liturgy, liturgical planning, and preaching.
- ☐ Provide spiritual counsel and opportunities for confession for the candidates during the Weekend.
- ☐ Encourage Candidates to maintain contacts and continue friendships following the Weekend through Group Reunions, Ultreyas, Clausuras, and Palanca.
- ☐ Give the Rector all relevant information. If the Spiritual Advisor learns that any Candidate in the Weekend should leave, temporarily or for the remainder of the Weekend.
- ☐ Insure that the proper number of presentation Cursillo crosses are available and that they are blessed and presented according to the custom of the local Cursillo Community.

After the Weekend, the lead Spiritual Advisor has responsibilities to:

- ☐ Provide an evaluation or report to the Secretariat or the Bishop even if not requested.
- ☐ Maintain relationships with the Candidates of the Weekend, attending Ultreyas, and providing continuing spiritual advice.
- ☐ Participate in ongoing Fourth Day activities of the Cursillo Community.
- ☐ Maintain communications with the Diocesan Spiritual Advisor and refer questions or concerns.

PRESENTATION OUTLINES

The outlines included in this booklet are provided in a format to be of maximum use to the Spiritual Advisor in preparing the Meditations and Clergy Talk.

The first section is “Purpose.” It is designed as an overview and objective of the Meditations and Talks. The second section is “Core Ideas.” This section contains the key points that need to be communicated to the participants. The core ideas should be referred to frequently enough to assure all of them appear in the talk. The third section is the presentation outline. Here the key ideas that need to be included are set forth in an order which builds to a logical conclusion. This is a skeleton outline and you need to bring your own experience and witness to the presentations.

The Weekend is a short course in Christianity and cannot be expected to touch on every aspect of the Christian life. This is not a Confirmation class. Many participants will already have a deep spiritual life while others may be just embarking on one. Departing from the outlines takes the risk that essential points will not be covered. Future speakers will be building on the content of the previous talks; therefore, care must be exercised in preparation. The outlines include all essential points.

In the Clergy Talk outlines, there is a fourth section, “Commentary on the Outline.” The Spiritual Advisor may use materials other than those suggested, but should always be certain they are within the theme, purpose, and scope of the talk. Each talk is listed in order with a brief description of the Lay Talk that precedes or follows the Clergy Talk. This is to assist with understanding the overall flow and connectedness of each talk.

Depending upon the topic, the length of each presentation is determined by the Weekend leadership and the schedule that has been adopted. Generally Clergy Talks range from 15 to 20 minutes — with the exception of the “Sacraments” Talk which can range from 30 to 45 minutes. Since it can impact other presentations and parts of the Weekend, it is very important to follow the time limitations given by the Weekend leadership.

CLERGY MEDITATIONS

The Meditations are an integral part of the message of the Weekend and serve two purposes. They aid the participant in self-reflection and heighten their awareness of their relationship with Jesus. Then, they provide a model for deepening each participant’s relationship with Jesus beyond the Weekend.

Meditations are not primarily content-oriented in the way the Talks are structured. They are intended to raise questions and to begin moving Candidates to consider their relationship with Jesus, putting Him up front in all things. The Meditations are based on Biblical texts; however, the texts should not be proof texts. They are neither Bible studies nor lectures. The manner in which they are delivered is at least as important as the content. Meditations should be delivered in an unhurried, intimate fashion. They should give evidence of the Spiritual Advisor’s own prayerful reflection. The meditations are designed to open the Scripture to the participants so that the Word may shed light on their present lives and the potential for living the life of Grace.

In many ways, the Meditations set the tone for the Weekend by providing a time for quiet and prayerful reflection. Each Meditation is essential. They set the tone and theme for each day; therefore, ample time should be allowed for reflection following each presentation.

Although they are to be given in order, the Meditations may occur at different times on the schedule depending upon the format used. Often they are part of the worship at the beginning of each section of the Weekend. They should not be longer than 10 minutes in length.

MEDITATIONS ARE:

- ***Based on Scripture***
- ***Searching yet simple***
- ***Initiators of personal reflection***
- ***Guides for further growth***

MEDITATION OUTLINES:

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MEDITATION #1 — KNOW YOURSELF

PURPOSE:

- ❖ To recognize the anxiety of the participants in a new setting and their concerns about what is going to happen.
- ❖ To assist the participants to accept in a positive way, the silence and self-reflection of their first hours at the Weekend.

CORE IDEAS:

- ❖ We need peace and quiet.
- ❖ We need clear sight.
- ❖ We need to see who we are, where we are going, and God's purpose for our lives.

INTRODUCTION:

- ❖ This meditation is based on the Gospel of Mark 8:22-26.
- ❖ Are we blind to God's presence and blind to the joy of living?
- ❖ Can we see our own blindness? Can we admit our blindness?
- ❖ Let us be still and let God be God.

THE BLIND MAN WAS BROUGHT BY FRIENDS (See Mark 8:22):

- ❖ Please trust your friends who have brought you here.
- ❖ These friends care about you and they have experienced the restoration of clear sight on their Weekend.
- ❖ We ask you to trust your friends and all of us on this Weekend.

JESUS TOOK THE BLIND MAN AND LED HIM ASIDE (See Mark 8:23):

- ❖ The reason we have come here this Weekend is to be with Christ away from the busyness of our world.
- ❖ Please trust the One concerned with the blind man. He is concerned with you also.
- ❖ The Lord will meet us where we are.
- ❖ He met the blind man and did not pressure him. Neither will you be pressured.

THE MAN REGAINED HIS SIGHT GRADUALLY (See Mark 8:24):

- ❖ This Weekend is a process that unfolds step by step. Please reserve your judgment until the end.
- ❖ No specific response is required of you. The blind man could only see gradually at first.
- ❖ The blind man's experience was his own and your experience will be yours alone.
- ❖ We encourage you to share yourself, your gifts, and your insights.

THE SECOND TOUCH (See Mark 8:25-26):

- ❖ Jesus stayed with the blind man until his sight was restored.
- ❖ Do not look for a single marvel or miracle this Weekend.
- ❖ The healing was not one-sided. Just as it involved the presence of Jesus and the faith of the blind man, so it can be for you.

- ❖ Jesus touched the man a second time, and you too may want to take a fresh look at yourself.

CONCLUSION:

- ❖ This is your opportunity to look at the priorities in your life. For what are you living? Strive to be present with Jesus who is present and accepts you.

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MEDITATION #2 — THE PRODIGAL SON OR THE LOVING FATHER

PURPOSE:

- ❖ To present the reality of the goodness and mercy of God in relation to human self-centeredness.
- ❖ To share the story so participants will see it as their story.
- ❖ To see the best way to live is to return to the Father.

CORE IDEAS:

- ❖ The human condition is self-centeredness.
- ❖ God allows us to make our own choices.
- ❖ God is willing to welcome us home even after making bad choices.

INTRODUCTION:

- ❖ We know about God but do we know God?
- ❖ What does God think of us?
- ❖ What is God's reaction to our self-centeredness?
- ❖ Luke 15:11-32 is everyone's story.

THE HUMAN CONDITION IS SELF-CENTEREDNESS

- ❖ In our own lives we have behaved like the son.
- ❖ Our self-centeredness cuts us off from being the person God created us to be.
- ❖ We are cut off from relationships, including a relationship with God.

CONVERSION:

- ❖ God allows us to fail.
- ❖ God allows us to learn from our mistakes.
- ❖ The first step for the son was to acknowledge his failure.
- ❖ The son failed to realize the scope of his father's mercy.
- ❖ The moment we decide to return to the Father, he receives us back.

GOD'S MERCY:

- ❖ God awaits our return.
- ❖ God's forgiveness is complete, and we are restored to His family as the son was restored to his father.
- ❖ God rejoices in our return as did the father on the son's return.

HUMAN REACTION:

- ❖ The older son represents the way "good" human beings tend to react. He refuses to forgive.

- ❖ The older son is self-centered and motivated by his own self-interest.
- ❖ God's ways are not based on our distorted concepts of right and wrong.
- ❖ God's ways are determined by His own love and mercy.
- ❖ The prodigal son rejoiced at his father's love.

CONCLUSION:

- ❖ God is waiting for us to return and be full members of His family.
- ❖ He meets us where we are and forgives us of our sins.
- ❖ He wants to celebrate our return.
- ❖ We must be willing to return.

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MEDITATION #3 — THE THREE GLANCES OF CHRIST

PURPOSE:

- ❖ To awaken the participants to their personal responsibility to open themselves to Christ.
- ❖ To acquaint the participants with Jesus' attitude towards them.
- ❖ To help participants understand the attitudes they present to Him.

CORE IDEAS:

- ❖ To help participants find themselves through three different persons Jesus encountered.
- ❖ To answer the question "What does Jesus see in me?"
- ❖ What is my response to Jesus?

INTRODUCTION:

- ❖ The parable of the Prodigal Son or the Loving Father illustrates who God is and how He regards us.
- ❖ We will look at three instances in which Jesus met others and how he responded to them.
- ❖ We notice how they reacted to Him.

THE RICH YOUNG MAN (See Mark 10:17-22):

- ❖ The man is living the "good life" and also searching to do God's will.
- ❖ Jesus invited him to remove the one obstacle that prevented growth in his personal relationship with God.
- ❖ The rich young man failed because he put his trust in something other than Jesus.
- ❖ Out of his love for the young man Jesus let him go on his way.
- ❖ Jesus gives us the strength to meet the challenges.
- ❖ Is this your story? Do you feel trapped between your desire to live for the Lord and your attachment to material things?

JUDAS (See John 12:4-6):

- ❖ We may fool others into believing we are devoted followers, but we cannot fool Jesus.
- ❖ Jesus leaves the door open for us to return just as he did for Judas (see John 13:30)
- ❖ In the beginning, Judas was enthusiastic to share Jesus' ministry.
- ❖ Although Judas abandoned Jesus, Jesus never abandoned Judas.
- ❖ Has this been your story? Have you grown deaf to His call? Are you afraid to ask for forgiveness, healing, and reconciliation?

PETER (See Mark 14:27-31; Luke 22:54-62; John 21:15-17):

- ❖ Peter, a typical human being, was devoted to Jesus.
- ❖ The problem for Peter was trusting too much in his own efforts to live the Christ-like life.
- ❖ By Peter trusting in his own efforts, he experienced failure when he encountered a major challenge.
- ❖ Peter did learn how to repent. He learned that Jesus understands our human failings and forgives us.
- ❖ Peter learned through Jesus he could have the strength to overcome obstacles.
- ❖ Peter discerned that he needed to love Jesus in order to serve Him.

CONCLUSION:

- ❖ Is Jesus reaching out to you this Weekend?
- ❖ What is your response as He speaks to your heart and you see His glance?
- ❖ Are you afraid to encounter Him? Even though you are imperfect, are you willing to love Him and trust Him?

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MEDITATION #4 — THE PERSON OF CHRIST

PURPOSE:

- ❖ To help the participants relate to Jesus and deepen their relationship with Him as a person.
- ❖ To help the participants realize the benefits of a life of Grace through God.

CORE IDEAS:

- ❖ Jesus is in the fullest sense human; therefore, the way is open for us to relate to Him. He shares our struggles and understands our condition.
- ❖ Jesus is also divine and God's unique presence among us; therefore, He saves us and He is with us through life's problems.

INTRODUCTION:

- ❖ How does an individual become a "real" person for us?
- ❖ For many Jesus is a distant figure with whom we cannot have a personal relationship.
- ❖ This meditation will look at how the crucified Jesus became a person in the lives of his disciples following the Resurrection. Jesus, once dead, but now alive, can be a personality, one with whom we can have more than a mere revered relationship.

THE DISCIPLES DID NOT RECOGNIZE JESUS (See Luke 24:13-17):

- ❖ For most of Jesus' earthly ministry, He was not recognized as the person He truly was.
- ❖ Those closest to Jesus failed to recognize His Divine purpose. Following his death and resurrection, the disciples failed to recognize Him.
- ❖ On the Road to Emmaus, His followers failed to recognize Him. They were absorbed in their own world and preoccupied with their own problems. They failed to notice His presence among them.
- ❖ Do we in our churches fail to recognize Jesus as a person? How well do we know Him? How well do we share His love with others? Are we ready to know Him at a deeper level?

JESUS LISTENED (See Luke 24:18-24):

- ❖ One sign of a “real” person is someone who is willing to listen. Listening demonstrates a willingness to enter someone’s life and share feelings on our terms.
- ❖ Jesus listened intently and patiently to the frustrations, disappointments, hopes, and fears of the disciples on the road.
- ❖ Jesus was the master listener.
- ❖ Examples of Jesus as listener:
 - Zacchaeus: Luke 19:1-10
 - Mary and Martha: John 11:17-44
 - Children: Luke 18:11-17
- ❖ We know that Jesus listened to his disciples. He is willing to listen to the fears and the frustrations we carry. (See Hebrews 2:18)

JESUS ALSO WAITED (See Luke 24:28-29):

- ❖ Jesus did not announce who he was and the disciples did not recognize Him as long as they remained absorbed in themselves.
- ❖ Jesus did not become a “real” person to the disciples until they poured out themselves and invited Him into their lives.
- ❖ If Jesus is to become a “real” person to us, we must be willing to share our lives with Him. He waits for us.

JESUS BLESSED THE DISCIPLES (See Luke 24:30-35):

- ❖ Jesus blessed the disciples by making sense of their encounter with the Risen Christ, and He showed himself in all His majesty and power in the breaking of the bread.
- ❖ Jesus came as the Risen Christ with the power to transform the world and the life of each of the disciples.
- ❖ Once the disciples poured out their hearts and had invited Him into their lives, He became not just a revered personality but their Savior as well.
- ❖ When Jesus first appeared to them, the disciples could not recognize Him because they held Him at a distance in their hearts. Now they could see Him for whom He truly was, who would forever live in their hearts. The way to eternal friendship was opened.

CONCLUSION:

- ❖ As Jesus becomes a “real” person for us, the barriers that separate us from God are torn down.
- ❖ Jesus is alive and so we can approach Him with confidence and share our lives with Him.
- ❖ Jesus waits for us to invite Him into our lives today and every day.

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## **MEDITATION #5 — THE MESSAGE OF CHRIST TO YOU**

#### PURPOSE:

- ❖ To prepare Candidates for return into the world.
- ❖ To assist Candidates to discover their own Christian calling.
- ❖ To challenge the Candidates to do greater things than they could ask or imagine with the assurance that through God all things are possible.

### **CORE IDEAS:**

- ❖ This meditation calls us to reflect upon our encounter in and outside the
- ❖ Christian community.
- ❖ The meditation should be as personal as possible to the Candidates.

### **INTRODUCTION:**

- ❖ This Weekend is like the time Jesus spent teaching His Apostles to carry out His ministry. (See John 14-17)
- ❖ Jesus brought us to this Weekend to prepare us to be Ambassadors of His work in the world. (See John 15:16)

### **THE MOUNTAIN TOP:**

- ❖ Like the Apostles, it is tempting to stay on the mountain top but this mountain top vision is given to prepare us for life in the valley below.
- ❖ Jesus brought us to this Weekend to send us out to do His work in the world. We are to live out His calling in our environments. This is the Apostolic Action that will bear fruit.

### **JESUS' STRATEGY:**

- ❖ After three years of ministry, Jesus had only a small band of followers. In the eyes of the world this was not a successful ministry.
- ❖ Jesus' strategy was that of building community. His time was spent building an intimate community, knowing His work would endure as long as they remained together.

### **BUILDING COMMUNITY:**

- ❖ Jesus' prayer was that His disciples would remain committed to His strategy of building community. (See John 17:21)
- ❖ As a Christian community, we are a sign of His presence in the world.
- ❖ Our effectiveness will be in proportion to our living in union with Him and each other. (See John 15:5)

### **OUR CONVERSION:**

- ❖ Our conversion must continue long after this Weekend.
- ❖ With His help we can be Apostles for Him. (See John 14:12)
- ❖ Jesus is the transforming power. His power is Love. (See Eph. 1:10; John 15:8)

### **CONCLUSION:**

- ❖ The challenge of returning to our world should not frighten us.
- ❖ The victory has already been won for us. We need to proclaim it as we live it each day. (See John 16:33)

## **CLERGY TALK OUTLINES:**

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### **TALK #1 — IDEAL — LAY PERSON**

The beginning of the Weekend's discussion of how we live our lives. All people live by ideals and this is what motivates them. We need to know our ideals and can discover them by looking at how our time, money, and thoughts are reflected in our lives.

## **TALK #2 — GRACE — SPIRITUAL ADVISOR**

### **PURPOSE:**

- ❖ The ideal talk calls us to live our lives with an ideal. The Grace talk calls us to live out the Christian ideal.
- ❖ This talk is intended to inform the participants that God calls us to share a new life in Christ, a life rooted in and empowered by Grace. Grace opens us up to an encounter with God where we can become converted to new life
- ❖ This new life of Grace transforms us. We become a child of God, a brother or sister of Christ, and a temple of the Holy Spirit.

### **CORE IDEAS:**

- ❖ God is inviting us into a new, living relationship.
- ❖ We are free to accept or reject this invitation.
- ❖ When we accept it, God begins a progressive transformation of our lives — conversion.
- ❖ Conversion involves our whole self and our relationships.
- ❖ By God's Grace we are able to live an "abundant life."

### **INTRODUCTION:**

- ❖ Everyone has an ideal. What is the Christian ideal?
- ❖ The Christian ideal is a life rooted in Jesus and empowered by grace.
- ❖ To live this new life of grace, we only need to say "yes" to God's invitation.

### **GOD IS INVITING US INTO RELATIONSHIP:**

- ❖ God is not remote, difficult to approach or waiting for us to get it "right".
- ❖ God is present among us, reaching out to us to offer the Divine Presence. This was most clearly demonstrated in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. (We recall God's love for us in Eucharistic Prayer B, "the goodness and love which you have made known to us in your creation; in calling Israel to be your people; in your Word spoken through the prophets; and above all in the Word made flesh, Jesus your Son" (BCP, p. 368) Jesus is Emmanuel — God with us (Matt: 1:23). (See also Luke 1:8-9; John 4:9-19)
- ❖ God reaches out to us as pure gift — we cannot and do not earn it. (See Eph.1:47; Luke 12:32)
- ❖ This is the first meaning of Grace — "God's favor towards us, unearned and undeserved". (BCP p. 858)

### **OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD IS A LIVING RELATIONSHIP:**

- ❖ Accepting God's offer of relationship begins a living encounter with Jesus. We become members of the family of God. (See John 3:1-2; Rom. 8:1-17a)
- ❖ This living encounter is life-giving and soul-filling. God alone is able to fill our empty souls.
- ❖ We receive life — "abundant life" — with the potential of its deepest, most complete fulfillment. (See 1 John 3:1-2; Rom. 8:14-17a)
- ❖ We become "a new creation", a human being, able to live as the image of God we were intended to be. (See 2 Cor. 5:17ff)
- ❖ This is the second meaning of Grace — the gift of God, restoring us to the image and likeness of Christ. (See 2 Cor. 3:18)

### *WE ARE FREE TO ACCEPT, REJECT, OR IGNORE THIS INVITATION:*

- ❖ Some do not respond because they are too busy with their own agenda. (See Luke 18:18-30: The Rich Young Man)
- ❖ The good news is — we CAN choose Christ. It is within our power to say “yes” to God’s freely offered invitation to a new life. (See Rom. 10:6-9)

### *IF AND WHEN WE ACCEPT GOD’S INVITATION, GOD BEGINS A PROGRESSIVE TRANSFORMATION OF OUR WHOLE LIVES – CONVERSION:*

- ❖ The moment we say “yes” to God we begin to be transformed in every way, that we may fully enjoy our lives in Christ.
  - For some, this is an instantaneous, dramatic effect.
  - For many others it is a less dramatic, slow unfolding of a new awareness of God.
  - For all, it is only the beginning of a lifelong walk with God.
- ❖ Conversion is a lifelong process of turning to God, coming to rely on God more and more in all circumstances of life. Conversion unfolds as we put Jesus up front in our daily living. (See John 3:1-10: The story of Nicodemus)
  - It does not happen all at once; it occurs over time.
  - It is progressive. As we turn to Jesus, we find Him ready to deepen our conversion. We allow Him more and more control in our lives.
  - Relying on Jesus, we find ourselves growing stronger in peace of mind and the power of love.
- ❖ Conversion means living a life of Grace — a life that God’s Grace makes possible. (See Gal. 2:20)
- ❖ This is the third meaning of Grace; the power God gives us to live more and more from God’s resources and less from those resources which we imagine to be our own.
- ❖ This is the Christian ideal.

### *CONVERSION INVOLVES THE WHOLE PERSON:*

- ❖ The life of Grace is often referred to as “salvation” which also means “to be healed” or to be made whole.
- ❖ Our whole conversion includes:
  - Our intellect — Faith is reasonable and gives new insight to our intellect;
  - Our emotions — Faith involves, but does not depend upon our feelings;
  - Our wills — The decision to turn to God is our decision, our choice.
- ❖ Conversion is “metanoia”: a fundamental reorientation of life to God in heart, mind, soul, and strength. (See Acts 2:37-39, translated “repent”, metanoia is to changes one’s way of knowing)

### *CONVERSION INVOLVES OUR RELATIONSHIPS:*

- ❖ We are not saved — made whole — in a “vacuum”. (See the BCP p. 303, “Will you who witness these vows do all in your power to support these persons in their life in Christ?”)
- ❖ We are saved — made whole — in our relationships. (See Col. 3:12-17)
  - Family;
  - Friends;
  - Work relationships;
  - The created world (nature) as well as the world of our social interactions.
- ❖ God’s Grace begins the progressive transformation of all these relationships. It begins when we say “yes” to God’s love for all. He gives to us.

### *GOD’S GRACE BRINGS US ABUNDANT LIFE:*

- ❖ A life of Grace is a rich life filled with God’s love. (See John 10:10b)

## COMMENTARY ON THE OUTLINE:

The clergy person giving this talk may want to include some personal testimony. Personal examples of a changed relationship with God and others can be excellent illustrations of the salient points. It is wise to remember that the candidates are likely to be hesitant at this point. The talk is best if it is reassuring, convincing and yet not overly evangelical. The proclamation in this talk is gentle and reassuring: "Here's a little of my journey of grace."

### *Suggestions for further reading:*

Life of the Beloved by Henri Nouwen

Amazing Grace by Kathleen Norris

Reaching for the Invisible God by Philip Yancey

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## **TALK #3 — LAITY — LAY PERSON**

The layperson is the church in the world. The church is the community of those who live in Grace and it channels Grace in the world. As we develop and grow in relationship with God and others, each of us has a mission the world. Thus, we are called apostles.

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## **TALK #4 — FAITH — SPIRITUAL ADVISOR**

### *PURPOSE:*

- ❖ Thus far in the Weekend, the participants have received three proclamations: Live life with an ideal; the Christian ideal; Christian ideal is lived out within a community (Laity). This talk is intended to offer an answer to the question: "How do I respond to these proclamations?" The response is faith.
- ❖ This talk is also intended: to help alleviate fears about not being able to live out the Christian ideal; to clarify the role of faith in living this ideal; and to show that the Holy Spirit is God's gift enabling us to live the ideal of Grace.

### *CORE IDEAS:*

- ❖ God's call to us is all encompassing.
- ❖ If we are to proceed under our own efforts, we will likely fail.
- ❖ There is a transforming power available to all Christians.
- ❖ Faith is the key to unlocking this transforming power.
- ❖ To receive this transforming power, we must open ourselves to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
- ❖ The Holy Spirit works through faith.
- ❖ Palanca are signs of the faith of others.

### *INTRODUCTION:*

- ❖ God's call to us is all-encompassing. As we have heard in the last three talks, we have three primary calls from God.
  - We are called to be fully human – with an ideal which motivates us and all our life.
  - We are called to be fully Christian – to live the Christian ideal – a life of Grace in close relationship with God in Christ.
  - We are called to be active apostles – our life in Grace is lived out in community. We bring Christ to the world and bring the world to Christ.

- ❖ On our own, we are not likely to succeed in our call – for two reasons:
  - We would not know what to do or how to do it. Left to ourselves, we usually tend to serve our own interests. Our nature is tainted by sin. We are likely to misuse our freedom. (See BCP p. 848ff. “Sin and Redemption”)
  - We become easily frustrated and discouraged. The good we want to do eludes us, sometimes becoming the very opposite of what we intend. (Rom. 7:18-20) In the face of obstacles, we tend to give up or in, falling back into our old, unproductive patterns. (Rom. 7:21-23)

#### **THERE IS A TRANSFORMING POWER AVAILABLE TO EVERY CHRISTIAN:**

*(Recall the Grace talk and the emphasis on God’s willingness to give us all the Grace we desire if we will only say “yes” to God’s invitation. Faith is that “yes” to God’s call)*

- ❖ Faith is the key to a life of Grace. (Recall the Greek word for faith, “*pistis*”, is a verb — faith is an action word in the Greek language as well as a noun.)
  - Faith is freely and wholeheartedly saying “yes” to God’s invitation.
  - Faith is trusting God with the whole self. (Heb. 11:1ff)
  - Faith does not require sophisticated beliefs, strong convictions, or moral perfection.
  - Faith is ACTIVE — it is making an investment of all you are and all you shall be in what God has promised.
  - Faith is less something we *have* and more something we *do*. People came to Jesus for healing. Their coming and asking demonstrated their faith.
- ❖ Faith is essential to the life of Grace.
  - Faith is turning to God as we are.
  - Grace tells us that God will accept us as we are even with our doubts, fears, and guilt.
  - Faith confesses, “I am a fallen soul.” God’s Grace says, “You are my beloved child.”
  - Faith is a surrender of control to God. “Without God, I can’t. Without me, God won’t.” (12 Step saying) this is redundant to the previous page
  - Faith answers the call to be human (Ideal), to be a Christian human (Grace), and to be a Christian in community (Laity) with the words, “I will with God’s help.” (BCP p. 304ff.)
  - Faith is not a product of intellect. We can find it in the profoundly disabled. (See “*Adam*” by Henri Nouwen)

#### **THE HOLY SPIRIT WORKS THROUGH OUR FAITH:**

- ❖ Grace and faith are closely related. (Eph. 2:8-9)
  - Grace is the power of God present to us at all times. (*God’s favor towards us, unearned and undeserved;* BCP p. 858) (*There was a time in the church when this was referred to as “Habitual Grace”.*)
  - Faith is the way of responding to this power of God. As we open ourselves to this power, it becomes effective in us.
  - When we exercise our faith, this general presence of God becomes present in a unique, individual way. (*This was at one time referred to as “Actualized Grace.”*)
- ❖ When we exercise our faith (when we say “yes” to God’s call), God the Holy Spirit becomes specifically present to us. (See John 14:15-17)
- ❖ Through faith and the presence of the Spirit, we are sent out in Christ’s name. (See John 20:21-23)
- ❖ The Holy Spirit has a specific nature and work.
  - The Holy Spirit is God- the fullness of God available to us and for us. (See John 3:1-8)
  - The Holy Spirit is the presence of the Risen Christ in our midst. (See 1 Cor. 12:11-13; Rom. 8:9; John 14:22-23)

- The Holy Spirit leads us into a greater love for God. (See John 14:15-17) This love opens our eyes to what is real, true. (See 1 Cor. 2: 9-13) This love prompts us to offer ourselves more freely to God. (See Rom. 12:1) This love animates our worship and praise.
  - The Holy Spirit sustains us in the conflicts of life. Interceding for us, assisting us in prayer even in weakness. (See Rom. 8:26-27) Giving us a vision of God at work in our lives. (See 2 Cor. 4:13-18) Granting us a share in the victory of Christ over sin and death, increasing our strength to deal with everyday living. (See Eph. 3:14-19)
  - The Holy Spirit enables us to be the Church – more than an institution or organization – a living center, a temple of the Holy Spirit (See 1 Cor. 6:19-20; 3:16-17) – a royal priesthood to carry on God’s work of healing and redemption in the world.
- ❖ We will be filled with the Holy Spirit.
- We are sealed by the Holy Spirit in baptism. (See Eph. 1:13-14; 2 Cor. 1:21-22; BCP p. 308)
  - We are further filled with the Holy Spirit: If we desiring to be filled; if we willing to be led; if we repent of sin; and if we entrust ourselves into God’s care.
  - The choice is ours; the Holy Spirit will not overpower us. In saying “yes” to God’s invitation in faith, we become freer, more fully human, as we are filled with the Holy Spirit. God does not do away with our essential selves, but enhances that which we are.
- ❖ As the Holy Spirit is available to us, so we are called to be available to the Spirit:
- Through prayer (daily fellowship/Eucharist);
  - Through faith (trusting God for the impossible);
  - Through action (translating faith into deeds);
  - Through confidence (leaving the outcome to God).
- ❖ Palanca are special signs of faith.

#### COMMENTARY ON THE OUTLINE:

At this point in the Weekend, the participants are settling in a little. The heart of this talk is the “transforming power” section where they are encouraged to trust God for the power to carry out the ministry to which they are called. This talk concludes the proclamations of the call to be human, the call to be a unique Christian, and the call to be a Christian in community by inviting them to believe that they can respond to that call “with God’s help.” The objective is to offer a joyful conviction that we can live a life of Grace, and it will permeate our lives. “Whatever you eat or drink, and whatever else you do, do it all for the glory of God.” (1 Cor. 10:31)

*Suggestions for further reading:*

Adam by Henri Nouwen

Reaching to the Invisible God by Philip Yancey

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## TALK #5 — PIETY — LAY PERSON

Living life as a committed Christian is something available to all, with the Grace of God. God wants to be in relationship with us and our life in Christ is a covenant of love. Piety is living a life of grace in a conscious, growing and shared manner. Thus, the practices of piety is an intentional process of spending time with God.

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## **TALK #6 — STUDY — LAY PERSON**

A life of study is a means of giving depth and strength to faith. We are called to grow in our life of Grace and Piety and we use our minds, hearts, and souls to learn how to be Christians. We seek to hear God speaking to us. Piety calls us to Study and moves into action in the world.

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## **TALK #7 — SACRAMENTS — SPIRITUAL ADVISOR**

### **PURPOSE:**

- ❖ The Sacraments are not magical actions to influence God and the course of human events.
- ❖ Sacraments affect us personally.
  - To show how God works through our material world to make His presence known to us.
  - To present the Sacraments as signs (actions) of Christ's presence here and now.
  - To examine each of the Sacraments in light of our being called to share in Christ's ministry to the world.
  - To identify ourselves as Sacraments of Christ and His Church in the world.

### **CORE IDEAS:**

- ❖ God works through the Sacraments for our sake.
- ❖ The sacraments are special encounters with the Risen Christ.
- ❖ A personal relationship with Christ is possible.
- ❖ The Sacraments are the ways in which God continues to reach out to us to strengthen us for life in Him.

### **INTRODUCTION:**

- ❖ The "bookends" of this talk are Baptism and the Eucharist.
  - In Baptism we are made members of the Body of Christ and to share in His ministry.
  - The Eucharist signifies our unity with God, one another, and with self; it is a personal encounter with the Risen Christ that empowers our ministry day by day.
  - These are the two Sacraments Jesus gives to us in the Gospels. (See BCP p. 858)
  - The other Sacraments of the Church are means of Grace by which God supports our ministry with and in Jesus Christ.
- ❖ We have been considering the ways in which God enables us to live continually in His Grace.
  - Piety and Study are two ways which enable us to live a life of Grace.
  - Another way which we can live a life of Grace is through the Sacraments.
- ❖ Sacraments also have Apostolic effects, that is, they empower us to carry out our ministry in union with Christ.

### **GOD WORKS THROUGH THE SACRAMENTS FOR OUR SAKE:**

- ❖ We are made of matter and spirit. (see Gen. 2:7)
- ❖ When God meets us it is through the material as well as the spiritual.
  - God reaches us through all creation. (See Psalm 19:1-4; Rom. 1:19-20; Eucharistic Prayer B, BCP p. 368)
  - God reaches out to us through people, family, friends, prophets, and pastors.



- God has reached out to us in the Word made flesh, Jesus of Nazareth.
- ❖ What is a Sacrament?
  - The formal definition is “an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace” (BCP p. 857)
  - Outward and visible signs are those events where spiritual realities shine in through the material, which is where God is known.
  - Signs of inward and spiritual Grace are those events where God’s Grace, His power to transform, are given in a particular way.

#### *THE SACRAMENTS OF THE CHURCH ARE SPECIAL ENCOUNTERS WITH THE RISEN CHRIST:*

- ❖ The Sacraments are given by Christ. This does not mean that Christ gave instructions to his disciples on the number and nature of the Sacraments.
  - It means that Christ, through the Holy Spirit, has led His people to discover that God acts in special ways to nurture them.
  - These are not the only ways in which God can act but we may be sure that in these ways God does nurture us. (see BCP p. 861)
- ❖ The Sacraments of the Church are means by which Christ is here and now, communicates His saving presence to us, and strengthens our communion with God.
- ❖ What is required of us for the Sacraments to be effective is a faithful response, trust in the presence of Christ, offering ourselves to Him, and receiving the Grace intended in each Sacrament.

#### *BAPTISM:*

- ❖ Baptism is the Sacrament of New Life. It tells us who we are and whose we are. (see BCP p. 306)
- ❖ The outward sign of Baptism is water.
  - Water symbolizes the washing away of sin. (see Acts 22:16; 1 Cor 6:11; Titus 3:5; Heb.10:22)
  - Water symbolizes the passage from sin and death to the life of Grace. (see 1 Cor.10:1-2)
  - Water is also connected with burial and resurrection in its identity with Christ. (See Rom. 6:3-4; Col. 2:12)
  - Water is about growth and life – watering plants and quenching our thirst.
  - Water can also be about death- too much watering of plants will kill them.
  - The Waters of Baptism offer these two powerful realities of dying to the old Adam and receiving new life in Christ.
- ❖ The Inward Grace is the assurance of sins forgiven, the assurance of new life through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and the assurance of life eternal.
- ❖ The personal effects of Baptism are:
  - Forgiveness of Original Sin
  - Adoption as God’s children;
  - Members of the Body of Christ;
  - Inheritors of the Kingdom of God and joint heirs with Christ.
- ❖ The Apostolic effects of this Sacrament are:
  - A new life and power through the Holy Spirit to gain victory over sin and death. (See Acts 1:4-5; Gal. 3:27)
  - Ministry to bear the Good News of life in Christ as we live the life of Grace in the world. (See Rom. 12:5-8; 2 Cor. 5:18-19; Col. 3:23-24)
  - Growth into the likeness of Christ.

#### *CONFIRMATION:*

- ❖ Many people are baptized in infancy and this does not take away from the reality and effects of the sacrament; however, it is necessary to make a mature public commitment to Christ.
- ❖ The sacrament of confirmation is making a mature commitment to Christ. (See BCP p. 860)

- ❖ The outward sign of confirmation is the laying on of hands by a bishop.
  - This is a sign of blessing. The blessing we seek is the power of the Holy Spirit to live in Grace.
  - In this Sacrament we are strengthened for our own ministry to represent Christ and His Church, bearing witness in the various environments of the world according to the gifts given them.
- ❖ The Inward Grace is the strength to carry out our service to Christ and the strength to remain faithful to Christ.
- ❖ The personal effects of the Sacrament are the confident affirmation of our faith, the assurance that the Grace given at baptism continues and a new awareness of our place in the ministry of Christ's Church. (See BCP p. 418)
- ❖ The Apostolic effect of this Sacrament is our commissioning to serve others, and our empowerment to witness and minister in Christ's name. Our commissioning is recognized in a public setting. (See BCP p. 418)

#### *BAPTISM AND CONFIRMATION:*

- ❖ Baptism and Confirmation equip us for the ongoing ministry of the Risen Christ. .
- ❖ Baptism and Confirmation help us discover our vocation as God's servants to others. This is also a guiding principle of the Weekend.
- ❖ The other Sacraments of the Church are means by which God under girds and supports our ministry with and in Jesus Christ.

#### *HOLY ORDERS:*

- ❖ This is the Sacrament of spiritual leadership.
  - The Church exists for ministry. To carry out effective ministry, we need those who will guide, coordinate, and support us. (see BCP pp. 854-855)
  - This sacrament signifies a ministry of service to the ministers of the church.
  - One who is Ordained is Ordered, or set aside from the Laity to serve the Church through Holy Orders.
- ❖ The Bishop has a specific ministry of guarding the faith, unity, and discipline of the Church. (See BCP p. 855)
  - The Bishop is an Apostle, Chief Priest, and Pastor of the Church in a diocese, or other Ministry.
  - The Bishop has responsibility for the continuing ministry through the power to ordain and confirm.
- ❖ A Priest or Presbyter has the specific ministry of pastoral care. (See BCP p. 856)
  - This ministry includes teaching, preaching, administering the Word of God with the bishop, administering the Sacraments of the new covenant, blessing, and declaring pardon in God's name.
  - Priests share with bishops and fellow presbyters in overseeing the work of the Church.
- ❖ The Deacon has a specific ministry of service. (See BCP p. 856)
  - This ministry represents Christ and his Church to those in need and interprets those needs to the Church.
  - The Deacon assists the Bishop and Presbyters in proclaiming the Word of God and administering the Sacraments.
- ❖ The Outward and Visible sign of Holy Orders is the laying on of hands by a Bishop.
  - The sign is a means of Grace through the empowering of the Holy Spirit. The Bishop signifies the acceptance of the one ordained into a common ministry. The sign confers authority.
  - The Ordained is called forward by the Church to serve through a specialized ministry.
- ❖ The inward grace of ordination is the abiding power of the Holy Spirit to do the work of the particular order. Ordination does not create competent professionals.
- ❖ The end is neither clericalism, i.e. domination of the Church by clergy, or laicism, i.e. domination of the Church by the laity. Wholeness is each order serving others for the building up of the Body.

#### RECONCILIATION:

- ❖ This is the Sacrament of renewal. (see BCP p. 861)
- ❖ The Outward and Visible Sign is an examination of conscience, confession of sin, and absolution in the name of Christ. The priest may also offer counsel, direction, and comfort.
- ❖ The Inward and Spiritual Grace is the forgiveness of sin, peace and unity with God and His Church, and the power of the Holy Spirit to amend life.
  
- ❖ The personal effect of the Sacrament is to set us on firm ground for spiritual growth.
- ❖ The Apostolic effect is to enable us to take our productive place in the ministry of the Church.

#### MINISTRY TO THE SICK (UNCTION):

- ❖ This is the Sacrament of Healing. (See BCP p. 861)
- ❖ The Outward and Visible Sign is prayer and the laying on of hands by a Bishop, or Priest as they Anoint the person with Holy Oil appropriate to the needs of the individual.
- ❖ The Inward and Spiritual Grace relieves anxieties, restores spiritual strength, and in some cases restores physical health. Confession and Absolution provide forgiveness of sin and assurance of God's mercy and may be a part of Unction.
- ❖ The personal effect of the Sacrament is placing the whole person into the care of God who gives comfort and assurance.
- ❖ The Apostolic effect is the restoration of health (in varying degrees) in order for us to be effective witnesses to the power and love of God

#### MARRIAGE:

- ❖ This is the Sacrament of the union between two persons. (See Eph. 5: 31-32) Marriage symbolizes the relationship of Christ to His Church characterized by unity and sacrifice.
- ❖ The Outward and Visible Sign is the mutual consent of the two persons to live in the Covenant of Holy Matrimony, vows of fidelity with the intention of a life-long union, and the blessing of God by a Bishop or Priest. (See BCP p. 861)
- ❖ The Inward and Spiritual Grace is God's favor and blessing of the union and the wisdom and will to care for each other.
- ❖ The effect is that marriage has a ministry. The more that is given from marriage to Christ's service, the more joy and meaning can be found in marriage.

*NOTE: The Spiritual Advisor may be required to deal with the realities of separation and divorce and same sex unions. It may also be appropriate to speak to those who choose to remain single.*

#### THE EUCHARIST:

- ❖ This is the Sacrament of unity: unity with Christ in His Body and Blood; unity with God through the self-offering of Christ; unity with Christ's Body, the Church; unity with ourselves growing into the life of Grace.
- ❖ The Outward and Visible Sign is the Bread and Wine given and received according to Christ's institution. The Sacrament is received in harmony with others, with openness to the Word of God, with response to prayer and action, offering our souls and bodies to God.
- ❖ The Inward Spiritual Grace is the Body and Blood of Christ given to his people and received by faith, the forgiveness of sins and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit to daily live our lives.
- ❖ The personal effect is living and giving thanks and praise to God for the wonder of His Grace.
  - It is a joyous encounter with the Risen Lord on a continuing basis.
  - It is the opportunity to offer ourselves anew for the work of Christ.

- The New Covenant, unlike the Old Covenant, sets in stone Jesus' love and mercy which is inscribed within our hearts. (See Ezek. 36:26; 2 Cor 3:3)
- The effect of the Eucharist is the strengthening of our union with Christ and one another, the empowerment of the body of Christ in the world, and witnessing the Good News of God's love
- It is a foretaste of the Kingdom.

**CONCLUSION:**

- ❖ Through the Sacraments of The Church, we become living Sacraments.
- ❖ We are the living presence of Christ in and for the sake of the world He loves and has redeemed.

**COMMENTARY:**

- ❖ In some communities a Eucharist will follow this talk. This may be an opportunity to say some additional words. This should not, however, be an instructed Eucharist.
- ❖ The Spiritual Advisor needs to be aware that this is not a Confirmation class. Many of the participants may already be aware of what is included in the talk and it will be a refresher.
- ❖ The focus of the talk is to have participants come to an understanding of what it means to be Sacramental.

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**TALK #8 — ACTION — LAY PERSON**

As Christians, reach out to others in the name of Christ. Christian Action is the natural outcome of our love for Christ and is part of our baptismal covenant. Bringing others to Jesus is the central mission of the Church.

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**TALK #9 — OBSTACLES TO A LIFE OF GRACE — SPIRITUAL ADVISOR**

**PURPOSE:**

- ❖ To be aware of the obstacles which prevent us from living a life of Grace.
- ❖ To understand the nature and sources of these obstacles i.e. sin.
- ❖ To present remedies to grapple with obstacles and more fully live a life of Grace.

**CORE IDEAS:**

- ❖ We encounter obstacles as we try to live a life of Grace.
- ❖ The sources of sin are spiritually unhealthy attractions of the world - our focus on self or selfishness and the Devil.
- ❖ There are remedies to assist us in overcoming these obstacles.

**INTRODUCTION:**

- ❖ It would be wonderful to live a life of Grace without failing, but we encounter obstacles which can lead to sin.
- ❖ We need to realize that other than Jesus no one has lived a life without sinning.

- ❖ We tend to fall back into old patterns of thought, word, and deeds when faced with obstacles.
- ❖ We need to admit our sins and seek remedies to live a life of Grace.

#### *WE NEED TO BE REALISTIC ABOUT THE OBSTACLES WE ENCOUNTER:*

- ❖ In the life of Grace, we encounter obstacles. (See 1 John 2:1)
- ❖ Obstacles arise from our individual lives and the world around us. (See James 1:15)
- ❖ These obstacles are not sent by God. (See James 1:13)
- ❖ Obstacles can lead to sin when we give in to them. Sinning is missing the mark because we fall short of God's purpose.
- ❖ Sin has very definite effects.
  - We are alienated and become strangers to God, ourselves, and one another. (See BCP p. 848; Eph. 2:12; Rom. 7:14-17)
  - The outcome of sin is spiritual death. (See James 1:15; Rom. 6:20-21; Rom. 1:28-32; Gal. 6:7-8)
- ❖ Some people deny the reality of sin. (See 1 John 1 8,10)
  - Some equate sin to socially unacceptable behavior.
  - When we mask the nature of sin, we attempt to justify ourselves and refuse to trust God.
  - If we deny the reality of sin, we infer God does not care about how we live our lives.
- ❖ God intends for us to be free, full of life, and joyful. To live into what God intends, we must be realistic about how we frustrate God's purpose for us.

#### *SIN INVOLVES A CONSCIOUS WILFULLNESS:*

- ❖ Sin, which is missing the mark, means failing to love God, neighbor and ourselves.
  - We must be conscious of our rebellion against God. (See Rom. 5:13)
  - When we sin, we choose to go against God's will. (See James 4:17)
  - Feeling temptation is not sin but dwelling on, entertaining, or acting on temptation is sin.
  - We do not fall from God's Grace by accident.
  - We can become oblivious to sin unless we realize the sources of sin.

#### *THERE ARE MANY SOURCES OF SIN:*

- ❖ The unhealthy attractions of this world are the unjust and improper use of God's creation which lead to waste, hoarding, greed and lust for power that creates divisions among the people of the earth. (See Luke 12:12-21; 1 John 2:15-17; James 4:1-4; James 5:1ff; Rev. 3:15-18)
- ❖ The focus on (me first) self or our selfishness is the internal forces, appetites, and desires which arise from our being and lead us to misuse our lives and those of others. These are not just sinful acts but attitudes such as pride, envy, hatred, and lust. (See Rom. 6:12-13; 1 Cor. 3:3; Rom. 13:13-14)
- ❖ The "Devil" in biblical terms "Satan" means adversary i.e. one opposed to God's will. (See Eph. 6:12; 1Tim. 3:6; 1 John 3:8)
  - Satan is the personification of deep spiritual evil.
  - Satan has no power unless we cooperate with him and stand against God's purposes.

#### *THERE ARE REMEDIES TO OVERCOME THE OBSTACLES TO GRACE:*

- ❖ We must repent, that is, turn again and again to God. (See 2 Cor.10:7a; Heb.12:18-24; Gal. 5:1; 2 Cor. 7:1)
  - We have the freedom to choose God's will or our own.
  - By turning to God, we can join in His creative work and give to others as he has given to us.
- ❖ Confession is honestly confronting sin. (See 1 John 1:7,9; 1Cor. 3:18; 1 Cor. 4:14)
  - Confession is not wallowing in our past sins.

- Confession is giving over our sins to God.
- Confession is grasping the wonder of God's power to redeem us.
- ❖ To resist sin, we must train ourselves and training requires discipline.
  - We develop spiritual muscle through God's help in resisting sin.
  - Spiritual direction, counsel, and the Sacraments help us develop spiritual muscle.
  - The Sacrament of Reconciliation restores us to God and opens new areas for growth.
  - A life centered in prayer nurtures our fellowship with God.
  - Sharing our struggles and joys with fellow Christians nurtures our life in Grace. (Group Reunion and Ultreya)

#### **REMEDIES ARE NOT AUTOMATIC:**

- ❖ We must have the will and discipline to use these remedies.
- ❖ Sin cannot be dispensed once and for all. To dispense with sin once and for all is a gift of God which belongs to our final victory in Christ.
- ❖ We can expect to grow in our mastery over sin by trusting in God's Grace.
- ❖ There are two biblical metaphors which apply.
  - From the athletic arena "training", "running the race" – training which results in spiritual strength. (See 1 Cor. 9:24-27; 1 Tim. 4:7-10; 2 Tim. 2:5; Phil. 3:14)
  - From the battlefield, the Greek strateia, "strategy" which means being forearmed so that we may gain victory over sin. (See 1 Peter 4:1-2; 2 Cor. 10:3-6; Eph. 6:13)

#### **COMMENTARY:**

- ❖ The spirit of this talk is not pessimistic but one of hope.
- ❖ An analysis of sin is useful but not the point of the talk.
- ❖ The primary focus of the talk should be remedies.

#### ***Suggestions for Further Reading:***

Speaking of Sin by Barbara Brown Taylor

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### **TALK #10 — LEADERS — LAY PERSON**

By using talents and experience, each person has a place in Christ's world and is called to help transform that world. We cultivate what has been given to lead others to Christ. There are many kinds of leaders and each has a unique way to lead.

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### **TALK #11 — STUDY & EVANGELIZATION OF ENVIRONMENTS — LAY PERSON**

How can each person transform their environment? Living out the Baptismal Covenant is shown through evangelism. Effective evangelism requires a plan.

## **TALK #12 — CHRISTIAN LIFE (LIFE IN GRACE) — SPIRITUAL ADVISOR**

### **PURPOSE:**

- ❖ To present the service sheet or the Rule of Life sheet, which will help the participants structure their lives.
- ❖ To make a plan for growth in piety.
- ❖ To familiarize participants with the aids for growth in their life in Grace.

### **CORE IDEAS:**

- ❖ Jesus is the pattern for true Christian piety and our pattern for spiritual growth.
- ❖ The importance of a Rule of Life.
- ❖ Persuading participants to develop their own Rule of Life.
- ❖ Various aids are available to grow in a life of Grace.

### **INTRODUCTION:**

- ❖ Retrace the steps the participants have been through during the Weekend. (See “The Flow of the Episcopal Cursillo Weekend Message” brochure available from [episcopalcursilloministry.org](http://episcopalcursilloministry.org))
- ❖ Clarify any items not adequately covered in previous talks or which need clarification. Therefore, to some extent this talk is prepared as the Weekend progresses.
- ❖ Repeat the themes of grace and faith, and our need for piety, study, and action to maintain our life in grace.
- ❖ We rely upon the Sacraments to seal our fellowship with God and to empower our mission into the world.
- ❖ The obstacles to grace threaten our fellowship and mission.
- ❖ To live the Christian life we need a plan, a rule of life.

### **JESUS IS OUR LIFE AND PATTERN FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH:**

- ❖ In Jesus, we find pardon, purpose, peace, and power. (See Rom. 5:8-11; Matt. 6:33; John 14:27; 1 Cor. 10:13; 1 Cor. 1:18-25)
- ❖ Jesus is a pattern for overcoming despair, sin, and death in our own lives. In John 14:6, Jesus said, “I am the way the truth and the life.” This can be related to piety, study and action, our three-legged stool.
- ❖ We must seek to allow Jesus to enter our lives more fully and to reshape them. We cannot just admire Him from afar. (See Heb. 12:2-3)
- ❖ The most prominent feature of Jesus’ pattern of life was prayer and communion with God. (See Luke 3:21; 6:12; 9:18; 22:41-46)

### **WE MUST MAKE A CONSCIOUS DECISION TO LET JESUS BECOME OUR WAY OF LIFE:**

- ❖ Distribute the Rule of Life sheets. Take time to examine the sheets. On this sheet we describe ourselves and our intentions.
- ❖ No one is to feel coerced to make this commitment and before making any commitment participants should realize what it entails. Participants may want to complete the Rule of Life sheet after further prayer.
- ❖ The Rule of Life sheet provides a method to let Jesus enter our lives more fully and to reshape them because of the commitment we make.
- ❖ There are a variety of aids for developing piety in the life of grace.

### *CORPORATE WORSHIP:*

- ❖ Corporate worship in union with fellow Christians is part of our obligation. (See BCP p. 855; Heb. 10:24-25)
- ❖ Worshipping together provides mutual support.
- ❖ Our worship is essential to our witness and the truth of the Christian faith. (See 2 Pet.1:8-10; James 1:22)

### *COMMUNION:*

- ❖ We are created to be in communion with God.
- ❖ We need join together in communion if we expect to enjoy Eternal Communion with Him.
- ❖ The Eucharist is a specific type of communion.
  - We are joined with Christ in community with one another.
  - We express praise and thanks to God. (See Col. 2:6-7; Phil. 4:6; Eph. 5:4)
  - We receive forgiveness and strength.

### *PERSONAL PRAYER:*

- ❖ Prayer is a prominent feature of our lives.
- ❖ Prayer is communion with God.
- ❖ There are different kinds of prayer:
  - A morning, noon, and evening offering.
  - Adoration, Praise, Thanksgiving, Penitence, Intercession, Oblation and Petition. (BCP pp. 856-857)
  - All prayer involves openness to God, honesty with God, and waiting upon God.
- ❖ We may not experience communion with God each time we pray but we grow spiritually as we continue to pray.
- ❖ Have a plan for praying. The key elements are: a period of time; posture; place; a passage of scripture; practice the patience of God.

### *SPIRITUAL DIRECTION:*

- ❖ We need friends in our spiritual life to develop our relationship with Jesus.
- ❖ A friend to help us is a Spiritual Director.
- ❖ A Spiritual Director is someone wise in spiritual matters, objective, and trustworthy. It is a person who shares with us our journey. A Spiritual Director does not have to be a priest.
- ❖ The purpose of spiritual direction is to examine our spiritual journey, set priorities, and find guides for growing our life in grace.

### *SACRAMENTAL CONFESSION:*

- ❖ Confession is being realistic about our failures so we may be forgiven.
- ❖ An explanation of the confession process should be given.

### *MEDITATION:*

- ❖ Meditation is giving attention to God so we may become more Christ-like.
- ❖ There are numerous methods of meditation. Some examples may be given.

### *THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER:*

1. The Prayer Book is a resource for spiritual growth.
2. The Prayer Book is a “pilgrim’s guide” and intended for everyone of all ages, young to old.
3. The Prayer Book is a resource for worship, prayer and teaching.



COMMENTARY ON THE OUTLINE:

- ❖ Following the talk, time should be provided for thought and prayer before Candidates complete their sheets, however some Candidates may want more time to complete their Rule of Life sheet.
- ❖ Candidates should have time to consult with a Spiritual Advisor if desired.
- ❖ The talk should be convincing, practical, and instructional.

*Suggestions for Further Reading:*

The Anglican Vision by James Griffiss

A Matter of Faith by Charles P. Price

Faith and Practice by Frank E. Wilson

What is Anglicanism by Urban T. Holmes III

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**TALK #13 — CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IN ACTION — LAY PERSON**

Life in Christ is celebrated, deepened, and upheld within a community. Working together as a community strengthens evangelism. Christians working together transform the world for Jesus.

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**TALK #14 — GROUP REUNION\* — LAY PERSON**

Group reunion provides a spiritual tool to support growth and perseverance in faith. The Candidate is shown a way to move forward together and continue their Christian evangelism and action into their Fourth Day.

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**TALK #15 — ULTREYA\* — LAY PERSON**

As the Weekend comes to a close, the Candidates are encouraged to seek the support of their Christian community through the Cursillo Method. They learn about Ultreya gatherings and opportunities for further Christian growth.

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**\* *The Spiritual Advisor should encourage Weekend leadership to allot ample time for these talks. Even though Talk #14 and Talk #15 come at the end of the Weekend, they form the heart of the Cursillo Method. If a full understanding of Group Reunion and Ultreya and their ongoing support is not provided, the primary reason for the Episcopal Cursillo Weekend will be lost***

# THE DIOCESAN SPIRITUAL ADVISOR

## WHO SHOULD BE A SPIRITUAL ADVISOR?

Since a Spiritual Advisor in the Cursillo Ministry has many roles and tasks to perform, those selecting Diocesan Spiritual Advisors — as well as Spiritual Advisors for a Cursillo Weekend or Ultreyas — must be aware of the demands of this position. They should prayerfully fill openings with qualified people. Just as the Cursillo Ministry within a diocese must have the approval of the Diocesan Bishop, a Diocesan Spiritual Advisor is approved by the Bishop and is directed to support the various parts of the Ministry — especially the Secretariat and Servant Community. The Cursillo Weekend Spiritual Advisor has a role separate from the Diocesan Spiritual Advisor. Although the same person may fulfill both roles, it is not the norm for it to happen at every Weekend.

## ROLE OF THE DIOCESAN SPIRITUAL ADVISOR

- Assist with the Pastoral Plan — The work of the ministry within a diocese is done through a Pastoral Plan drafted by the Secretariat and approved by the Bishop with the support of the Spiritual Advisor. Through the Pastoral Plan, the Secretariat studies the environments of the diocese and determines which ones are to be given priority. The work of the Pre-Cursillo is then directed toward the environments which have been given a high priority. In the Pre-Cursillo, the persons and groups who should attend a Weekend are identified and prepared for the experience, keeping in mind they are ultimately being prepared to carry out the work of evangelization in their key environments in the Post-Cursillo or Fourth Day.
- Assist with Cursillo Events — The Diocesan Spiritual Advisors may not necessarily always be the Spiritual Advisor for a Weekend or Ultreya, but they do assist with identifying appropriate clergy to fill these roles. And, they provide whatever assistance is requested to support the Weekend. When not fulfilling the position directly, Diocesan Spiritual Advisors should see that all Cursillo events have clergy participation.
- Support Training of Cursillo Secretariat and Servant Community Leadership — Encourage ongoing study of Cursillo publications as provided by the Episcopal Cursillo Ministry at its website ([episcopalcursilloministry.com](http://episcopalcursilloministry.com)).
- Model the Cursillo Method — Participate fully in the Fourth Day and advocate for it as a way to bring Jesus to the World.
- Be a Resource for Spiritual Direction — If not able or qualified to provide Spiritual Direction, the Advisor should maintain referral information for those seeking this ministry.
- Serve as a Link to Other Clergy and Parishes — The Spiritual Advisor should be in contact with other clergy within the Diocese and encourage their participation in Cursillo and its activities. Additionally, the Advisor should encourage and support pre-Cursillo activities within diocesan parishes.
- Keep the Bishop Informed — The Diocesan Spiritual Advisor should insure that the Diocesan Bishop is informed about the activities and plans of the Cursillo Community. Regular communication is essential to establish a solid and supportive relationship within the Diocese.
- Support Training of Cursillo Secretariat and Servant Community Leadership — Encourage activities. Additionally, the Advisor should encourage and support pre-Cursillo activities within diocesan parishes.
- Keep the Bishop Informed — The Diocesan Spiritual Advisor should insure that the Diocesan Bishop is informed about the activities and plans of the Cursillo Community. Regular communication is essential to establish a solid and supportive relationship within the Diocese.

## COMMONLY USED TERMS:

*Throughout the Cursillo Community, there are some terms that are commonly used. None of them are required, but knowing their meaning does help with communication.*

*As the Cursillo Ministry has evolved through time, some communities have developed their own terms. Also, some communities have moved away from Spanish language terms.*

*Changes are normal and part of the passage of time and the introduction of new generations. They are fully acceptable if they meet the needs of an individual community.*

- **APOSTOLIC ACTION:** Action planned to bring someone closer to Christ that involves words as well as deeds and the witness of a Christian life.
- **CLAUSURA:** A Closing Ceremony for the Weekend with members of the Fourth Day community.
- **CURSILLO DE CHRISTIANDAD:** A short course in Christianity or little courses in living what is fundamental to being a Christian.
- **CURSILLO MINISTRY:** The Cursillo Ministry is a ministry of the Church that has as its purpose the Christianization of the world through the apostolic action of Christian leaders in all areas of human activity. The Ministry's purpose is achieved by means of a certain strategy and method.
- **DE COLORES:** The colors. A Spanish song used in Cursillo with many verses.
- **ENVIRONMENT:** The sum of ideas and circumstances brought about by the people around us people and situations with which we are in contact. Refers to groups of people rather than a physical setting.
- **FOURTH DAY:** The rest of your life.
- **REUNION:** Group Reunion is simply a meeting of a small group: to share last week's experience of Piety, Study and Action, to pray together, and to be mutually accountable to one another for carrying out a plan "to make a friend, be a friend, bring a friend to Christ." The group follows the Cursillo Method. (See "Group Reunion" booklet at [episcopalcurso.com](http://episcopalcurso.com))  
The following are types of group reunions:
  - **ENVIRONMENTAL GROUP REUNION:** Consists of friends who share an environment: a business, a parish, a neighborhood, etc., which is their common field of apostolic action.
  - **FLOATING GROUP REUNION:** the groups which meet during an Ultreya, usually made up of different people each time.
  - **PERMANENT OR FRIENDSHIP GROUP REUNION:** consists of friends regardless of whether they share environments.
- **METHOD:** The Method of Cursillo is basically one of perseverance. The Cursillo Method is used in the Fourth Day and is a means for lay apostles to meet, share, and plan their Apostolic work together in small groups (group reunion) and larger groups (Ultreyas) where Cursillistas meet to give life and impetus to a community endeavor.
- **PALANCA:** Literally means "a lever." It is used in Cursillo to mean an outward expression, through prayer or sacrifice, of our Christian love.
- **ROLLO:** A Spanish word used in Cursillo to refer to the talks given by both clergy and laity.
- **STRATEGY:** The strategy of Cursillo involves seeking out key people in the different environments (the Pre-Cursillo phase), converting them to a deeper relationship with God by having them accept their role as lay apostles ( The Episcopal Cursillo Weekend), and then linking them together for their mutual support and apostolic effectiveness (the Fourth Day).
- **ULTREYA:** Onward! Keep on going! A medieval Spanish word which is associated with pilgrimages made on foot to the Shrine of St. James at Campostella in Spain. It is a word of encouragement which one group of pilgrims would call out to another. It conveys the meaning of "pressing on to the end" or "persevere." (See "Ultreya" booklet at [episcopalcurso.com](http://episcopalcurso.com))