SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR MANUAL

A Guide for Spiritual Directors of the Lutheran Cursillo Movement of Arizona
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FORWARD

It has been over 60 years since the Spirit of Jesus, in response to fervent prayer for revival and evangelism, first gave Eduardo Bonnin and his friends this special gift. The Cursillo Renewal movement has remained a strong ministry to provide support for our churches through individuals who have discovered new gifts to enable their service in the Kingdom. While Cursillo is predominately a lay movement, the participation of pastors is a key element in support of the weekend. From the beginning LCMA has used a variety of Spiritual Director Manuals from other expressions of Cursillo, which haven’t fully expressed our unique traditions and theological convictions. As a result our LCMA Secretariat has gathered key outlines and good samples of recent talks and which we believe will be useful in creating your own meaningful Rollos and other devotional elements in keeping with our Lutheran confessions. We have generously borrowed from the National Lutheran Secretariat, which has led the way.

This Manual is at best a helpful “addendum;” it is certainly not the “last word” on the subject, but until the Holy Spirit raises up others, we pray that it will be of value for this precious movement. While we don’t expect anyone to follow these outlines or samples verbatim, experience has shown that Cursillo is most fruitful when “used according to the directions.” Just as our laity need to be held accountable in following the basic outlines of their Rollos, so we as clergy want to exercise responsibly in preparing our talks. The Rollo you give is really only 1/15th of the entire “talk” presented during the three days, and therefore needs to fit in with the entire presentation. Be sure to make them personal, by sharing your own struggles. Most of all, let’s take the leadership in our prayerful reliance on the Holy Spirit, to assure that this "Short Course in Christianity" will be complete, and continue to be the blessing it has been to so many millions.

A key for that happening is to remember that the real purpose of each Weekend is only achieved on the Fourth Day when participants begin grouping, and together commit to be the disciples Christ is calling us to become. The goal of Cursillo is never merely an exciting Weekend, but the evangelization of our environments as we “Make a friend, Be a friend, and bring that friend to Christ.”

Along with these suggested Outlines, Sample Meditations and Rollos for your consideration, we have also included a single “Rollo Handout.” We encourage you to provide a “fill-in” handout for the Rollo (s) you give to assist the Cursillistas in grasping and remembering it.

We are very grateful for the busy pastors who took the time to share the presentations in this Manual. None of these Rollos or Outlines, of course, are meant to be a substitute for your own personally fleshed out presentation; but we trust they will be helpful in giving you fresh ideas and basic direction as you plan, write and present your own talk. In that spirit we thank the following contributors for these pages:

Arnie Frank
James Hoefer
Les Hoffmann
Bob Holstein
John Schaumburg
Steve Talmage
Kent Touhino
Paul Witkop

Plus, special thanks to Marie Hoefer and Leticia Wilson for their skillful editing.
# THE PROGRESSION OF THE WEEKEND

One “Talk” given in 5 Mediations & 15 Rollos (Clergy parts shaded)

## THURSDAY -- PREPARATION

**Face To Face With Christ**

**Focus:**
- Who Am I?
- Silent Retreat Begins

**Emotions:** Apprehensive, Introspective...

**First Meditation**
- What am I doing here? You need to KNOW YOURSELF!

**Second Meditation**
- What does God want of me? Your return—PRODIGAL SON!

### Thursday Meditations

1. **First Meditation**
   - What am I doing here?
   - You need to KNOW YOURSELF!

2. **Second Meditation**
   - What does God want of me?
   - Your return—PRODIGAL SON!

### Silent Retreat Begins

**Focus:**
- Who Am I?
- Silent Retreat Begins

**Emotions:** Apprehensive, Introspective...

### Thursday Meditations

1. **First Meditation**
   - What am I doing here?
   - You need to KNOW YOURSELF!

2. **Second Meditation**
   - What does God want of me?
   - Your return—PRODIGAL SON!

## FRIDAY -- PROCLAMATION

**Called Be A Saint**

**Focus:**
- General Christianity
- A Beautiful Calling

**Style:**
- Low Key, to head, not heart.

**Emotions:** Tense, Nervous, Eager...

**Third Meditation**
- What is a human being?
- One who lives by an IDEAL.

**Rollo 1**
- What is a human being?
- One who lives by an IDEAL.

**Rollo 2**
- What is a Christian? One whose ideal is GRACE.

**Rollo 3**
- Where is this ideal to be found and lived?
- In the Church—LAYITY

**Rollo 4**
- How is the ideal lived out?
- By active trust in God FAITH

## SATURDAY -- CONVERSION

**Called Be A Leader**

**Focus:**
- Practical
- Individual, Personal
- “How To” for the life of grace

**Style:**
- Explanatory, somewhat restrained.

**Emotions:** Mixed, drained, joy filled, shocked, expectant...

### Saturday Meditations

1. **Fourth Meditation**
   - What do I see in Christ?
   - THE PERSON OF CHRIST.

2. **Rollo 6**
   - How can I live in Grace?
   - By using my head—STUDY.

3. **Rollo 7 & 7 ½**
   - How can I live in Grace?
   - By hearing God’s call to me—SACRAMENTS.

4. **Rollo 8**
   - How can I live in Grace?
   - By offering my hands—ACTION.

5. **Rollo 9**
   - What can block my progress in the life of grace?
   - OBSTACLES.

6. **Rollo 10**
   - How can I move beyond these obstacles?
   - By acting as a LEADER.

## SUNDAY -- IMMERSION

**Called Be An Apostle**

**Focus:**
- Specifically Cursillo
- Living in Kingdom Community, with an apostolic mission to the world!

**Style:**
- Inspirational, Confident!

**Emotions:** Board spectrum, tired, hearts on fire; “Can I maintain?”, Joy, Concern about 4th Day...

### Sunday Meditations

1. **Fifth Meditation**
   - What do leaders do?
   - Develop a plan—STUDY OF ENVIRONMENTS.

2. **Rollo 11**
   - What do leaders do?
   - Develop a plan—STUDY OF ENVIRONMENTS.

3. **Rollo 12**
   - Can these plans work?
   - Yes—CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IN ACTION.

4. **Rollo 13**
   - Where do I begin?
   - By developing a personal rule of life—CHRISTIAN LIFE.

5. **Rollo 14**
   - Where can I turn for help and support?
   - GROUP REUNION.

6. **Rollo 15**
   - Can we do it?
   - Yes, if we do it together—ULTREYA.

The Cursillo Community gather in CLOSURA to encourage all to persevere in their calling.

LCMA’s Spiritual Director Manual, Page 5
THE ROLE OF SPIRITUAL DIRECTORS

REVIEW: CURSILLO PHILOSOPHY

- NOT “one more thing to do” for busy pastors, or something that “drains away leadership” BUT actually a LEADERSHIP SCHOOL for your congregation!
- NOT just a Weekend, BUT an unfolding LIFESTYLE CHANGE that will bless everyone the participant’s life, family, congregation & vocation.
- YES, a Lay Movement, BUT impossible without the support of, involvement in and promotion by their Pastor
- These and more are covered in the entire LCMA’s LEADER’S SCHOOL

QUALITIES NEEDED:

QUALIFICATIONS: Spiritual Directors on a weekend must have (1) experienced their own weekend (2) be rostered clergy, currently grouping (3) attended Team Formation Leader’s School.

MAIN OBJECTIVE: The spiritual director has a mission of teaching and a ministry of grace in the Cursillo. In the talks, the Director should provide a synthesis, profound yet simple, so that a doctrinal structure can be presented for deriving the principles to solve problems in life and for making the whole of life Christian. In ministerial function, the spiritual director is God's instrument to share God's grace, especially through the Word and Sacraments. The main objective is everyone leaving the weekend their 4th Day to “Make a friend, be a friend and bring that friend to Christ” in their unique environments, to the glory of God!

BALANCE: In addition to the qualities demanded of the laity, the spiritual director should possess pastoral balance, having faith in the efficacy of his/her ministry, but also in the Cursillo movement, living it out in witness and not merely directing it. The lay quality of the movement requires an attitude of humility and appreciation for the ministry vocation of all the baptized, and a readiness to be ministered to as well. Also, the spiritual director must be comfortable in the role of evangelizer because of the Cursillo objective of bringing about "metanoia," awakening or deepening faith. For all these reasons, Spiritual Directors need to understand and support the total Cursillo method, including pre-Cursillo, the three days, and the all important 4th Day post-Cursillo, for which everything else exists. While there are plenty of opportunities for creativity, Spiritual Directors are not free to endlessly modify this valuable tool to suit their private preferences, but are rather charged with leading a Team in a true spirit of Body life community with all team members.

RESPONSIBILITIES: PRE-CURSILLO

The Head Spiritual Director is recruited by the Rector/a from names recommended by the Spiritual Director of Secretariat. The Head Spiritual Director must have gone through Leaders School, served as a Co-Director on two previous weekends and regularly attend groupings.

The Head Spiritual Director is accountable to the Secretariat for the spiritual content of the team preparation and the weekend. He must become familiar with everything in this Manual, as well as the method and traditions of the Lutheran Cursillo Movement of Arizona. Since the Rector is directly responsible for all external aspects of the Cursillo, the Head Spiritual Director
is in a supportive role for the Rector. Wherever questions arise regarding external aspects, the Rector has final authority. The Head Spiritual Director is responsible for the internal aspects of the Cursillo. This includes spiritual direction, doctrinal soundness, and matters of liturgy. Wherever questions of this nature arise, the Head Spiritual Director has the final authority. This authority, however, should be low-key and exercised only in love. The HSD regularly attends Core Team meetings and participates in the team formation through: praying with the Core team over potential candidates for Team, assisting with the devotional life and mutual care and support of the Core Team, and recruiting Co-Directors from eligible names received or approved by the Spiritual Director of Secretariat. (We always encourage at least one “Rookie” SD, and it is also a plus to have Spiritual Directors from different Synods). The Spiritual Director helps to plan the schedule for the weekend, with special responsibility for planning the worship opportunities as outlined by the Cursillo movement.

The Head Spiritual Director is also responsible for building rapport with Co-Directors, including providing role descriptions and assigning and explaining meditations, talks and sacramental duties well in advance of the weekends.

At Team meetings, the spiritual directors are responsible for helping to give the meditations, in coordination with the Rector/a, and for presiding at Holy Communion. They are to ensure that physical arrangements are made for the sacrament. Spiritual Directors should attend as many of the Team meetings as possible, including the overnighter, with a minimum of one Director at each Team meeting. Spiritual Directors need to know something of every talk, in order to give feedback to speakers practicing the talks at Team meetings, especially paying attention to see that such talks accurately and fairly represent Lutheran theology and clearly convey the Good News. The Lay Rector/a directs the timing of such feedback.

Listen! Pray constantly! Support and expect support from your Rector/a! Since the Team itself is supposed to be a model of Christian community for the weekend participants, pastoral care of the Team is as important as care of participants on the actual weekend.

RESPONSIBILITIES ON THE WEEKEND: WORSHIP & MEDITATIONS

Pray Constantly! The Head Spiritual Director has oversight of all worship opportunities, but shares these opportunities with Co-Spiritual Directors. Most of the liturgy can be found in the Cursillo worship pamphlet. The following opportunities with accompanying meditations are part of each weekend:

1. "Stations of the Cross" - Thursday night. Purpose: to reflect on the consequences of our sins and on the unconditional love of God revealed through the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus. There are a variety of forms that this "adoration of the cross" can take; which one is decided upon at the Core Team meetings. The Head Spiritual Director usually gives a brief explanation of the theology of this exercise just prior to its experience.

2. Meditation #1: "Know Yourself" @ "Evening Chapel" - Thursday night closing. Usually follows "Compline" in Cursillo worship book. Purpose: to emphasize God's infinite love and mercy and readiness to forgive. Also prepares for the later Meditation # 2 given by a Spiritual Director: "The Prodigal Son."

LCMA's **Spiritual Director Manual**, Page 7
3. "Confession and Communion" - Friday morning. Meditation #3: "Three Glances of Christ." Purpose: to classify ourselves, see ourselves as responding to Christ much like the biblical figures described.

4. "Evening Chapel/Healing Service" - Friday night. Purpose: to offer the ministry of reconciliation in a tangible and powerful way. All pastors are involved in the laying on of hands and prayer for concerns brought forward (see page 100). Lay leaders are also part of the laying on of hands ritual. If additional counseling is desirable and asked for, this should be done afterwards by appointment.

5. "Morning Chapel" - Saturday morning. Meditation #4: "The Person of Christ." Purpose: to present Christ as both fully divine and fully human, accessible to all and worthy of adoration.

6. "Special Intentions Communion" - Purpose: sums up and is climax to "Sacraments" talk. Also designed so that participants may share what they want to dedicate to God or what they want to sacrifice, let go of, because of what Christ has sacrificed for us. (See page 99 for clear instructions of this Cursillo tradition.)

7. "Evening Chapel" - Follows the Agape meal Saturday night. Use Compline service.

8. "Mananitas" - Sunday early morning. Head Spiritual Director usually responsible for planning entire Worship with Rector/a and Worship Leader, and for preaching Meditation #5, "Message to the Cursillistas." Purpose: to instill a sense of joyful obligation. Bulletin Copies are needed with the service for the entire community, or use Hymnals & song sheets.

9. “Cursillo Cross Distribution” - Friday. Purpose: an initial Palanca after the FAITH Rollo in the Chapel, unifying Team, Cooks and Candidates as disciples of Christ (see page 101).

10. In addition, all Weekends include a “Healing Service" (see page 100), and a “Nailing Sins to the Cross" (page 101) event which require proper explanation both practically and spiritually, by a Spiritual Director. Some include a “Foot Washing" as part of the Agape Meal (page 101). The HSD also helps prepare participants in framing their remarks during the Clausura (see page 103).

RESPONSIBILITIES ON THE WEEKEND: ROLLOS/TALKS

1. "GRACE" - Second talk on Friday morning. Purpose: to give listeners their supreme ideal. This is the Main Rollo of the weekend, and it usually given by the Head Spiritual Director.

2. "FAITH" - Fourth talk on Friday afternoon. Purpose: to show listeners that faith is a gift also, a manifestation of grace God gives so we can receive all the benefits of Christ’s work on the cross. The gift of faith in others results in many prayers and sacrifices which God uses. We have a special word for the way God works here in Cursillo…we call it palanca …that’s a Spanish word for LEVER, or, if you are a mechanic, CROW BAR. God is going to make everything fit, and He uses the active faith of others (palanca) to do His work in us!

3. "SACRAMENTS" - Seventh talk (really TWO TALKS) on Saturday morning. Usually in two parts, before and after lunch, concluded with "Special Intentions Communion," or Holy Com-
munion at the table groups. Often given by Head Spiritual Director. Purpose: to show the means for a personal relationship with Christ.

4. "OBSTACLES" - Ninth talk, on Saturday evening. Purpose: to make listeners aware of those things which get in the way of faithful living and how the Spirit helps us overcome them.

5. "CHRISTIAN LIFE" - Twelfth talk, on Sunday morning. Purpose: to hear what one must do for Christ through Piety, Study and Action.

6. "HEAD SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR'S TALK" - Sunday afternoon. Purpose: provide instruction for Clausura, presents the voluntary witnessing as an opportunity to give back to the Community sharing what the weekend has meant. A "wrap-up" talk for the Director, by which you can set the tone for sharing that gives glory to God for specific blessings (see page 102).

PASTORAL CARE

Spiritual Directors are responsible for pastoral care of Team and Participants on the Weekend. Supporting and encouraging the Team and its overall mission can’t be emphasized too much. Both Team and Participants need you to befriend them as the Lord gives guidance and be available for pastoral counseling at times set by the Core Team (usually following the Evening Chapels). They must be flexible in their style of counseling, such as prayer for healing, confession and absolution, active listening, etc. Often there is a REQUEST BOX for participants to indicate this desire.

OTHER ROLES:

1. HSD introduces Co-Spiritual Directors, often also the Rector and Head Cook (as decided in Core Team meetings) on Thursday night to the entire community.

2. Pray for Rollistas, all through the preparation and during the weekend as you are led. This always includes joining your prayer partner just before his/her Rollo.

3. Writing/ providing palanca for team members and participants. (Optional: as the Lord leads).

4. HSD introduces "General Palanca" to be presented after "Faith" Rollo and assists the Rector/a and Cooks in the Bible Distribution following the STUDY Rollo

FOURTH DAY/POST-CURSILLO:

1. Pray for the participants and team. Attend Reunion Ultreya following Cursillo weekend. Celebrate with Cursillistas!

2. Assist Cursillistas “coming down the Mountain Top” with sensitivity of the rest of the congregation. Help match gifts with leadership needs in Cursillo Movement, for example potential candidates as Parish Rep, etc.

3. Continue to be active in Cursillo community and goals. Group yourself. Attend Ultreyas and participate in Cursillo community as the Lord leads, including hosting an Ultreya.
4. **Encourage other pastors** to consider attending a weekend and/or being a Spiritual Director.

**WHERE TO GET MORE INFORMATION:**

- LCMA’s Secretariat Head Spiritual Director  spiritdir@lutherancursillo.org
- Via de Cristo’s **SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR’S MANUAL** available at www.viadecristo.org/
- Roman Catholic LEADER’S MANUAL
- LCMA’s web site:  http://www.lutherancursillo.org/
- National Lutheran “Via de Cristo” web site:  http://www.viadecristo.org/

**ESSENTIALS FOR THE WEEKEND**

- **Palanca** – The heart and lifeblood of the movement – deep, intentional, selfless, sacrificial prayer
- **Seventy-two hours** – Three full days of Christian community, away from all the distractions of daily life
- **Holy Communion daily** – Jesus is truly present in word and sacrament; both are made available to the participants
- **5 Meditations** – Five guided image meditations; offered to assist the participants in examining their relationship with Christ
- **15 Rollos** – Actually separated parts of one talk necessary to cover the basics of the Cursillo method
- **Note taking or write downs** – Specific ideas and power phrases that capture the essential points of each of the Rollos
- **Discussions** – Small group encounters where Christ can come alive at the decuria and the fundamentals of Christianity can be reviewed
- **Posters** – Hand drawn expressions of the essential meaning of each of the Rollos to be done at least through the Environments Rollo
- **Decuria sharing** – A summarizing of the Rollo; a wonderful opportunity for the participants to talk before a larger group
- **Silent retreat** – A period without talking; offered the first night to prick the conscience of the participants
- **Stations of the Cross** – An opportunity for the participants to begin to focus on what Christ has done for them
- **Crosses** – A cross common to the Cursillo® movement with the telling inscription “Christ is counting on you”
• **Nailing/burning of the sins** – An opportunity for the participants to nail their sins to the cross, thereby giving them release through the subsequent burning/offering of those sins to God

• **Agape dinner** – A meal where the participants share the love in fellowship as it was established at the churches birth

• **Healing service** – Held either Friday or Saturday night as a way for the participants to ask for personal healing for themselves or others

• **Mananitas** – Where the participants meet the larger community for the first time

• **Clausura** – The welcome of new participants into the community as a whole; designed to assure them that there are many brothers and sisters who understand

**Traditions of LCMA for the weekend**

- **Intentions communion** – Held Saturday afternoon following the Sacraments Rollo as an opportunity for the participants to share their intention with the Lord to make some positive personal or spiritual change in their life.

- **Mananitas service** – Music selected should be well known by the community to maintain a high energy prior to and throughout the service. The only exceptions would be new songs that were being taught and sung on the Weekend. Song to be sung during the entrance of participants into the sanctuary Sunday morning, "Las Mananitas".

- **Clausura service** – Music selected should be well known by the community to maintain a high energy prior to and throughout the service. The only exceptions would be new songs that were being taught and sung on the Weekend. Song to be sung during the entrance of participants into the sanctuary Sunday afternoon, "Somebody Touched Me". Song to be sung at the end of the Clausura service, "Sing Alleluia".

(Essentials and Traditions established by the LCMA Secretariat on November 13, 2005)

**Meditation 1, Thursday Evening**

**Sample KNOW YOURSELF**

10-15 minutes

**Purpose and Setting**

This meditation begins the process of preparing the participants to let go of their anxiety so they can listen to and accept the message that will be proclaimed on the weekend. It does this by encouraging the participants to be more aware of who they are, why they are here, and to be honest about their potentialities and limitations. They are invited to look inside the self and see what God already sees. This truth and self-knowledge will set them free to respond to God. It should be stressed that each person’s situation is unique, and that there is no "expected response" to the Cursillo experience. Do some centering exercises to prepare for listening to this meditation.

Who am I? Where am I going? What is the meaning of my life? Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German pastor and martyr sat in a prison cell during WWII. He wrote these words:
Who am I? This or the other? Am I one person today and tomorrow another? Am I both at once? A hypocrite before others, and before myself a contemptibly woe-begone weakling? Or is something within me still like a beaten army, Fleeting in disorder from victory already achieved? Who am I? They mock me, these lonely question of mine. Whoever I am, Thou knowest, O God, I am Thine!

Does this sound like someone who has spent too much time behind bars? Someone not thinking straight? Or, is this an honest confession of the soul? Who am I? Where am I going? What are the priorities in my life?

When I was a Mission Director a colleague of mine, Gene Buettel, was a supervisor for a unique mission church. It was called: St. Barrabas. Given the name of a thief in the Bible, it is the only Lutheran church inside the walls of a state penitentiary in Baltimore, Maryland. Part of its mission statement is to "lose" members when people leave the prison. It is also the only church, which by state law cannot receive an offering. One Friday evening Dr. Buettel paid a visit to that church. Since it was a maximum security facility any metal whatsoever showed up on the x-ray. Well, his first attempt through this "detector" resulted in a loud sounding buzzer. He surrendered a belt, some cash, and other objects. Still the buzzer. Layer after layer of clothing was shed, until he was down to what he called, "the bare essentials". Finally he made it thorough.

It was sheer relief to reach the cellblock where church members were waiting. He began his little talk that evening by saying, "you know I just discovered we are all really the same." Now, that was a radical statement. We are not all the same. But there is a commonality among all people. We all want to be loved. We want our lives to count for something. We want to feel that we have contributed something. In matters of what's within each of us there are some common needs. We all have our weaknesses. We all need to know God loves us warts and all. And, if we stop to take inventory, we all have some adjustments, which need to be, made in the way we are living our lives.

Now, there is something threatening about this process. An invasion of privacy, surfacing some things which have been buried within our conscience, the fear of being exposed, the worry that this might be a short course in mass therapy; these may make us wonder if we really need to be here. Let me allay your fears. Nothing will happen without your willingness. Each of us will share things that are within our comfort zone. This is not a spiritual journey to let it all "hang out".

The word "Cursillo" means a short course in Christianity. Each lesson or event is carefully designed to help you think through that dimension of your walk with God. Some of these may bring "aha" moments; others may result in quiet affirmation of ways in which God is at work among His people.

So this weekend will give each of us an opportunity to get our bearings, to evaluate where we are and where we want to go in our Christian journey. The title of this talk is "Know Yourself". Knowing ourselves is not an easy task. It may be this is why the word personality is derived from the Greek, "Persona", meaning shield or "mask". The personality, is that tip of the iceberg, which we share with other people and by which we are known. But it is a mask, which covers up who we really are within.

What you are seeing in me just now is the person I choose to share with you. You will learn very little beyond what I say about myself and the way in which I present myself. Some
years ago I was marrying a couple. In the counseling session, the woman suggested that the fiancée was a personable, social, outgoing person who had many friends. The husband-to-be abruptly interceded, "no, that's not the case. I let very few people get close to "me". Many of us, even in this setting may be seen as lively, sociable, friendly and outgoing. But within we may find ourselves lonely and isolated from other human beings.

The theme for this weekend comes from Psalm 51. It is a troubled David who prays fervently to God: "Create in me a clean heart, 0 God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of thy Salvation." It's important for us to know the context of this prayer. It was the result of some soul searching, which David never really intended. Israel was at war. Their commander in chief David should have been with his troops. But he was in Jerusalem at his palace taking a nap one afternoon. When he awakened he came out on his balcony and looked over the city. As he glanced over toward the next rooftop he spotted a beautiful woman. Her name was Bathsheba. She was the wife of one of David's generals. Given the situation, there were two errors, which David made. First he had no business lounging around when there was a battle to fight. Secondly while there is nothing wrong with looking at a woman, he forgot to push "the pause button." He let his tape of lust run and the result was an act of adultery, and later the intentional murder of this woman's husband. It was through Nathan the prophet that David finally came to himself. When the prophet cornered him it was with pointed finger that he said, "David, you are the man". So David cries out, "create in me a clean heart 0 God." Sometimes it is a friend who calls us up short and brings us back to our senses.

David discovered here that he could not flee from God. Later he said, "if I make my bed in hell, you are there. If I make my bed in heaven you are there. Whither shall I go and how shall flee from thy presence"?

But David also discovered something which each of us desperately need. As we open up to God, the dark valleys are filled with the waters of forgiveness. Where sin abounds, grace abounds even more fully. When we risk knowing ourselves, we discover that God loves even our unlovable parts with unconditional, non-judgmental love.

Let me ask you a question. IF YOU COULD LIVE ONE DAY IN YOUR LIFE OVER AGAIN WHAT WOULD IT BE? For some it might focus on one event, or one particular situation. It might be the closeness you felt when you sat at the bedside of a dying parent. It might be joyous like a wedding day. Or, maybe when you had an affair with someone. Or, it might be something you always regretted not doing. (It may even be that you would like to live several days over.) And now it is too late. The good news today is that God's love is deeper than any of our pits. He reminds us that as we learn more about ourselves, we also learn to know more about His grace. The parts of our lives, which we consider unacceptable, are indeed acceptable to God. The fact is he doesn't want to love our pretense or our mask. He wants to love us deep down within.

When Jesus looked over the crowd, he saw them as helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. He had compassion on them. It was like his ex-ray eyes penetrated beneath to see how much they really needed the go news he had come to bring.

You remember the story of the woman at the well. If ever there was a person who experienced shock therapy, it was this woman. She came in the heat of the day so no one would see her. But Jesus was there. He knew about her past affairs. Jesus knew about
her illicit love affair going on at the present moment. He knew that she was trying to cover a spiritual emptiness with a form of religious expression. But as He gently mirrored for her, who she was and what she was, she discovered not only being emotionally vulnerable and naked. She didn't run for cover. She discovered that the forgiving love of Jesus covering every guilt and shame and sadness of her life The story ends with her telling the world that here was one who knew all about her past and present; and yet she was filled with joy.

As we begin our journey tonight I would like you to remember Jesus words, "don't be anxious about your life. Don't ask questions like what shall we eat, what shall we drink, or what shall we wear." Let Him move front and center and this will be a journey to remember. As I look out over this crowd I am wondering what you are feeling just now. (Apprehension, expectation, wondering?) Maybe you are asking, why did I come? I could have used this time doing things which will be waiting for me when I return home.

When I had my weekend 3 years ago I remember someone encouraging me with a special phrase they used. The advised: "LET GO AND LET GOD". When I first heard those words they offended me. Here I was spilling out my life for the church. Here I was, a pastor dedicating my whole life to Jesus, and someone says,"let go and let God!" Well, I discovered on my weekend that was exactly what Indeed.

So let's remember Socrates words --"Know yourself". Lets allow the layers of superficiality to be peeled off so the Holy Spirit may be given a chance to give us our bearings and reveal to us what new thing He wants to do in our life.

When I last visited the mid-west with my wife Helen we stopped by the cemetery just outside her little Wisconsin town. As we looked at the graves of her parents, aunts, uncles, we began sharing something of what their lives meant to us. There were rich memories, which surfaced. It was not the date of birth or death, but the meaning of the dash in between. As we walked away that afternoon, I asked myself, "what kinds of things do I want to happen in the time God has given me? As people examine my "dash", what would I have it say? How would I like to be remembered?

Do you remember the text I read at the beginning? "Jesus did not trust them; because he knew what was in man." That was said of people who refused to take the journey. But to those who received Him, he gave the power to know themselves, and to know the endless power of His love. That was Paul's expectation when he wrote: "Now I know in part, then I will know even as I am known. Now we see dimly, then face to face."

So know yourself even as you are known. And out of that will come answers to the questions: "Who am I?" "Where am I going?" and; "What is the meaning of my life?"

**Alternative KNOW YOURSELF**

Please relax, and think along with me. This is the first of several meditations we will share with you this weekend. A meditation is a sharing of some thoughts (usually from the scriptures) for your personal, and prayerful, reflection. Please, if at all possible, try to un-cloud your mind of other thoughts while you are here with us, so that you can use this time apart to talk these things over with God.
Some of the things that can get in the way of clearing our minds and relaxing include anxiety, worry, apprehension. You are probably wondering what this weekend is all about. You may even be wondering if we are going to ask you to do something you don't want to do. If we do ask, you will not be forced to do it. You can always say "No, thank you." So you can relax about that. You just may be wondering if our intentions are honorable – rest assured they are. And if you are wondering if one or more of us will back you into a corner and "convert" you or something, don't worry, nothing could be farther from the truth. THIS WILL BE – IF YOU LET IT— A UNIQUE TIME FOR YOU TO HEAR JESUS...TO SENSE AND LISTEN TO THE PRESENCE AND SWEET COUNSEL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

YOU ARE HERE BECAUSE SOMEBODY CARED ABOUT YOU...LOVES YOU...DEEPLY. BUT EVEN MORE IMPORTANTLY, YOU ARE HERE BECAUSE YOU ARE FAR MORE PRECIOUS TO GOD THAN YOU THINK. ACCORDING TO SCRIPTURES...YOU HAVE PURPOSE...GIFTS...BLESSINGS...CAPACITIES...THAN YOU COULD IMAGINE.

I PERSONALLY AM CONVINCED THAT EVERY ONE OF US WILL CRY WHEN WE GET TO HEAVEN, AND FINALLY COMPREHEND WHAT LIFE ON THIS EARTH WAS REALLY ALL ABOUT, AND HOW LITTLE WE TOOK ADVANTAGE OF IT...OF COURSE, EVEN THOSE TEARS WILL BE DRIED IN LOVE BY OUR HEAVENLY FATHER....BUT THIS IS A REMARKABLE OPPORTUNITY...We're not going to crowd you for anything - we just want you to relax, to listen, to ponder, to think. Along that vein, I would like to share this meditation based on Matthew 6:26-34 (read the text)

"Look at the birds. They don't plant, harvest, or gather the harvest into barns. Yet, your heavenly Father feeds them. Aren't you worth more than they?

[27] "Can any of you add a single hour to your life by worrying?

[28] "And why worry about clothes? Notice how the flowers grow in the field. They never work or spin yarn for clothes. [29] But I say that not even Solomon in all his majesty was dressed like one of these flowers. [30] That's the way God clothes the grass in the field. Today it's alive, and tomorrow it's thrown into an incinerator. So how much more will he clothe you people who have so little faith?

[31] "Don't ever worry and say, 'What are we going to eat?' or 'What are we going to drink?' or 'What are we going to wear?' [32] Everyone is concerned about these things, and your heavenly Father certainly knows you need all of them. [33] But first, be concerned about his kingdom and what has his approval. Then all these things will be provided for you.

[34] "So don't ever worry about tomorrow. After all, tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. Matthew 6:26-34 (GW)

These words follow the beatitudes, the first words that Jesus spoke to his brand-new bunch of disciples, the twelve. This was something new to them, too. They didn't quite know what to think about all this. Here's this guy from Nazareth, of all places. Jesus, the carpenter's son (pretty common lot), who just comes up to them and says, "Follow me." Sort of like the person who asked you to attend this Cursillo.

So here they are. Unsure. Wondering what it's all about. Anxious. Nervous. Biting their nails. Looking around at the rest of the group. What a strange bunch they were, too. Mostly fishermen, one a loudmouth named Peter, two brothers people called "Sons of Thunder," a hated tax collector - all kinds. That made them more nervous. And now this Jesus was speaking about peace and piety and showing love and praying, and they just weren't too sure that they wanted to stick around.
Jesus tries to soothe their troubled minds by assuring them that worrying isn't necessary. God will provide for them everything they need, especially for their spiritual needs. What he asks of us at this Cursillo, is to trust him. He wants us to put aside all our cares and worries and, maybe for the first time in our lives, seek his kingdom alone. Living anxious lives, as Jesus puts it in Matthew 6:32-33, is for those who have never met Jesus Christ. (read text)

For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Matthew 6:32-33 (ESV)

We need these quiet times for reflection—DON'T WE?—just as Jesus needed time occasionally to withdraw to a quiet place by himself or with his disciples. It gives us opportunity again to confront the fundamental questions of life, such as:

- Who am I?
- Where am I going?
- What are my priorities in life?
- What has meaning for me?

Without some structure in our lives, it's like trying to assemble a jigsaw puzzle on a shag carpet - there's nothing solid to lay the pieces on to fit them together, and some get lost in the pile of the carpeting.

Life is like that for many today. Nothing solid in their lives on which to hang meaning and structure for all the many activities. They are bored, frustrated, often to the point of suicide. We fill our minds with so many different things, we crowd out time for serious reflection. We must ask, "Am I too busy for reflection? Can I afford to follow the crowd?" Our Lord's words to his friend, Martha, are important to us, too:

The Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha! You worry and fuss about a lot of things. There's only one thing you need. Mary has made the right choice, and that one thing will not be taken away from her." Luke 10:41-42 (GW) (read text)

We can never allow activity, no matter how good it is, to crowd out serious reflection. Life is too fragile to let it fall apart that way. There's an Old Poem I like, entitled:

"You Tell On Yourself"
You tell on yourself by the friends you seek,
By the very manner in which you speak,

By the way you employ your leisure time,
By the use you make of dollar and dime.

You tell what you are by the things you wear
By the spirit in which you your burdens bear.

By the kind of things at which you laugh.
By the records you play on the phonograph. (This is old, isn't it?)
You tell what you are by the way you walk,
By the things of which you delight to talk,

By the manner in which you bear defeat,
By so simple a thing as how you eat.

By the books you choose from well-filled shelf,
By these ways and more, you tell on yourself.

So there’s really no particle of sense
In an effort to keep up false pretense.

Everything about us, tells about us. But the good thing is this: no matter who we are or where we have been, we don’t have to stay there!

What’s your foundation for life? No one else sees your foundation. It’s hidden…but they will see the fruit of a solid foundation. I was in New York City years ago, and I saw the EMPIRE STATE BUILDING. I lived in the Bay area, and often saw the TRANSALANTIC BUILDING. Or the SEARS TOWER in Chicago. The average person looking at these buildings says, “WOW! WHAT AN INCREDIBLE BUILDING!” But an architect, who really knows about buildings, would look up at the EMPIRE STATE BUILDING and say, “WOW! WHAT A FOUNDATION!” No building can grow very tall or withstand the test of time that does not have a solid foundation.

How do we begin? Socrates suggested, "Know yourself." We begin by taking a very honest look at ourselves, allowing the Holy Spirit to reveal our INNER SPIRIT…OUR HEART. All our strengths don’t mean anything if there isn’t a secret foundation for them to rest upon. And God has a track record of taking someone even with many weaknesses, and making them strong. He took a grain of sand like Peter, and transformed him into a rock of a man.

Nothing happens until get real... Until we get down from our HIGH HORSE, and be ourselves. This means being humble. "Humble" is a word that comes from the Latin "HUMUS" which means "earth." Humility has that quality, like the earth, of being open and receptive to the seed. Let us employ our humility and be open and receptive to the seed of the Word of God and his grace in our world.

Cursillo can build for the future if:

- We are open and receptive to God's grace.
- We make the best use of this opportunity.
- We do not prejudge the Cursillo. There is no "expected" or forced response.

Relax and enjoy. Take time to know yourself. And here is some extra free advice:

During my ministry, I’ve gotten lots of notes and letters, all sorts of feedback, which I very much appreciate. But one that I will always treasure was given to me by a Cursillo man years ago, just before I went to the pulpit. It said, “Today as you speak, I'm going to imagine that I am sitting alone, and that God is speaking just to me through you.”
Which one are you tonight? Are you going through the motions tonight, satisfying your conscience that you’ve come? Are you looking at Cursillo #____ as a time for others to have a vision of God? Or are you going there to meet with Him too?

Meditation #2, Thursday Evening

Sample THE PRODIGAL SON

10-15 minutes

Purpose and Setting

This is one of Jesus' most popular parables. Many have come to know it more as the story of the Waiting or Forgiving Father. It truly is a lesson of God's mercy and love for his children. It illustrates the freedom and the healing found in God's forgiveness and love in the midst of our brokenness.

Through the first meditation and the Rector's opening remarks, many candidates will have already begun their spiritual retreat and introspection. This meditation furthers that pursuit by introducing the idea that in identifying with the Prodigal we may recognize our own efforts to fulfill or "find" ourselves in life, apart from the Father. The theme can be developed in many ways, also by employing the relationship with the older son, who doesn't appreciate what he has had all along.

The parable should be shared rather than analyzed - Tell the story! As it is shared, candidates will identify it as their own, since it really is everyone's story. Above all, let them see the Father's unconditional love.

Have you ever wondered what Jesus was really like? How he spoke? How he thought? How he felt? How he reacted to the brokenness of people everywhere he turned? Well, Christ gives us a glimpse of himself in his telling of the parable of the Prodigal Son - or maybe we should call it "The Waiting Father"? Let's look at the struggles of a young man and at the feelings of Christ to his situation. It's recorded in Luke 15:11-24.

There was a man who had two sons; and the younger one said to his father, "Give me the share of the property that belongs to me." In other words, "I want what would be mine if you had died." The old man looked into his son's eyes and they said to him, "Father, I am bored. I can never be fulfilled as long as I remain here. I have to find meaning for my life. Actually, I think the cause of my frustration is you - your rules, your regulations, your limitations. I have to find myself!"

The Father thought, "I can't force him to be my son. A forced son is no son at all. He obviously prefers things to me. He believes they will make him the man he wants to be; so I will not stand in his way." With tears running down his cheeks, he gave the young man his share. The boy on the other hand was excited. "There's no stopping me now. I'm free. Life is going to be different."

A few days later the son gathered up everything and went off to a far country. It actually wasn't that far in miles, but very far in relationship. The son had decided that as far as he was concerned his father was as good as dead. He would live his life completely apart from his father, enjoying himself, his gifts, and his money. So he began his quest for meaning. "I know I can do it," he thought happily.

But life somehow refused to cooperate - it didn't turn out how he wanted it to be. So he started using props - money, music, relationships, sex, you name it. He couldn't get along with-
out them. His excitement waned and life was feeling emptier than ever. He was driven to seek more ways to fill it. He wasn't looking to be bad. All he wanted was happiness, and he was compelled to use everything he had in order to find it.

He literally spent everything he had - not just his money, but also all the love he had, all the emotional energy he had, all the friendships he had cultivated. Everything he thought that made him a man, he spent. And when it was all gone, a great famine arose in that region. "What terrible timing!", he thought. Just when you need to call upon all your gifts and find control so you can turn things around, there is a famine in every department of your life. Self-image? Empty. Desire? Gone. Self-control? Run wild. "How did all this happen," he thought, "I never intended for this to happen."

The farther away the son got from the father, the farther he got away from himself and from meaning. He was confused, hungry, tired, lonely, shattered, and feeling guilty. The distance from his father now seemed unbridgeable.

One last try. He goes and attaches himself to a landowner and takes the only job available to him - tending pigs. They were better off than he was. They were having a feast, but he was starving. Alone, he was surrounded by utter silence. No music, no comfort, no friends, no money, no home, no father, no life. Was this the end of the line? Parenthetically, Jesus who gave us this story is the same one who said, He who loves his life (like this young man), will lose it." (John 12:25)

But this is not the end of the story. Jesus tells us, the young man "came to himself - an interesting use of words. It was not simply that he came to his senses. There was something more that drew him. It was the memory of love. A father's love. Love brought hope to a hopeless situation, and impelled the son to make one simple decision. "I will return to my father, and I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned'."

His plan was to explain to his father that he didn't deserve to be a son, but would be content to be a field-worker, a slave if you will, for that would be better than dying of hunger away from home.

That journey home must have been a hard one. A devilish voice inside says, "How will I be received? I went away arrogant and rich and here I am, broken and starving. Maybe I shouldn't bother. I am no good. I don't deserve a thing." But there was another voice, a voice of love, which kept saying, "Come home!"

The story continues. While he still was quite a way off, his father saw him (had he been looking all along?). He ran out, threw his arms around him and embraced him. In the arms of love (this is the real place for repentance) the wanderer began his practiced confession, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, I am no longer worthy to be your son." But the father wasn't even listening to the words. His son was home. He was already addressing the servants, "Quickly, bring the best robe, bring shoes for his feet and a ring for his finger. Bring in the fatted calf, it's time to party. My son was dead, but is alive again; he was lost, and is found." The message of the story is clear. The father is God. He waits to welcome his children home.
Alternative "THE PRODIGAL SON"

10-15 minutes

A teenager came to his pastor for advice: "I left home," said the boy, "and did something that will make my dad furious when he finds out. What should I do?" The minister thought for a moment and replied, "Go home and confess your sin to your father, and he'll probably forgive you and treat you like the prodigal son." Sometime later the boy reported to the minister, "Well, I told Dad what I did." "And did he kill the fatted calf for you?" asked the minister. "No," said the boy, "but he nearly killed the prodigal son!"

There are few stories in all the world's literature that are as well known or as well loved as the parable of the Prodigal Son. And rightly so; there is no portrait of God in any of the world's religions more winning than this one. Jesus was trying to give us a snapshot of God. He is seeking to answer the age-old question, "What is God like?"

IN THE FIRST PLACE, JESUS SHOWS US A FATHER WHO LOVES ENOUGH TO LET GO. This is remarkable if you think about it. An impudent boy comes to his father and says to him, in essence, "Look old man, I'm tired of staying on the farm. I want to see the city. I don't want to wait until you die to enjoy life. Give me my share of the inheritance now." Needless to say good Jewish boys did not talk to their fathers like this. Surely his punishment would be swift. Surprise. The father ponders the young man's request for a few moments and then says, "All right. If that is what you want, that is what you will get."

Remember, now, that Jesus is saying something to us about God. And this is it: God loves us enough to let go. God did not create us to be robots. God created us in God's own image. Whatever else that may mean, one thing is certain: WE ARE FREE TO CHOOSE OUR OWN DESTINY. We are free moral agents. We make our own beds—to use a familiar adage.

The Father has given us our inheritance. That inheritance takes many forms. We have amazing minds. We can use them or we can waste them. We have remarkable bodies. We can keep them healthy or we can abuse them. We have the gift of life, of time, of precious relationships. All are at our disposal. We are free!

A father was walking along a road some years ago with his son when the boy asked, "Dad, do you suppose anywhere in the world there is a sign that says 'trespassing'?" His dad asked what he meant and the boy said, "Well, see that sign over there that says 'no trespassing'? is there a sign somewhere that just says 'trespassing'?" They started laughing and they had fun imagining what it would be like some night to change No-signs to Yes-signs, from "no trespassing" to "trespassing." "private keep out" to "public come in," changing "Stop" signs to "go" signs, "no parking" to "parking," "danger" to "safety," etc. It is an amusing thought.

Have you ever thought about the fact that over most of the world God has placed a trespassing sign, a go sign, a yes sign? We are free—free to love, free to enjoy, free to dream and to decide. The Father loves us enough to let go.

Of course, there are a few "no trespassing" signs along the way. "Thou shalt not kill," "Thou shalt not steal," "Thou shall not commit adultery," etc. Every game has its rules. So does the game of life. There are only rules that make sense, though. Some things in life are destructive. They lead to death—physical death, emotional death, spiritual death, death of a friendship, or a marriage. Because our lives are interconnected with one another's and with God's, there are always choices to make. But we are free to make those choices—even bad
choices if we so desire. The Father loves us enough to let us go. That is the first thing about God that Jesus shows us.

There is a second thing Jesus reveals here: HE SHOWS US A FATHER WHO PATIENTLY WAITS FOR US TO RETURN. Earlier, Jesus told two other parables about a lost sheep and a lost coin. Lost sheep or lost coins are not responsible for making decisions. The shepherd (Jesus) goes out to find the lost sheep. The woman (Holy Spirit) sweeps the house to recover the lost coin. But the father waits on the lost boy to make his own decision. That is the ultimate consequence of our freedom. God will not force Himself on us. God will not make us behave. God will not interfere. We are free to choose life or death, love or indifference, heaven or hell. Whichever we choose, however, we must live with the consequences.

There are consequences in life, you know. Sometimes we don't want to face that truth about God. We want God to be like an indulgent parent following behind us—cleaning up our messes. We want a soft, flabby God, created in OUR image that will somehow deliver us from our own misdoing. Jesus showed us a God who was like a loving Father; but Jesus did not rescind the law of consequences. As one cynic has put it, "Some of us want to sow our wild oats and then pray for a crop failure."

The prodigal son abused his freedom. He squandered his wealth and was reduced to feeding swine. For the Jews, pigs were unclean. How could a nice Jewish boy fall much lower than feeding pigs? The Bible says that the young man gladly would have eaten the pods that he fed to the pigs.

But one day he came to himself. What a great statement! He came to himself. He wasn't a pig. He was a boy. He wasn't a swine, but a son. Even the servants in his father's house had plenty to eat and a warm place to sleep. What was he doing in a pigpen? He would go back to his father and say, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son ..."

He was taking responsibility for his own situation. That's always a sign that God is at work! I hope if any of us ever end up in one of life's pigpens because of bad choices—whether it be slavery to some addiction, or watching your family breakup because of your own lack of moral discipline, or in court because of cheating on your taxes, or whatever your pigpen may be—I hope that we will be given the courage this boy showed—instead of blaming it on your parents or on the government or your friends or your spouse or on God. I hope that you will be man enough or woman enough to say, "I brought this on myself."

When the young man started home, we discover the third thing Jesus taught us here: GOD IS A FATHER WHO WELCOMES UNCONDITIONALLY. "Seeing him from afar, the father had compassion on him, and ran and embraced him and kissed him."

The son started his litany of confession, "Father I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son." But the father did not even give him the opportunity to finish his carefully rehearsed speech. He said to his servants, "Bring quickly the best robe and put it on him..." That robe was a symbol of honor—Jonathan, the prince of Israel, gave David his rich robe to honor him. "Put a ring on his hand..." The ring was a symbol of authority—Pharaoh gave his ring to Joseph when he made him his right hand man over Egypt. "Put shoes on his feet..." Slaves went barefoot; sons wore shoes. "Kill the fatted calf..."
In the ancient world there was no possibility of preserving meat. When guests came, an animal was killed that could be eaten by the guests. Thus if another family came, it would be appropriate to kill a chicken or perhaps a pigeon. If two families came, it might be appropriate to kill a duck or a goose. If more came, it would be appropriate to kill a lamb. The killing of a fatted calf was done only if the entire village was invited. This was indeed an event of great import.

Some scholars believe that the fatted calf was actually slaughtered in front of the doorway. When the guests would step across the blood of the animal that had been slain, it was a sign that the past had been left behind, that there was a new covenant or new relationship between the host and the guest. As the son then stepped over the blood of the animal that had been slain, it was a sign of his father's total and complete acceptance and forgiveness. The father welcomed him back unconditionally.

The boy didn't deserve that kind of reception, did he? Many who heard Jesus tell this story were surety offended that a boy who treated his father so, should get off scot-free. Their discomfort is reflected in the envy of the elder brother. He had stayed home all these years, and his father had never killed the fatted calf for him! It wasn't fair! But grace is never fair. Saint Augustine once said, "God gives grace where he finds empty hands." The truth is that whenever we come to God with stuff already in our hands, He can't fill them.

If you or I could stay home in the Father's house and keep all the rules and obey all the laws, we might have the idea that we somehow deserved the Father's favor. Even worse, like the Pharisees we might get the idea that somehow we were morally and spiritually superior to the rest of God's children. Then we would never hear the Gospel—how we are all sinners saved by Grace. That's the real tragedy of the elder brother—he never knew the Father at all! He never discovered the Father's heart! He was always too wrapped up in himself.

A young man loved playing golf. He used to spend hours in the backyard practicing his golf swing. Of course he wasn't allowed to use a real golf ball because that would be very dangerous so near to the house. So he used a practice ball—hollow and made of light plastic with holes in it. You couldn't hit it very far and it could do no damage. One day he thought that both his parents were out and the house empty, and he longed for the feel of a real golf ball on the head of his club. Just this once wouldn't matter. He teed up a real golf ball and swung. You guessed it; he sliced his stroke and the ball headed for his parents' bedroom window. He heard the glass shatter and then his mother's scream! He ran into the house and up the stairs to her bedroom. She was standing there in front of the broken window and she was bleeding. He started to cry and couldn't stop. All he could say was, "Mum, what have I done. I could have killed you." His mother just hugged him, though, and said through her own tears, "It's all right. I'm all right, everything going to be all right." His mother knew that punishment was not what he needed at this moment. He needed to know that everything was all right.

That is what grace is all about. At the end of his magnificent letter on the Grace of God to the Romans, Paul gives this good advice to the Church: "Welcome one another, as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God" (Romans 15:7). The Church is the home of prodigal sons and daughters. That's all we have. We all need forgiveness and we all need to forgive. The Father loves us enough to let go, and then Father patiently waits. He will not force His way into our lives, but when you start for home, His grace will always surprise you. Earthly fathers may be tempted to kill the prodigal son, but the Eternal Father kills the fatted calf.
Meditation #3, Friday Morning

Sample THE THREE GLANCES OF CHRIST

10-15 minutes

Purpose and Setting

This is the morning meditation of the first full day. The candidates have spent the night in silent retreat. For some it has been a satisfying, even enlightening experience. For others, it has been a troubling process, perhaps adding to their anxiety about coming on the weekend. Being open (transparent) to God can make us feel vulnerable.

The purpose of this meditation is to show that exposure to the glance of Christ is not a new experience. The disciples and others saw in the eyes of Christ a mirror into their own minds and hearts. Most of them learned that his glance was not condemning, but loving. Some missed it, while others like Peter, found out the truth the hard way. We want the candidates to see the One who "looks upon the heart" as one who understands us and our struggles because he's been here, incarnate, with us.

It should be noted that traditionally this talk has focused on Jesus' encounter with the Rich Young Ruler (Mark 10:17-22), Judas (John 6: 66-71), and Peter (Mark 14: 27-31). These are three strong examples of the glance of Christ on individuals during his ministry. They are also all men. On a Women’s weekend, feel free to cite or substitute other examples, such at the Woman at the Well (John 4:5-26) or the woman caught in adultery (Luke 8:3-11) or others. It can also be effective for two or three pastors to do this meditation, each one taking another character.

Grace to you and peace from God our heavenly Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

You have just spent a night in silence. We have asked you not to speak to anyone. That was probably a little awkward. You could only use your eyes to communicate. But perhaps in this time of silence you have been reminded just how much we can communicate with our eyes. Just with our eyes-alone, we can express wonder, fear, amusement, anger, sleepiness, or love.

And sometimes we can communicate much more with a short glance than we could even with a steady gaze.

Jesus' eyes must have been powerful instruments of communication. Imagine looking into the eyes of Jesus. What would you see there? There are at least three occasions recorded in the Bible when someone experienced the glance of Christ in a powerful way. As we look at them and how they responded to Jesus' glance, perhaps we can see a bit of ourselves, too.

THE RICH YOUNG MAN

The first person I'd like to point out was the rich young man who came to see Jesus. The story is told in Mark 10:17-22.

READ MARK 10:17-22

Now here is someone who must have been considered a fine young man. He was well respected. He went to the Synagogue services every week, and probably attended the Adult Bible Study, too. He learned his lessons well. He knew the commandments, and tried to live by them. He was doing all right, as long as commitment to God did not cause him any financial problems.

The bible says that Jesus looked at him and loved him. He must have been able to see inside that young man, into his soul. It probably made that young man feel a little uncomfortable.
Jesus could see that the young man was sincere. But when Jesus asked him to sell all that he had and give it to the poor, the young man couldn't do it. It was the one obstacle standing between him and God, but he wasn't willing to give it up. The story of that rich young man causes us to look at ourselves and ask how important our possessions and our money is to us. What obstacles do we have that keep us from giving ourselves totally to God? Imagine that Jesus is looking at you intently, looking into your soul. He knows our thoughts and our desires. Ask yourself, Why is it so hard to have the courage to trust God to provide for all our needs?

JUDAS ISCARIOT

Another person who experienced Jesus' powerful glance is Judas Iscariot. The very name Judas has come to be used to refer to anyone who is rotten or a traitor. Judas is the "bad guy" of the Gospels. But isn't there a bit of Judas in each one of us? A part of us that sometimes betrays or abandons Jesus?

No one abandons God in a moment. We fall away gradually. It just sort of happens. A small sin here, a minor mistake there. But we slowly allow evils of various kinds to build barriers between us and God.

When Jesus first called Judas to be one of his disciples, Judas was full of enthusiasm. Judas was probably a Zealot. The Zealots were Jews who advocated an armed revolt against the Romans in order to re-establish Israel as an independent nation with its own king. The Zealots were a little like the religious terrorist groups of today.

Judas had high hopes for Jesus. He probably hoped that Jesus would be the one to lead a revolution. He never intended to separate himself from Jesus. But Jesus didn't "measure up" to Judas' expectations – Jesus didn't lead his people in an armed revolt against Rome.

Judas felt frustrated by Jesus, because Jesus wasn't doing what Judas wanted him to do. His frustration gradually turned him against Jesus, and his devotion to Jesus was replaced by greed, dishonesty and pride. As a result, Judas was unable to see the truth about who Jesus really was.

Judas' barriers were dishonesty, greed and pride. Ours may be different, I'm sure that Judas thought that he had everyone fooled. For the most part he did fool everyone, except Jesus. But even though Jesus saw through Judas' facade and into his soul, he still continued to include Judas in his group of disciples.

Jesus tried to help Judas understand the truth about his mission. Jesus washed Judas' feet on Maundy Thursday along with the rest of the disciples. He was willing to forgive him and cleanse him. But Judas was like a man possessed. Listen to what happened next:

READ JOHN 13:21-30

Try to picture the scene that night. Jesus offers Judas a piece of bread, trying one more time to get Judas to look at him. Can't you see Judas as Jesus hands him the bread -- how he must have been afraid to look Jesus in the eye, and lowered his eyes out of guilt?

Jesus saw Judas a short time later in the Garden of Gethsemane. Judas approached him and greeted him, saying, "Hail, Master!" Then he kissed Jesus. It wasn't until that moment that Judas finally looked into Jesus' eyes and felt his glance. Jesus' eyes were not full of anger, but with pity. He loved Judas.

Judas quickly turned away, but he had seen enough, and the horror of his actions
soon led him to despair. Judas' returned the 30 pieces of silver he ad been paid to betray Je-

sus, and then he hanged himself.

Have we ever acted like Judas? Have we been so blinded by our feelings of guilt or 
resentment that we cannot see the truth about Jesus' love and mercy? Have we put our 
desires ahead of God's desires? Our priorities ahead of God's priorities? If we're honest 
with ourselves, we realize that there is a little bit of Judas in each of us.

PETER

The third person for us to focus on is Peter. The name Peter means, "rock," but he 
was more like an avalanche or rockslide! Peter was always putting his foot in his mouth. He 
spoke without thinking about how his words would sound.

Peter was a very genuine human being. He was really dedicated to Jesus. 
He felt like Jesus' protector. But he had one serious flaw: he was very independent and self-
confident. He trusted in his own efforts to live a godly life. So he made rash statements like, 
"Even if everyone else abandons you, Jesus, I will not." "I would even lay down my life for 
you."

But when his boasting and self-reliance were put to the test in the, courtyard of the 
High Priest's house, Peter crumbled. He denied Jesus three times, just as Jesus had said he 
would, and then the rooster crowed. Jesus turned and looked right at Peter. Peter felt Jesus 
looking into his soul. Then Peter realized what he had done, and he began to weep bitter 
tears.

He had completely denied ever knowing Jesus. He was ashamed of himself, 
afraid to face the other disciples. If it hadn't been for the fact that they had all run away, 
too, he might have never lived it down!

In that single moment in the courtyard of the High Priest's house, when he felt Jesus' 
glance, Peter realized two important things: first, that he had betrayed Jesus, and second, from 
the look of love that he saw in Jesus' eyes, he knew that he was still loved and could be 
forgiven.

He learned that Jesus understands our human weaknesses. He learned that it's 
forgivable to fail, and that Jesus will forgive. If Peter had one saving trait in his personality, it 
was that he was humble enough to admit he was wrong, repent and change.

Peter later experienced the glance of Christ once again. It was after the resurrection, 
when Jesus appeared to the disciples while they were fishing on the Sea of Galilee. They 
brought their boats to shore and ate breakfast with Jesus. Then, the Gospel of John tells us...

READ JOHN 21:15-17

Peter had denied Jesus three times, and so now Jesus asks him three times, "Do you 
love me?" and tells Peter to take care of his sheep. Jesus was telling Peter that he would now 
be the leader of this motley bunch of disciples, because Jesus knew that Peter loved him with 
his whole being. There were other disciples who might have had some other good leadership 
qualities, but Peter had learned not to rely on himself, but on Jesus. And that's what made the 
time. Human perfection.

Peter was a rock with many flaws, but Jesus saw the potential in him. Jesus knew that 
he could make Peter into a fine leader, in spite of his flaws.
Peter reminds me of Michelangelo's famous statue of David, which stands in Florence, Italy. The statue is a masterpiece in marble; it is a celebration of the Renaissance ideal of human perfection.

But there's an interesting story behind the statue. When you look at it, you notice right away that the young man David is slightly bent over, as if he were getting ready to hurl the stone in his sling at Goliath. The reason for this is that Michelangelo carved the statue out of a block of marble that had been ruined by another sculptor a century before. The first artist bungled his sculpture when he took too large a slice out of the side. But one hundred years later, the trained eye of Michelangelo saw the stone and caught the possibility that lay in it. The sliced-out area of the marble block became the curve in the body of David, which gives the appearance of him throwing the stone at Goliath.

It was the same block of marble -- ruined by one man, and redeemed by another. Like a skilled artist, God can take our flawed lives and redeem them. Through the power of the Spirit, God can take our sinful selves and remold them into the likeness of Jesus Christ.

We have looked at three people who experienced the powerful glance of Christ: the rich young man, Judas and Peter. Now Jesus is glancing our way -- what does he see in us? What does he see in our hearts? In our minds? How do we react to his glance?

Do we walk away with a sad heart, unwilling to give up what Jesus asks us to give up? Do we let our own sin and stubbornness blind us to Jesus' love? Or are we willing to admit our faults, and allow Jesus to reshape our lives?

During this Cursillo weekend, dare to look Christ in the eyes. Dare to return his glance. And dare to let Christ turn your life into a masterpiece. Amen.

And now may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep our hearts and our minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

Meditation #4, Saturday Morning

Sample THE PERSON OF CHRIST

10-15 minutes

Purpose and Setting

On to the morning of the second day. The candidates are realizing that God does love them and has redeemed them through Jesus, but they may be unsure how to relate to him. How can almighty God possibly understand how we feel? How can God understand our human weaknesses? The purpose of this meditation is make this vital connection. We want the candidates to relate to Jesus as a person, as our brother, and as God and Man. He is the perfect revelation of the Creators love.

In this sharing we want to express how both divinity and humanity were fully realized in the person of Jesus. But because of the traditional emphasis most of the candidates have experienced on his being the divine Son of God, it is necessary for us to put a greater stress on Christ's humanity here. Because he was also fully man, he understands and shares our struggles.

This may introduce a whole new way of perceiving Jesus for many.

The presenter of this meditation may express this picture of Jesus drawing on whatever events from the Gospels that appeal to him or her. Many are mentioned here. Use them and/or others as you fashion this meditation as your own.

I was an accounting major in college. But I also took lots of upper level mathematics courses. One of the reasons I bailed out of math is that at the upper levels, it just gets weird. We live in a world of three-dimensional space. Mathematicians try to do problems in what they call "N" space or N dimensions. The apostle's creed is a summary of the faith, which we
profs. In one of Luther's explanations, he explained that Jesus is 100% God and 100% human at the same time.

To talk of him as God is to speak the truth --- but only a part of it.  
To talk of him as a human, is to speak the truth - but only a part of it.  
We will never know everything about Jesus, but we can still know Jesus.

1. Jesus is God
   • According to John, He was there long before the earth was created.  
   • He is part of the incredible relational triune image of God called the Trinity  
   • He is God who became flesh--- He became a complete human.

2. Jesus is also human
   • He was subject to all the feelings, pains, temptations, emotions, sicknesses that we experience.  
   • He was born.  He grew up in Nazareth.  He played with kids there.  He played games  
     (probably pretty good at Bible trivia.)  He had brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Jude  
     (Judas)  He had sisters.  He worked with Joseph.  
   • When he went back home to teach people saw him as Joe and Mary's boy.  
   • He studied.  
   • He went to parties - the wedding at Cana is an example.  
   • He loved and cared.  
   • He got tired and thirsty --- he often went into the mountains to rest; he went a well in  
     Samaria in the middle of a hot day to get a drink.  
   • He was disappointed - he expressed it to his best friends when he painfully asked  
     them - don't you get it yet?  
   • He got angry - and focused his anger to make changes in a broken system.  
   • He knew pain --- the lashes that weakened him; the nails in his hands  
   • He loved people and even seemed to have favorites --- John is mentioned as favorite ...  
     so is Mary, Martha and Lazarus  
   • He asked for help from his disciples when he went to the garden of Gethsemane.  
   • He was empathetic to the woman caught in adultery  
   • He bled, He died  
   • He loved children. We could go on and on.

3. He is both God and human
   a. He died for our sins and rose from the dead.  
   b. But we also speak of Jesus as being our Shepherd and our guide.  We can consult him  
      on any issue, any challenge, and any place where we lack knowledge and he is  
      completely trustworthy.  
   c. He must be the most competent, best informed, most intelligent person who has ever  
      lived.  
   d. Think about it - the Bible tells us that He made everything in reality and continues to  
      hold it together.  Today we think people are smart because they make computer chips  
      and light bulbs from "stuff that is already present. Well, Jesus made the "stuff."

I love the way that Dallas Willard puts it: **At the literally mundane level, Jesus knew how to  
transform the molecular structure of water to make it wine. The knowledge also allowed him to  
take a few pieces of bread and some little fish and feed thousands of people ... He knew how  
to transform the tissues of the human body from sickness to health and from death to life. He**
knew how to suspend gravity, interrupt weather patterns, and eliminate unfruitful trees without an ax or a saw. He only needed a word. Surely, he must be amused at what Nobel prizes are awarded for today.

One of the greatest testimonies to his intelligence is surely that he knew how to enter physical death, actually to die, and then live beyond death. He seized death by the throat and defeated it.

He is not just nice, he is brilliant. He is the smartest man who ever lived. Now he is supervising the entire course of world history while simultaneously preparing the rest of the universe for our future role in it. He always has the best information on everything and certainly also on the things that matter the most in human life. (The Divine Conspiracy)

This past Wednesday, I had the honor of officiating at the graveside service of brother of a friend from LOD, who by all accounts died suddenly and prematurely—at the age of 54... way too young. We all cried at the loss. Yet... we learn in John, that when his close friend Lazarus died, He cried.

Paul writes in Philippians 2:8-11 “And in human form he obediently humbled himself even further by dying a criminal's death on a cross. [9] Because of this, God raised him up to the heights of heaven and gave him a name that is above every other name, [10] so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, [I] and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

That's our brother Jesus. He's one of us and he knows us. He can relate. He's a real person, that Son of God.

Alternative THE PERSON OF CHRIST

When in 1977, the Psychologist C. Scott Peck finished the manuscript of what was to become a modern classic entitled, "THE ROAD LESS TRAVELED", he decided to give himself a special vacation—not only from his practice, but even from his ordinary routine with family and friends. Though he wasn't a Christian or even a Church-goer at the time, he decided to go on a MONASTIC RETREAT. While he was there, it was suggested that he read the Gospels. After hemming and hawing a bit, he decided to go along with that request.

What happened as a result changed the entire course of his life. HE MET JESUS. He had thought that he knew all about Jesus. He had listened to many people talk about Jesus; he had read all about Christianity; he had a fixed conception of who Jesus was.....until he read the Gospels chapter after chapter, for himself.

He discovered that Jesus was far more real than he had ever expected. This was a personality so unique and surprising—and yet so fully integrated—that no one could have possibly made this up! The way Jesus would get so disappointed with the 12, over and over again, as it were, pleading with them: "Don't you get it? What more do I have to do?" Jesus words and actions shocked Peck! Yet he also fell in love with Him, and is devoting the rest of his life to helping others see that the Jesus they think they know might not be the real Jesus at all!
One of the Bible's names for Jesus is **STUMBLING BLOCK**. His own people stumbled on Him from both directions. They were looking for one sent by God, but Jesus didn't fit the bill. He was TOO GREAT for them. He would say things like, "I and the Father are One....He who has seen me has seen the Father also." and they choked up. He was at the same time TOO LOWLY for them...a Carpenter's Son from the raw hills of Galilee...a friend of fisherman, publicans and prostitutes!

If only he had been from a wealthy family, if he had gone to the right finishing schools and prestigious universities! But Jesus not only was born in a barn, he built barns! His hands were calloused with work...building tables, and chairs, houses and yokes. He didn't hesitate to fall to his knees to wash his disciples' dusty feet.

When Jesus spoke, he never tried to impress anyone with big words. He avoided all the attributes of greatness. When he did ride into Jerusalem in triumph, he did it on a donkey, not a war horse surrounded by secret service agents! He never made a fuss about himself, so why should anyone else?

And yet, strangely, whenever Jesus spoke, you had to stop and listen! There was an authority in His voice than no amount of titles and degrees could have conferred. **I think the most common word in Mark's Gospel is ASTONISHED!** He continually surprised people. That is probably the mark of someone who has finally met Jesus--he permanently astonishes them!

Here He is--TOTALLY LIKE US and yet also TOTALLY UNLIKE US! He is SON of GOD, but also SON of MAN.

He gets **HUNGRY** and **THIRSTY**, and knows what it is to be **BONE TIRED**. He loved to **LAUGH**, yet also looked to friends to share his times of **GRIEF**! As a matter of fact, **He was more a human being**, content to live as God's creation, than we are!

This is what the Bible means when it calls Christ the **Second Adam**. We look to Him not only to see who God is, but to see who we are meant to be!

Jesus was able to enter into and enjoy His Father's creation more than any of us! He could see more grace in sunsets, birds and flowers than anyone else! He was content with the limitations of being a creature, trusting God for every breathe of air, for companionship, food and clothing. He needed no mask; he was free to be himself--a First Century male Jew living in a third-rate country in Rome's Empire!

Think about it! **While sinners then as now strut across the world's stage trying to act like God, Jesus, who is God, has time to talk to widows and little children without any fuss at all.**

When we read about the Lord Jesus Christ in the Scriptures, the things He did and said, we tend to just shrug our shoulders and say, "THAT'S GREAT FOR HIM! He was God; but you can't expect anything like that of me." But we are wrong. Jesus had no advantage which we do not have right now.

Jesus said, "The Father who lives in me, He does the work." "Everything I do he does."
"Everything I am, He is."
"Everything I say He says through me."

You and I claim to be Christians. BUT WHAT AM I SAYING WHEN I DECLARE: 'I AM A CHRISTIAN'? Really, what I am saying is this: "Christ who died to REDEEM me, and rose again to RELEASE me, NOW DWELLS IN ME!"

"As the Father once dwelt in Jesus and empowered Him, so the Spirit of Jesus Christ now lives here and empowers me!"

Our experience of faith is like Jesus. Our experience of temptation will be like His also. Satan tried his best to get Jesus to claim all the rights of deity, to use his own powers and abilities, instead of simply trusting the Father, who knew what was best for Jesus.

In the same way we are continually tempted like the first Adam and Eve to stop trusting that God knows what is best for us, to succumb to the demonic deception that we can be our own little gods and goddesses, making up our own rules, planning our own way to significance and happiness.

Today many fear to acknowledge there is any "god." They have gone through life starved for attention and significance. They foolishly see God as competition: "The greater one makes God the smaller we become—until finally we lose our identities totally, and we feel like a bunch of worms!" Paradoxically, history has shown just the opposite of that statement to be true: The more God is banished from the center of life, the more forlorn and worthless humans have become—regarded now as accidental products of meaningless evolutionary forces. No wonder the whole history of the 20th Century was one of vicious dictators purifying races like cattle, with the "good life" conceived in terms things acquired and sensual moments exploited. While false "idols" (including money, pride and lust) are indeed cruel "gods," demanding total worship and finally leaving us spent and hopeless, no one ever experienced this with Jesus! In fact it is precisely those beaten down by life, full of anxieties, guilt, and inferiority who lift up their heads—and take a new lease on life—when they come in touch with Jesus of Nazareth. Why? Simply because all of a sudden they know: *Here is one who treats me as his brother. He sees it all; He knows I'm a hopeless case, a bundle of nerves, a burden to others, an erring child, but nevertheless a child and nothing less than the child of the Father. Here is the One who gave His life to bring me back to the Father's house!* Who ever in their wildest dreams devised a conception of human nobility that can equal the dignity which any man or woman acquires in the eyes of their brother Jesus?

This day, like every day, you will hear many voices. You may hear a voice telling you that you don't need all this. You are wise and sufficient in yourself. Or you may hear voices telling you that you don't measure up, you never did measure up, and you never will! "You fell down—why bother to get up? You know you have blown it, that's who you are, and that's who you are stuck being! That's your identity—a loser!" Don't believe those lying voices. They are, Jesus says (John 8:44) the lying voice of the devil, the father of lies. When he lies, he speaks his native language, says Jesus. He is a murderer out to steal, and kill, and destroy!

But I'm praying that you may also hear another voice, that of the Holy Spirit of Jesus, with a different aroma: *Are you stuck again in that old stuff? Do you want to be free? Would you like to experience my deliverance? My power? My plans? Well then take hold of my hand and I'll help you up. Take my love...take my strength...my life itself--we are a team!*
Meditation #5, Sunday Morning Mañanitas’

CHRIST’S MESSAGE TO THE CURSILLISTAS

10-15 minutes

Purpose and Setting

This meditation is for the morning of the last day. It is brief and to the point. It returns to some of the basic questions raised or implied on Thursday evening. Why did you come? For what purpose are you here? and so on. We asked the candidates, as best they could, to lay their cares and responsibilities aside for these valuable three days. On this last day, however, the circle of care and concern will be expanded to include the world and environments from which they have come. The questions they may be asking themselves now might be different. What expectations do I have about how this will effect my life? What does God ask of me? Where can I find the support and strength to carry on? These are questions which will be addressed this day. This sharing anticipates some of these concerns, and ushers in the third grace-filled day of the weekend.

The Meditation

Good morning, brothers/sisters/children in Christ. It is a new day God has given us. Let us relish every moment of it. I ask you to listen now, briefly, as our Savior, Lord, and brother Jesus Christ speaks to all of us, and especially our newest Cursillistas...

[Because this message will always be completely unique, guided as it is by each weekend’s special Scripture theme, as well as the work Jesus is doing in the lives of your participants, any sample talk we gave you here would probably only get in the way of what the Holy Spirit wants to say.]

Rollo #2, Saturday Morning

THE NATURE OF GOD’S GRACE OUTLINE

(God's Habit of Loving Us in Christ)

35-45 minutes

Situation and Objective

This is the second Rollo on the first day. Having been challenged to consider their own IDEAL, and having discussed this dimension at their tables, the candidates are now introduced to God's Ideal: Jesus Christ, and the life of Grace he offers us. If the first talk was received well, this spiritual talk will be welcomed like water in a dry sponge. It will set the tone for the weekend. Grace will be the benchmark through which we look at our relationship to God, and a cornerstone on which to build the talk.

Remember, this is the first Grace talk. Stick to the basics here - the extent of God's love and grace will unfold as the weekend progresses. Avoid being systematic, or using jargon that requires a lot of explanation. You may touch on the means of grace, but remember that this will be covered more extensively on Saturday morning. To appreciate God's Grace, you may want to contrast it with the sin of humanity, but remember again that the Obstacles talk will go into this in some detail. In other words, it is best to keep the whole weekend in mind (this is the 2nd part of a 15 part Rollo) as you prepare this talk. Keep the presentation positive, warm and as basic as possible, while sharing personally of your own life of grace. This is a great opportunity to clearly portray the relationship that God has chosen to establish with us in Christ.

Grace Rollo Outline

I. Introduction

This talk is about another Ideal, God's Ideal, which can also be ours as well. Grace is a won-
derful word, but it is not one we use every day, except possibly when someone suggests we give thanks for a meal. We do hear it a great deal more in church ("The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God.....", etc.) Although the word is used often in the Bible, you won't find a concise definition of it there. But you will find it described – everywhere, from the Gospel of John 1 (where Jesus is referred to as being full of grace and truth, and that we all from his fullness have received grace upon grace, to the Letter of John 4:9, where God's Ideal is spelled out this way: "In this the love of God was made known among us, that God sent His only Son into the world, so that we may have life in him."

Let's explore together, God's Ideal, GRACE.

II. GRACE - God loves us, always has, always will.

A. History reveals it - God is the Initiator, God keeps promises

1) Creation/Fall - "Adam, where are you?"

2) Abraham's call and covenant

3) The Prophets - calling God's people back to God's mercy

4) The Incarnation - Jesus models God's gracious invitation, and confronts humanity at its worst ("Father, forgive them")

B. The Scriptures proclaim it

1) Grace in the Old Testament (Some possible examples)
   - God's Covenant(s) with His people
   - Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph
   - God's Deliverance/ The Exodus
   - The story of Hosea and Gomer
   - God, Jonah and the people of Nineveh
   - The story of Daniel
   - The trials and tribulations of David - Psalm 51
   - Preservation of the Remnant of Israel
   - The promise of the Messiah

2) Grace in the New Testament (Some possible examples)
   - The Woman of Samaria (John 4: 7-26)
   - The transformation of Zacchaeus (Luke 19: 1-10)
   - The parable of the Generous Householder (Matthew 20:1-16)
   - Jesus healing/forgiving the Paralytic (Matthew 9)
   - Raising of the son of the Widow of Nain (Luke 7: 11-17)
   - The Lost Sheep, Coin, Son (Luke 15: 7ff)
   - Jesus and Bartimaeus (Mark 10: 46-52)
   - The account of Pentecost (Acts 2)
   - The Philippian Jailer (Acts 16: 25-34)
III. GRACE - What It Is: God's gift - An Invitation to a New Relationship (John 3:16)

A. Definition - The undeserved love and favor of God
   - free and unearned (Ephesians 2: 8-9; Romans 5: 6-8)

B. Grace is supernatural - unconditional (Isaiah 30:15-18)
   - habitual (Romans 8: 35-39)
   - unending (John 11:16)

C. Grace is sacrificial - priceless (Matthew 13: 44-46)
   "God's Riches At Christ's Expense"

IV. Grace - What It Does: Imparts New Life

A. Awakens faith within us (Acts 16: 31-34)

B. Imparts forgiveness (Isaiah 1:18; Romans 8:1-4)

C. Gives us a new status (Galatians 4:4)

D. Enables us to love (Ephesians 2:10; I John 4:9)

E. Gives us hope - God in Christ has written the final chapter (I Peter 1: 3-4)

V. Conclusion - God loves you, and so do I!

Sample GRACE Rollo

My name is ____________. The title of my Rollo is "Grace". I attended Lutheran Cur-sillo No. ____, in the spring of _______. My wife and I worship at _____________________.

Please pray with me: Dear Heavenly Father, we are so grateful for this day, another day of Your grace and mercy and love in Jesus Christ our Savior. May this Rollo be a blessing to those who hear it this day, to Your glory. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

In the previous Rollo on Ideals, given by ______, you heard him state that every one of us has an ideal, an ideal that motivates us in our life. A good way, he said, to discover what your ideal is, is to ask yourself three questions: "On what do I spend my time? On what do I spend my money? And, About what do I think the most?" He spoke in general terms of the fact that each one of us has an ideal, and that the authentic ideal is the one that gives purpose and meaning to life. I'd like to talk to you for a few minutes this morning about the highest of all ide-als: GRACE. As we continue on this Cursillo weekend, we want to establish that as the basis, the foundation, for our relationship with our Heavenly Father. GRACE, the grace of God in Je-sus Christ, is the cornerstone on which we build our life.

A few years ago there was a commercial (I can't remember for what, possibly 7-UP),
that said something like, "Always has, always will," or "Never has, never will", one of the two. I have the great good news to share with you, news that you already know but which is so important, namely, "God loves you and me -- always has, always will." And I'd like to touch briefly on why He would love us.

Before I do that, let's look at the meaning of the word, "Grace." This word is used with a great variety of meanings. I found a few articles that use the word in different ways. The first is an article about Audrey Hepburn after her death in 1993. Just a sentence from this article: "...the world found a grace in her that it yearned for." You see how the word was used here.

The next is an article by Miss Manners entitled, "Checking out with grace," about being polite in the checkout line in the grocery store.

Next is a brief article about super-model Christy Turlington, who is referred to by the title as the "Face of Grace." Another usage of the word.

The Family Circus cartoon is closer to our usage of the word, as the little girl is singing, "Amazing grace! ...How sweet the sound! ...That saved a witch like me." More on this usage of the word grace later. In another, Dolly asks, "What did Grace do that's so amazing?"

"Grace in Motion" is the title of an article about ballet dancers.

"Looking for Grace under Pressure" tells about the author's visit to England, where he tells about the pressure involved in talking to royalty, and if he ever met a duke the proper address would be, "Your grace," rather than, "Hi, Duke, how you doing?"

Another use of the word is in the Hagar the Horrible comic strip, where Hagar is saying to his friend, "The greatest thing a man can have is grace under pressure." Whereupon Helga demands to know, "Who's Grace?"

There was an article about a Salvation Army dinner, which says, "Celebrities to grace dinner for charity."

Finally, from a birthday card featuring Snoopy, the dog, where Snoopy says, "High-class people like you deserve to be honored with style and grace on their birthday." The word means different things to different people, doesn't it?

To help us understand what GRACE is we want to remember that God's ideal is our ideal: God's love for us in Christ. Grace is that kindness God shows us in Christ, that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. That's what we will be talking about. Maybe we can use the three "R's" to help us understand God's grace a little better. You've heard of the three "R's", haven't you? -- Rough, Ready, and Rambunctious? Or, Right, 'rong and Rueful? Or, Reading, 'riting, and Recess? Well, how about The Three R's of God's Grace: Revelation, Rudiments (basic elements or fundamentals), and Results.

I. The REVELATION of God's Grace.

A. We see God's grace revealed in picture (picture-language) and in experience.

1. The noted author G. K. Chesterton once said, about learning and remembering,
"Grow up, but keep your childishness. Forget the pendant’s (teacher's) creeds and strictures, and don't believe in anything that can't be told in pictures." That may be a rather strong statement, but it's true that a picture is worth a thousand words.

2. The ancient Hebrews talked in picture language. You see that all through the Old Testament, using language that evoked pictures. For example, in the Bethel Series the following illustration is used to show the difference between our way of thinking (the Greek way) over against the Hebrew way of thinking. In our words, we would say a juvenile delinquent is often the result of bad parental influence. Okay. The Hebrew would put it something like this: "If the mother eats garlic and the father eats onion, the child will not grow up smelling of sweet perfume." Catch the picture?

3. The grace of God is revealed to us in the Scriptures in pictures, in the mighty acts of God, and in experiences.

a. For example, in the Old Testament, in Ezekiel 16 there is a powerful picture of Israel in symbolic words, that paint a picture of Israel's sin and God's loving kindness. Israel is pictured as an unwanted child of a Hittite and Amorite liaison, the umbilical cord not cut, not washed after being born, and put out to die. But Israel grew up to be a beautiful maiden, God claimed her, loved her, bestowed upon him clothing and jewelry made of silver and gold. But she prostituted herself in spite of all this. Yet God still loved her, and in the last verse He says, "I forgive you for all that you have done." What a picture of God's chosen people and their unfaithfulness and His grace!

b. In the New Testament there are numerous pictures that reveal God's grace, God's undeserved kindness:
   (1) You all know the story of the thief on the cross (Luke 23), and Jesus' assurance to him of paradise. What a picture to illustrate the "sheer grace" of God.
   (2) Or the account of the woman caught in adultery (John 8) -- "Let him who is without sin cast the first stone!" "I do not condemn you, go and sin no more. Pure grace!
   (3) Another picture is Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan Woman at Jacob's Well, in John 4. Jesus knew all about him adulterous background, yet accepted him and led him to trust in Him as the Messiah. That whole chapter is a vivid picture of God's grace in action in Jesus Christ.

4. What have you gathered so far about Grace? What vibes do you get from hearing the word "grace"? Several things come to my mind:

a. Grace is: Undeserved, unmerited, unearned. In other words, Grace is FREE. Jesus Christ paid the price.

b. Grace is: A Gift of Love, a gift of self given without any merit on our part, a gift that gives eternal life in the life to come, and that gives us new life right here and now.

c. Grace brings out a deep response in the one who receives it, especially when the receiver remembers what we deserve: "The wages of sin is death," and then remembers what we have received: "The gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord."
B. There is several definitions of Grace I'd like to share:

1. The undeserved love and favor of God for us! "Thy loving-kindness..." 2. It is the sharing of God's love and God's life with us through Christ. 3. It is being loved by God, and in love with God through Christ. 4. It is God's Riches At Christ's Expense.

II. The RUDIMENTS (foundation, fundamentals) of God's grace.

A. Think of the importance and uniqueness of it!

   1. Grace is the very nature of God according to the Scriptures.
      a. We always talk about man seeking God. We hear about people are seeking God. But that is completely OPPOSITE to what the Scriptures have to say!
         (1) In the Garden (Gen. 3), God came to Adam after the Fall and sought him, saying, "Adam! Where are you?" God sought him!
         (2) Think of Abraham. Abram didn't seek God, but God called him out of Ur of the Chaldees, and made him the father of a great nation. God sought him!
         (3) Or how about the Christmas story? God SENT His Son into this world. We didn't seek Him. He sought us!
         (4) The Good Shepherd who sought the lost sheep and the Forgiving Father running out to meet his son (Prodigal Son story) are two times where God reached out, and didn't wait. He sought us!
         (5) The epitome of grace is, of course, the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. He sought us!

   b. According to Jesus in Matthew 13, the Kingdom of heaven is a relationship between God and man that we would "sell all to have." That relationship, that treasure, is GRACE - God's love for us showered freely upon us, from the cross, and from the open tomb! Jesus in giving the Lord's Supper speaks of His body, broken for us, and His blood, shed for us. Grace is that treasure, that pearl of great price --you can't sell your soul for it! Christ gave Himself for YOU and Me, on the cross! That treasure is YOURS! It's FREE!

   c. In my own life I have found that the heart and center of all I do and say is God's grace in Jesus Christ. I was raised in a Christian home; in fact my father was a Lutheran Pastor as was his father. I attended Sunday School, confirmation classes, Walther League, Concordia Jr. College in St. Paul, and Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. I studied homiletics, dogmatics, exegesis, church history, eschatology, hermeneutics, you name it! But I have found that nothing is more important, nothing is more meaningful than the simple truth found in that child's hymn learned at my mother's knee: "Jesus loves me! This I know!", or the first Bible verse I learned, "God so loved the world..." God loves ME - a sinner!

Over the past 46 years I have delivered hundreds of sermons, given thousands of Bible Studies, lessons and talks, but in all of it there is only ONE message: the Good News of God's grace in Christ. God loves you! Christ died for you! - And rose again, for you! There's no other message as important as that one.

In all the counseling I have done, the only REAL assurance I can give anyone is that "God loves you."
It is God's love, God's grace in Jesus Christ that has sustained me over the years, through thick and through thin, as it has each of you and many thousands and millions before us.

B. God's grace is not only absolutely important and totally unique, but it is also supernatural.
   1. This gift comes from God. It is a gift of His grace, His undeserved kindness. We can't respond to Him, we can't begin to live like Him until God's love is IN our heart, actually dwelling within us.
   2. The way the world around us loves others is to love the lovely, to love those who "deserve" it, as long as that love is returned, is paid back.
   3. God's love is totally different! God's love is for the Unlovely, the Undeserving, and lasts forever. God's love is unconditional, not in any way based on what we deserve.

C. God's grace is within us; it becomes part of our life. It isn't something you can touch or see or taste, but what a difference it makes in life! Paul said, "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Ga12:20). Christ dwells in us by faith.

D. God's grace is permanent, unconditional, never withdrawn, always there!
   1. Jesus said, "Lo, I am with you always!"
   2. Paul said, "I am persuaded that neither death nor life ... nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from God's love in Christ Jesus our Savior."
   3. Again, Jesus said in John 14:23, "If a man loves me, My Father and I will come and make our home with him."
   4. God's love and grace are the greatest powers in the world: greater than sin, death, the devil, doubt, greater than anything else in all creation!

III. Let's look now at the RESULTS of God's grace:

A. As a result of God's grace in Christ, you and I are adopted as God's child.

B. We are adopted into His family as his sons, with all the rights and privileges and inheritance as a son. God CHOSE us to be His own, through grace.
   1. In 2 Peter 2, Peter calls the believers a "holly nation, a distinctive people."

C. God's grace in Jesus Christ makes you and me SAINTS. I don't know what you may picture a saint to be, but it definitely is not a person walking around all day long with his hands folded, mumbling prayers, and living in poverty. A SAINT is not someone who never smiles and hates this life. Very simply put, a SAINT is a sinner, a FORGIVEN sinner. As a result of God's grace in Christ, we can be the most joy-filled, or more correctly peace-filled, people who ever live, because we have that free gift, freely and uncondi-
tionally given.

D. Finally, the result of God's grace in my life is it gives me the power to love: the power to love God and endeavor to do what pleases Him, and the power to love others in return. It is God's grace that empowers us to love others in return. You will be hearing more about that in Rollos to come.

CONCLUSION: As we look at the three R’s of God's grace, the REVELATION of God's grace, the RUDIMENTS (fundamentals or foundation) of God's grace, and the RESULTS of God's grace, we see that the highest of all ideals, one that is purely a gift and not one that we can attain on our own, is GRACE. As we continue on this Cursillo weekend, we want to establish that as the basis, the foundation, for our relationship with our Heavenly Father. GRACE, the grace of God in Jesus Christ, is the cornerstone on which we build our life.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Alternative GRACE Rollo

Hello. I sat where you are sitting now with my brothers in Cursillo #_____. I’m a ________ serving ...

This morning ________________ got us off to a great start for this Cursillo by directing us to focus on our IDEAL. I want to follow that up by presenting a picture of God’s Ideal—GRACE. “God is love…” I John 4:8. Grace is really what life is all about. While I am excited to give this talk, I also am aware that there is no way I could give the last word on this subject. I feel like John did when in writing his Gospel he says that if the whole sky were parchment there would not be enough room to write what could be shared. So permit me to just bring some tidbits of a subject we will keep coming back to all during this Cursillo.

• THE WHOLE BIBLE, every page, is a REVELATION of God’s GRACE.
• God’s creation of the world and our first father and mother, Adam and Eve—all grace.
• Almost immediately, then and now, we—with help from the ENEMY—mess things up. But God still loves and provides for them and us—that’s grace. Indeed, we know from Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians that God knew before He created the world that we were going to sin:

“He chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. He destined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ.”
Ephesians 1:4-5 (RSV)

I can’t comprehend this Grace.
• Rescuing Noah—all grace.
• The calling of Abraham—all grace.
• The Exodus out of Egypt—all grace.
• Guiding and protecting the Israelites in the Wilderness for 40 years—all grace.

And we could go on and on, reading page after page of the sweet story of Ruth, the horrors of the times of the Judges, the Kings, the Prophets….repeated disobedience and judgment, and yet what comes through most clearly is the grace of God.

“In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength… the Lord
"Longs to be gracious to you; he rises to show you compassion..."  
Isaiah 30:15-18 (NIV)

"Return, faithless Israel,' declares the Lord, 'I will frown on you no longer, for I am merciful,' declares the Lord, 'I will not be angry forever. Only acknowledge your guilt-- ...declares the Lord. “  
Jeremiah 3:12-13 (NIV)

How gracious God is. Grace is who God is. It is his CHARACTER, his ESSENCE, his NATURE—the very HEART OF HIS BEING. We bring our messes, our rebellion, our weakness to the table, and God exchanges it with His Grace.

Martin Luther said, “God takes our sin, guilt, remorse, pride, and all the rest—and gives us grace, mercy, peace, cleanliness...as the divine exchange.”

This brings me to my main point. You have probably heard some acronym for Grace... a popular one is GOD’S RICHES AT CHRIST’S EXPENSE. I’d like to share my favorite acronym: GOD’S RIGHTEOUSNESS AND CORRESPONDING ENABLEMENT.

By Grace, God not only creates you, He restores you and empowers you to live as you were created to be. This is my main thesis today to presenting what Grace is, and I have three sub points. Please write these down.

GRACE IS A...

I. PRESENCE
Grace has a Face. This comes to a climax with the birth of Jesus. John expresses it this way.

“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”  
John 1:14 (NIV)

Theologians have come up with many definitions of GRACE. Interestingly enough, Jesus never once used the word grace. Rather, he taught it and he lived it. Grace has a Face. Grace is the Presence of Jesus.

[Luke 7:11-17] Imagine for a moment that we’re standing at the gate of Nain, through which a casket is being carried with the corpse of a young man, the only son of his mother, and she a widow. A great crowd follows in observance of the Jewish custom of “attending the dead all the way to the grave.” Heads are bowed and faces reveal deep sorrow for the bereaved. Bitterly the mother weeps as she walks behind the casket, for he, her only son, had been her only support.

Then suddenly the mourners are interrupted by a man who hurries forward, “here let me deal with the dead, I can bring him back to life.” Instantly the procession halts and with mystified faces gaze upon the speaker as he elbows his way through the crowd.

“All this man needs is education,” explains the man while boldly approaching the casket. And from his books of science and philosophy he attempts to teach the young man in the coffin. But in vain he watches for the flush of life to return; there is no response. Education has failed.

Another man approaches the scene, confidently proclaiming that he can bring the young man back to life, and so he begins, “Now young man, make up your mind that you...
are going to live. Exert your will, and choose to live – the choice is yours. You can get up if you only will". But there is no response as the previously confident man looks upon the lifeless face of the young man. Will-power has failed.

Then another man came toward the crowd, calmly and with a sense of peace about him. For a few moments no one moves. Then the man speaks, “My friends, do you not know that what this man needs is religion? Through the knowledge of the Torah he will be revivied”. And he sat down by the coffin's side.

Taking a scroll from under his arm he declares, “Now I will reveal to the young man the precepts of the law, for if he will keep them faithfully he will live again”. “But” inquires one of the bystanders, “how can a corpse observe the laws since he cannot even hear your words? Until he is first alive, all the Jewish precepts will avail nothing”. Sorrowfully the rabbi walks away, religion has failed.

Then from the crowd steps the figure of One who walks with perfect confidence and composure to a scene of certain failure. Then he went over and touched the coffin. The pallbearers stopped. He said, “Young man, I tell you: Get up.” Luke 7:14 (MsgB)

Eagerly the people draw close. Who is this? What power is there behind his simple words? But then their questions are suddenly answered. The eyelids quiver, the flush returns to the cheek; the heart throbs once more, and the young man rises to his feet.

What happened? Jesus imparted life. The man was dead and it was life that he needed. This is the one great essential. No MIGHT or HUMAN WILL-POWER can do that. No HUMAN AUTHORITY, no EDUCATION or even RELIGION, however sincere it may be, can make that grade. Nothing else is equal to the task of restoring life. Where do you need OVERCOMING GRACE in your LIFE situation? Only God's grace brings back to life!

When we read the Gospels, we are getting a non-stop picture of Grace. Everything Jesus says, everything He does, reveals the grace of God. So often when people hear of grace and forgiveness, they think of it as sort of a contract. That’s just what the divine being does… he passes out forgiveness. But that’s a misunderstanding. This isn’t a cold contract—this is a warm relationship. Grace is a person. Grace is a PRESENCE.

"I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; And I will not remember your sins.” Isaiah 43:25 (NKJV)

Forgiveness always costs someone. That brings me to my second point….GRACE IS A..

II. PAID FOR GIFT…Gratis, Gratuitous, scot-free. One of the great statements of grace is….

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God--not by works, so that no one can boast.” Ephes. 2:8-9 (NIV)

This week our church welcomed a new member. We’ve been counting him as one of us, and praying for him for months, but Sunday was his second day out of prison. Tuesday he joined my home group. Since we are getting to the end of Lent, I asked everyone to share what they were thankful for about Jesus. When it was his turn, he just broke into tears as he
thanked Jesus for dying on the cross for him. He was raised in a Mormon family, and he knew all about religion, but nothing about relationship... and the presence of Jesus. He is one of those people who never has gotten over the glory of the cross.

Is grace free? Yes, but only because it has been paid for. This was the whole point of the movie THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST. How many of you men have been able to see it? Not a film easy to watch. Hollywood didn’t like it. But unless we understand to the depths of our souls what Christ suffered, we will never comprehend:
   a. The sinfulness of our sin
   b. The depth of God’s grace and love for us
   c. The cost of forgiveness
   d. The way His Kingdom works

Is grace free? Yes, but only because it has been paid for in blood. Are you and I totally forgiven and set free from sin? Are we able to enjoy these marvelous bodies God has entrusted us and use them to bless those around us? Yes, but only when we live by faith in thanksgiving to the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Have you ever known someone who...
   · ...thought his or her sin wasn't that serious? Send them back to the cross.
   · ...didn't think God could forgive them? Send them back to the cross.
   · ...thought God was unjust, or cruel? Send them back to the cross.

To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. “He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.” When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. 1 Peter 2:21-24 (NIV)

Forgiveness is a PAID FOR GIFT. Forgiveness always costs. That’s why there is so little forgiveness in our homes, in our world. We HOLD GRUDGES, we WRITE PEOPLE OFF, we WALK IN RESENTMENT.

But Christ’s cross isn’t simply a day in history 2,000 years ago. It’s a living reality. It’s a call to each of us to engage in KINGDOM LIVING. That means we experience grace by being graceful... WE ARE TO FORGIVE AS WE HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN, and that will cost us.

If I forgive you for wounding me, I need to bear those wounds, feel the pain, and not try to retaliate or get even. I need to say, in effect, “What you did really, really, really hurt me. It was wrong. But I love you so much, and I value our relationship and I don’t want to lose it. So I will pay the emotional price they caused me. I renounce the enemy’s desire for me to develop a bitter attitude toward you for what you did to hurt me. I choose to show kindness, a tender heart and a forgiving spirit toward you.”

And that brings us to my last point about Grace. GRACE IS A...

III. POWER
We are talking about Grace this morning, because everyone of us in this room needs grace to achieve our ideal. Anybody in this room have an easy life free of problems? Or is your life, like mine, filled with very real challenges? Problems dealing with difficult people and
seemingly impossible situations? On Tuesday night we had more tears when a woman in our home group shared about her pain watching her best friend, a young wife & mother, die of cancer last week. Life isn’t easy for her right now.

My life isn’t easy either. Right now my health is good, and I’m thankful as I enjoy this incredibility designed body God gave you and me. But being the Pastor God called me to be seems often out of my reach. I labor and labor but at times, even when I see real fruit, I feel like a failure. I’m not yet the Husband I want to be. I love my wonderful wife but our marriage isn’t easy. We each brought different baggage into our relationship, and we have very different personalities and points of view. Disagreements are inevitable. Often I blow it. I make the mistake of trying to be right, instead of trying to make things right. We argue loudly about petty things, and hurt each other’s feeling needlessly. I’m frequently ashamed of myself. Sometimes I honestly feel like God keeps giving me missions impossible to complete.

But the Good News is that God gives us OVERCOMING GRACE to accomplish the impossible! This morning I’m thinking of an Old Testament figure who had a mammoth task set before him and decided to give up and call it quits.

We have heard a lot recently about the wrong war, at the wrong time in the wrong place. Well, this man was convinced he was the wrong person, for the wrong job at the wrong time, PLUS he had the wrong name.

His name was Zerubbabel. Zeru means “born,” and Babel refers to “Babylon.” His name was “born in Babylon,” and Babylon represented spiritual bondage and defeat. In Hebrew the meaning of your name determined your destiny, so Zerubbabel’s name spelled out defeat from the very beginning. He felt destined to be defeated in whatever task he set his hand upon to accomplish.

I want to turn to Zechariah 4. Before I read it, I want to set up the historical context of this passage. This was the time when the Jews were returning from the Babylonian exile. Jerusalem lay in ruins. The protecting walls were rubble, houses ruins. For 70 years it had collected dust.

At first, everyone worked hard. One of the first things they did lay the foundation for the Temple. But the enthusiasm didn’t last. Everything looked too hopeless. Enemies attacked them because the Wall was down. People put all their resources into their own homes. The oldest among them, who could remember how beautiful and large Solomon’s Temple had been, cried when they saw the puny foundations of this sorry replacement.

Over and over again, God intervened on their behalf. He sent Nehemiah to help rebuild the walls. He sent Ezra the prophet to wake them up. And finally, God gave another prophet, Zechariah, some of the most amazing and powerful visions in the Bible. Only the visions of John in Revelation can compare.

Now let us read Zechariah 4:1-7: 1 Now the angel who talked with me came back and wakened me, as a man who is wakened out of his sleep. 2 And he said to me, “What do you see?” So I said, “I am looking, and there is a lamp stand of solid gold with a bowl on top of it, and on the stand seven lamps with seven pipes to the seven lamps. 3 Two olive trees are by it, one at the right of the bowl and the other at its left.” 4 So I answered and spoke to the angel who talked with me, saying, “What are these, my lord?” 5 Then the angel who talked with me
answered and said to me, “Do you not know what these are?” And I said, “No, my lord.” 6 So he answered and said to me: “This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: ‘Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ Says the LORD of hosts. 7 Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain! And he shall bring forth the capstone with shouts of grace, grace to it.”

Zerubbabel was the governor. Everyone knew it was his job to resume the building of the Temple, but he was overwhelmed with the task. Zerubbabel probably looked at the task that was set before him and saw the limited resources and all the obstacles and felt like giving up.

Have you ever been asked of the Lord to do something great for him, like Zerubbabel was asked to rebuild the temple, only to feel overwhelmed by the task from the beginning and then you give up? Sure you have. We have all denied the Lord at some time or another because we felt insignificant or incompetent for the task that God asked of us. Many of us, like the returning exiles, become discouraged, lose our vision, and then tend to our own interests and forget God altogether.

The reason this happens to us is that we tend to look at a situation through worldly eyes instead of through spiritual eyes. We might say, “That’s not humanly possible,” and many times we’re right in saying so. But rather than stating the obvious and leaving it at that, God wants us to trust and rely on him for the strength to thrive in the midst of difficult assignments or life situations.

The truth is, our God wants us to dream big, because he’s big enough to see us through. In fact, if you aren’t attempting to do something impossible for God, you probably don’t really believe in the God of the Bible. People who don’t know the LORD, lack confidence in Him and lack confidence in themselves. They sow small, and reap small. But God gives grace to dream big, grace to overcome.

Zechariah had a vision in which he saw a lamp stand or Jewish menorah, burning with light. Those flames represented God’s presence. Because it takes olive oil to fuel the flames in the lamps, the priests would have to continuously go in and out of the temple and keep refilling the lamp stand so that the flames would burn constantly. This going in and out by the priests represented human effort. That’s a problem, because anything done through human effort is bound to die out like an untended flame.

However, in this vision, there were two olive trees on either side. These olive trees represented something very special because these trees were tied directly into the lamp. Because the oil is being pumped directly in, there is a continuous supply of oil and the priests no longer have to stoke the flame. We are told in this vision that these living olive trees represented the ushering in of God’s grace. Grace is a very, very special word in the Bible.  
- Grace is what God does for us, when we are at our weakest.
- God’s Grace is always undeserved and …
- God’s Grace comes when we least expect it.
- God’s Grace comes when we have all but given up.

Have you experienced God’s grace? That drip, drip, drip of oil coming directly from the Living Olive Tree, keeping your light alive in the darkness?

I love this vision of Zechariah, and I have frequently quoted to myself and others verse
6, because I don’t think there is a better declaration of what OVERCOMING GRACE really is: ‘Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ Says the LORD of hosts.” What is Overcoming Grace?

a. NOT BY MIGHT
This word, “might” refers to all your human strength, all the energy of our flesh. All our human wisdom and can-do ability. This is what we all try to do. It’s a gut-instinct. It feeds our hunger for instant gratification & pride of accomplishment. Nose to the grindstone. We’ve all been trained from an early age with mottos such as: the early bird gets the worm, no pain no gain, there is no such thing as a free lunch, demand your rights, get what you pay for.

Our tendency to rely on our own strength is compounded by the very real fact that fleshly might does get results! Human ingenuity works! It raises funds. An excessive amount of energy and manipulation by guilt will cause a large number of people to do more and work harder and give money to get a project finished. Large businesses, and even large churches have been built by it.

There’s only one problem with it—the arm of flesh kills. There’s no life to it. Everything that you accomplish that way will have a hollow ring to it. You will end up wondering why you worked so hard for nothing. In the final analysis it will create futility. As one hymn-writer put it, “The arm of flesh will fail you, ye dare not trust your own.”

A Counselor friend of mine uses a special term for this style of dealing with your relationship problems in his counseling...he calls it BUCKING UP. What do most people do when things fall apart? Do they admit that they messed up? NO WAY! Do they agree that they need help? NO WAY! Do they seek out a counselor, or spend the day in prayer? NO WAY! Most of the time, what they do is BUCK UP! They try harder. They say the definition of insanity is trying the same things over and over even if they don’t work—but that’s what most people do. If they are hurting, they try to solve it by building higher walls. If they are locked in an argument, they try to solve it by raising their voice a few decibels. But all this BUCKING UP in the FLESH just leads to more death.

b. NOT BY POWER
“Power” refers to some delegated authority. That’s the other way we try to succeed with problems. Get some status, some rank, some authority, some horse-power that we have earned or deserve to help us succeed. Again, this is the way we think, because we live in a society that is based on earnings and rewards.

For example, he works tirelessly for a week or two, then anxiously await his hard earned paycheck. Correct me if I am wrong, but I have never heard of anyone going up to his boss after they receive his or her paycheck and saying, “thank you oh thank you for this undeserved gift. How can I possibly thank you enough.” No, this is not how it works. You earned that paycheck.

We are engrained with the idea: the more and harder we work the more we will receive in return. This idea is very present in the business world.

1) For example, this idea is present in the Ford Motor Corporation. Ford employees are graded on a scale of 1 to 27. 1 would be given to clerks and secretaries whereas 27 is chairman of the board. You must reach grade 9 to receive an outside parking place. Grade 13
brings with it such perks as a window, plants and an intercom system. Grade 16 offices come equipped with private bathrooms.

2) **Military practices this idea as well.** Assigned a title, uniform, salary and code of behavior, every soldier knows exactly where he or she stands in relation to the other. You salute and obey superiors; you give orders to the inferiors.

3) **Sports franchises** rewards those who complete passes, throw strikes, or make baskets, and has no place for those who fail.

We are constantly engrained with this idea that the harder we work the more we receive. But instead, what anyone who actually buys into POWER as a way of life receives is just endless **regrets, disappointment and pain.**

That’s because there is never sufficient human power and authority. People who base their worth on their rank or status end up feeling cheated and bitter, because there is always someone else who has something they don’t. They can never feel secure that they have enough **money, titles, and power.** People who rely on their track record end up going to their grave regretting some decision, some effort, always wishing they had that pitch to do over again.

c. **BUT BY MY SPIRIT**

God has a better idea. **Grace.** Not our pride, but **God’s Glory.** Not our efforts, but **God’s Grace—unearned and undeserved.** After we do our best and end up exhausted in the effort, God’s comes to us to bring us alive. All the other religions of the world are spelled **DO,** Christianity is spelled **DONE.** This is **GRACE.** It’s what God does for us, ZECHARIAH says, NOT what we try to do for ourselves. It burns brightly when everything is dark and lifeless.

Paul sums it up perhaps best….**But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ, and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. Ephesians 2:4 – 9**

This is OVERCOMING GRACE. That’s what **Zerubbabel** needed, and he got it! God worked a miracle in his life. That’s what you and I need. **Grace, Forgiveness, a FRESH START.** You need the help of God’s Spirit! It’s having the LIVING CHRIST continually filling you with new OLIVE OIL for your LAMP…so the light never goes out. **‘Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ Says the LORD of hosts.”** Zechariah 4:6

Let me share a personal example. Last August my wife and I helped celebrate her parents’ 50th University on the North Carolina coast. I love to sail so I arranged to rent a small boat on the Inland Passage—like a long lake that goes from Maryland to Florida along the coast. I talked to the owner and picked a one-man boat, but a hired hand said the 14-footer was more fun. (NEVER LISTEN TO THE HIRED HAND). So I went with the larger boat. I love sailing and it was wonderful. I finished my lunch on an island, heading back, but on the way, the tide took me into a large buoy. As soon as the boat touched, it overturned.
My training was on larger keelboats, which never tip over, but water is a great motivator to learn. It was a lot of boat, and even when I got it up, it took all my muscle to lift myself aboard. I bucked up to the challenge, determined to get back on my own power up the estuary where the owner’s dock was located.

This young owner had told me NOT to go over a piece of water that was too shallow, and NOT to let the boat get under a bridge out to sea. That left a narrow area. As I tacked, a billow blew me over a second time, and before I could get it upright, the boat went under that forbidden bridge, sticking upside-down in barnacles! I tried everything I knew, getting cut up with no success. Since it was getting dark, I agreed to take a ride in a fishermen’s boat to the pier. But as soon as my weight left the downturned sailboat, it unstuck and floated out into the Atlantic! It was unreal. The fishermen took me back to the fast drifting hull. Righting the boat, I succeeded in beam reaching back under the bridge. But now I was in the same predicament, with tide and wind pushing me out to sea, instead of where I wanted to go up the estuary. Several flips later, I was getting weaker, my strength draining away.

What I was doing wasn’t working. The strong wind would catch the sail immediately when I righted the boat, and take it like a speedboat—the opposite direction I wanted—while I struggled to get aboard like the tail on a kite. I felt like going to the mast, pushing with all my MIGHT and POWER where I wanted that boat to go, as if that would help!

All this time, the young owner had been watching from the shore (probably with a grin). He hailed me from a speedboat, “Do you want any help?” Does a car need gas? Once on-board, he kindly said, “I’ve helped a few other boaters today. The wind is picking up.” Some understatement!

He immediately tacked into the waters he told me were too shallow. To my question, he said, “Oh, well that was before the tide came in.” Oh! There was apparently a lot I didn’t know. I told him he was doing a lot better job than I, and he said, “These 14 footers are really designed for more weight... It’s a lot easier with an extra person in the boat.” Oh!

Quickly, with knowledge and skill I didn’t possess, making tacks I could never have duplicated, he brought us both safe to the pier. That’s GRACE. That’s what I needed. An extra person in my boat—the Master, the Owner, the LORD JESUS CHRIST. That’s what Zerubbabel needed to complete the Temple—God’s help, and he got it.

That’s what you need—that extra person—the Owner Himself—in your boat GUIDING you back to a safe PORT! Maybe you are facing an impossible task right now. Some mountain standing in your way. What you most need is not in exertions of will-power, or in efforts of discipline, or any other self-effort, but the PRESENCE AND POWER OF THE GRACE OF GOD IN JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD.

Rollo #4, Friday

FAITH: GOD’S GRACE IN ACTION OUTLINE
35-40 minutes
Situation and Objective

This is the fourth Rollo on the first full day. The candidates are now, though discussion and interaction, widening their circle of concern and interest at their tables. The previous Rollo on “Laity” has confronted them with a call to action which likely has elicited a “Who, Me?” response.
The challenge of this Rollo is to begin living the life of grace by faith. Right after this FAITH Rollo, the participants will have this clarified with a three-fold answer to this question “How can I lie in grace?” with the three Rollos PIETY, STUDY & ACTION. Living God’s grace by faith involves all three. This is an opportunity to focus on Luther’s wonderful teachings in his explanation to the Third Article of the Apostle’s Creed. Faith is a verb more than a noun, and is impossible without the Lord and Giver of Life to inform, guide and sustain us in our day to day living!

Be sure to leave enough time to introduce Palanca as the spiritual “lever” of prayer and sacrifice that undergird the entire weekend. This is a precious time as candidates begin to full realize how much prayer and sacrifice is being offered just for them. At the close, the HSD will read letters of encouragement from those near and far to help widen their understanding of the larger Christian Community.

OUTLINE OF FAITH ROLLO

I. GRACE is God’s invitation to us

A. The Grace Rollo reminded us that Christianity does NOT begin with us. It always starts with God's Work and God's Promise:
   - “This is love: NOT that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.” I John 4:10
   - ”You did NOT choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit--fruit that will last." John 15:16
   - The entire history of Israel, and the coming of Christ, was initiated by God, not us.
   - As Lutheran Christians, many of us began our spiritual walk by God giving us His promise as infants through the Sacrament of Baptism.

B. What shall we do with such an awesome offer?

II. FAITH is the response we make to this invitation of GRACE.

A. Living the mystery. There is a powerful drawing force of grace, which constrains us to respond! It’s a mystery to us why everyone doesn’t! While we are chosen to be God's children, it is an offer of love. Love doesn't manipulate, or force itself, but waits to be received.

   - "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day." John 6:44 (NIV)
   - “You’re not in charge here. The Father who sent me is in charge. He draws people to me—that's the only way you'll ever come. Only then do I do my work, putting people together, setting them on their feet, ready for the End." John 6:44 (MsgB)
   - “Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.” Rev. 3:20

B. Trusting the Father. It is important to understand what Biblical Faith IS & IS NOT! Biblically, faith isn't something we know, it is something we do!

   “Our problem is that we think that FAITH IS A NOUN--when really it's a VERB!” Karl Barth
1. **Faith is NOT just KNOWING THE FACTS.** I can know everything about the Bible, and all the details of Jesus Christ, his life, death and resurrection, and those facts will be meaningless to me without trust.
   - Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!' **Matthew 7:22-23**

2. **Faith is NOT KNOWING and AGREEING WITH THE FACTS.** I know George Washington was our First President, and I fully assent to the truth of those facts, but I still cannot put any personal faith in George! I can agree with all the truths of the Gospel, and still be no better off.
   - “You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.” **James 2:19**

3. **Faith is ALL THREE: KNOWING, ASSENTING to the facts, and TRUSTING!**
   - “But what does it say? "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart," that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming: That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.” **Romans 10:8-10**
   - “Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.” **Hebrews 11:1**

**III. FAITH joins with to CHRIST now and forever**

**A. In Adam, In Christ (Romans 6:3-5, 8)**

1. Baptized into His Death. We are partakers of Christ’s life. The New Testament teaches that as baptized Christians we aren't mere spectators of, but participants in Christ's crucifixion. We didn't merely witness the crucifixion. We experienced it. When we were baptized, God made us share in all that Christ was, suffered, and accomplished.

2. Baptized into His Life. By virtue of our physical birth we share "in Adam." By virtue of our second birth we share "in Christ." When Christ led a sinless life, we, by virtue of baptism led it with Him. When Christ was put to death to suffer punishment for human sin, we shared that death with Him. When Christ was placed in the grave which sin brings, we went to the grave with Him. When He rose from the tomb on that Easter morning, we rose with Him. **Ephesians 2:4-10.**

**B. Faith is Christ being formed in me.** In Christ, God has declared us holy (1 Corinthians 1:2), not by what we have achieved, but what Christ has achieved. His appeal to us is: *Become what you are!* That is the key. *I am God's child. It has been done for me. It is God's gift to me. I am participant in what Christ has done for me.* That is faith.
• “Such confidence as this is ours through Christ before God. Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God.” 2 Cor. 3:4-5
• Faith is a living relationship with the person and the power of the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ (Apostle’s Creed - Article Three).
• Faith is the power to live the Christian ideal.
• Faith is trusting that Jesus is holding on to me, rather than trusting that I am a Christian.

Conclusion: Palanca - evidence of reliance on the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit. Palanca bears witness that the Holy Spirit is present and active in the community of believers.

• Palanca - Spanish for lever. Multiplying the power to get the job done. The solidarity of members of the church through prayers, gifts and messages from individuals and groups.

Sample FAITH Rollo

As we think about faith and what it means to our lives and how it fits, we need to talk about “remembering.” As Lutheran Christians we are often reminded to “Remember your Baptism.” In order to understand what that means we need to know how Old Testament Israel remembered past events.

Pilgrims came to America on the Mayflower in 1620. Were you on board with him? Captain Cook explored the East Coast of Australia in 1770. Were you with him? Obviously not. These happened long ago. Past is past; it’s over and done. When we remember we are merely bringing back to our minds what happened back then.

Now if you were to ask a pious Jewish person today how many people came out of Egypt in the Exodus, he might well say, “Maybe a billion.” After you picked yourself up from the floor, you would have to understand that the Jewish view is that all Jews who have lived since the time of the Exodus took part in the event. They would see themselves as present at Sinai when the covenant was made with Israel. Exodus 12:37-38 says about 600,000 men plus women and children came out. Deuteronomy 7:7-8 says that Israel was the fewest of all the people.

Look at Deuteronomy 26:5-9. Here the Israelites were given instructions about giving and the resulting confession that goes with it. “5 Then you shall declare before the LORD your God: "MY father was a wandering Aramean, and HE went down into Egypt with a few people and lived there and became a great nation, powerful and numerous. 6 But the Egyptians mistreated US and made US suffer, putting US to hard labor. 7 Then WE cried out to the LORD, the God of OUR fathers, and the LORD heard OUR voice and saw OUR misery, toil and oppression. 8 So the LORD brought US out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with great terror and with miraculous signs and wonders. 9 He brought US to this place and gave US this land, a land flowing with milk and honey;” NIV

I have bolded some important words here for emphasis. Note the change from third to first person. The he and they become we and us. This same kind of "remembering" still is part
of the Passover liturgy for Jews. When an Israelite remembered, he didn't differentiate between the past and present. He shared in the events of the past. He celebrated their meaning for his own life. What happened long ago was for him and involved him. God chose him, God rescued him in the Exodus, God made His covenant with him at Sinai. We too need to have that same sense about the truths of what God has done for us.

In Romans 5 Paul often uses the term "in Adam." Read Romans 5:12, 12b, 16b, 17, 18, 19. God gives us the same picture in other places as well (1 Corinthians 15:21,22) Israelis could say "History of the fathers in my history. I was there!" Paul says, "Adam's history is our history. We all share in the events and consequences." We all took part in the fall into sin in the Garden of Eden. That is a tragic message. All men share in Adam's sin. He brought judgment and death on all of us as he brought it on himself. Sin brought judgment, which brought death. Paul wrote in Romans 7:24 "Wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this death?" RSV There is an exciting answer.

We are all familiar with the spiritual that asks, "Were you there when they crucified my Lord?" etc. The expected answer is "Yes, I was there, I saw it happen." The writer had in mind being there in memory rather than in fact. He does want us to take the events of the crucifixion personally and seriously. The New Testament answers us that that as baptized Christians we aren't mere spectators of, but participants in Christ's crucifixion. We are partakers of the event. We didn't merely witness the crucifixion. We experienced it. Note Romans 6:3-5, 8. When we were baptized, God made us share in all that Christ was, suffered, and accomplished. By virtue of our physical birth we share "in Adam." By virtue of our second birth we share "in Christ."

When Christ led a sinless life, we, by virtue of baptism led it with Him. When Christ was put to death to suffer punishment for human sin, we shared that death with Him. When Christ was placed in the grave which sin brings, we went to the grave with Him. When He rose from the tomb on that Easter morning, we rose with Him. Ephesians 2:4-10.

In Christ, God has declared us holy (1 Corinthians 1:2). In our baptism He gave us Christ's sinless life as a set of credentials as our very own. We will take those with us throughout our lives and finally through death into heaven itself so it becomes not what we have achieved, but what Christ has achieved. His appeal to us is "Seek to make the credentials I have given you in grace describe you personally more and more. Seek to demonstrate what you have been given. Become what you are!" That is the key. I am God's child. I am a Christian. It has been done for me. It is God's gift to me. Listen to me again. I am God's child. I am a Christian. I can do nothing to make that happen. I am participant in what Christ has done for me. That is faith.

• Faith then is to know God and enjoy Him forever. (Explain the biblical concept of "to know."
• Faith is Christ being formed in us. (To be "in Christ" or "Christ in me."
• Faith is a living relationship with a person - we are in a person to person relationship with Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. Briefly explain the Holy Spirit and His peculiar work in us.
• Faith is the power to live the Christian ideal.
• Faith is not the acceptance of a belief system. Again it is a relationship with a person - Jesus Christ.
• Faith is trusting that Jesus is holding on to me, rather than trusting that I am a
Christian.

(Along here you can use the story of the two nuns who have run out of gasoline. Go to farmhouse and only container is a bedpan. Man driving by observes the event and says: "Now that's faith". You can fill in details and embellish on the story.)

Now we can possibly answer a question that some of you have asked without finding an answer: What is Cursillo?

This is your opportunity - It's a great occasion. Many are praying for you without knowing you. None of us would dare to participate without knowing that others are offering prayers and sacrifices for God's direction, guidance, and strength.

**Palanca** - evidence of reliance on the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit. Palanca bears witness that the Holy Spirit is present and active in the community of believers. That community is behind us this weekend.

**Palanca** - Spanish for lever. Multiplying the power to get the job done. The solidarity of members of the church through letters and messages from individuals and groups. Evidence that prayers are being lifted on our behalf for God’s blessings and working in our lives and ministry.

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**Alternative FAITH Rollo**

**Introduction:** Share name, wife & family...I attended Cursillo # _____

Review other talks...We have already heard some tremendous Rollos. ____________ started us off on the right foot by helping us to see the importance of Priorities, Ideals, and Directions for our life. Pastor ____________ opened up to us as beautifully and as powerfully as can be done the wonder of God's Grace, as the foundation of life, the ultimate ideal. ____________ reminded us in his Rollo on *Laity* that we are all the people of God. The ministry of the Church was never meant to be only reserved for professionals. Pastor _____ reminded us that *Christianity begins NOT WITH US, BUT with God's Work and God's Promise: “You did NOT choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit--fruit that will last.” John 15:16*

Of course, there is a mystery here. While we are chosen to be God's children, it is the offer of love. Love doesn't manipulate, or force itself. I remember someone from the underground Church telling me 20 years ago about a simple Russian Soldier who became a Christian, and when asked why, he said, it was because Jesus was such a gentleman. Everywhere else in his society he was told what to do, how to act, what to say. No freedom at all! But Jesus just knocks at our door, and waits patiently. This is what GRACE is all about. God notices us, welcomes us, invites us to the dance, and then waits. **WHAT SHALL WE DO WITH SUCH AN AWESOME OFFER?**

FAITH is the response we make to this invitation of GRACE. Now I know that this isn’t a school, exactly, but CURSILLO does mean little course, and so I’d like to start our time
this afternoon by giving you all a **POP QUIZ ON FAITH**. Maybe all of you have so much faith now, that you don’t need this ROLLO?

Are you all ready for a quiz? Just five questions…and really, you don’t have to show them to anyone. Before I give you the quiz, it is important that you understand exactly **what Biblical Faith IS & IS NOT!**

- **Faith is NOT just KNOWING THE FACTS.** I can know everything about the Bible, and all the details of Jesus Christ, his life, death and resurrection, and those facts will be meaningless to me without trust, just as I can know this is a chair, but not get off my feet, and rest myself in it. Lots of people who know about Jesus are far from experiencing His Saving Power in their lives.

- **Faith is NOT KNOWING AND AGREEING WITH THE FACTS.** I know George Washington was our First President, and I fully assent to the truth of those facts, but I still can not put any personal faith in George! I can agree with all the truths of the Gospel, and still be no better off, James tell us in the New Testament, than the Demons who believe and tremble!

- **Faith is ALL THREE: KNOWING, ASSENTING to the facts, and TRUSTING!** Karl Barth says our problem is that we think that **FAITH IS A NOUN**—when really it’s a **VERB**! Biblically, faith **isn’t something we know, it is something we do!**

  Jesus said we would encounter many, many people who think they are believers, but really are not. "LORD, LORD...." they will say to Him. Look at our wonderful life, and all the things we did for you. And then He will respond: "**I NEVER KNEW YOU; DEPART FROM ME, YOU EVILDOERS.**"

  Sometimes I’ll ask someone: **"Are you a believer?"** "Oh, yes, absolutely; everyone in my family is." **"Great! What do you believe?"** "Well, I believe it all.... Whatever the church says that I’m supposed to believe, that’s what I believe." (I try to help them out): **"What are you trusting God for right now, specifically?"** "What are you asking God to do in your life this year? What difference will happen to you TODAY because you are a believer?" "Ahh, what do you mean? I don’t get it."

  I have come in a practical way to thinking that Faith is another way of talking about COURAGE. In a sense the whole Christian life is about faith and the whole Christian life is about Courage.

  **"Courage is not simply one of the virtues but the form of every virtue at the testing point, which means at the point of highest reality."** - C.S. Lewis

  In other words, a strong faith will always appear courageous…a strong love will appear courageous. How much faith do you have? How much courage do you have? Here’s the quiz (on a handout):

**ON A SCALE OF 1 TO 10** (ten being the highest)

- I daily hear and obey the voice of the Holy Spirit. ______
- People close to me ask me to stand with them in faith. ______
- My loved ones find me a source of strength & peace rather than fear and confusion. ______
• My faith-walk is stronger than ever before. _____
• I’m charging to tear down the gates of hell in my life/world. _____

ASK: ANY ONE GET A TOTAL OF 50? Well, neither did I. We all need to grow in Courage.

A CASE STUDY of FAITH—GIDEON
Judges 6-7

The story of Gideon begins in a situation of faithlessness and powerlessness. The people God had brought out of Egypt with SIGNS and WONDERS and given the LAND OF MILK AND HONEY as their inheritance are now powerless and hopeless.

Verses 1-10 describe the present condition of the nation of Israel. While God had given them a beautiful and fertile land, they weren’t experiencing it’s abundance. You find out right away that there are reasons for Israel’s predicament. They had disobeyed everything God asked them to do. Instead of getting their wisdom from God’s revelation, they sought insight from every philosophy, cult, and religion in the nations around them. As a result of Israel’s rebellion, and idolatry, God delivered them into the hand of the Midianites for a period of 7 years. These fierce desert raiders were the first to domesticate the camel, and used it like a TANK for BLITZKRIEG WAR. They took whatever they wanted. The Israelites sought refuge in the dens, and caves in the mountains.

Conditions were so bad that when the harvest was ready, the Midianites would come in and destroy or steal the crops. They took all of their livestock. Verse 6 says that Israel was greatly impoverished. Meaning they were empty, thin, and oppressed. This went on for seven years until finally God’s people called upon the LORD. Why do we wait so long to ask the true God for help?

I. IT ALL STARTS WITH GOD vv. 11-15

“Gideon” actually means “warrior” Gideon had a good name. One that would fit the task for which he was chosen...but at the time of the Lord’s choosing, he is anything but a warrior.

a. Gideon is fearful -- Read V. 11

Where does the Lord find Gideon? He is in a winepress....which was in a pit ! What is he doing....making wine? No....Gideon has found a new use for the winepress. He is using it to beat out the wheat ! Why in a winepress? That’s normally the worst possible place. Normally you would thresh wheat on a high rock on a windy day, so the wind would carry off the chaff, and it wouldn’t get in your eyes, nose, and mouth, and you could breathe.

But Gideon is afraid that if he beats out the wheat out in the open that he will be seen by Midianites. Give Gideon credit for ingenuity. He is doing the best thing he can for his family at the time, but he is not doing anything to solve the overall problem. Once again, this reminds us that it’s not about you!

You’re not in charge here. The Father who sent me is in charge. He draws people to me—that’s the only way you’ll ever come. Only then do I do my work, putting people together, setting them on their feet, ready for the End. John 6:44 (MsgB)

This is the whole point of The Third Article of the APOSTLE’S CREED & Martin Luther’s Explanation:
I believe in the Holy Spirit; the holy Christian church, the communion saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.

What does this mean? I believe that I cannot by my own understanding or effort believe in Jesus Christ my Lord, or come to him. But the Holy Spirit has called me through the Gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, and sanctified and kept me in true faith. In the same way he calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it united with Jesus Christ in the one true faith.

b. Gideon feels forsaken. V.12-13
   When the Angel of the Lord (CHRIST HIMSELF IN HIS PRE-INCARNATE FORM) tells him his purpose, Gideon opens up his mouth and speaks his mind! If the LORD is with us, where are all His miracles? Gideon is arguing with God, isn’t he? He feels forsaken.... abandoned!

c. Gideon experiences futility. V. 15
   He comes from a poor family. And he considers himself to be the least worthy......or least capable of doing anything to help. “I’m a no-account sort of fellow from a no-account family, in a no-account tribe.” I’m the weakest of the weak.” THIS IS DEFINITELY NOT WHAT our world thinks of WHEN IT IS LOOKING FOR heroes. But look what follows…

II. IT ALL STARTS WITH HONESTY (vv 12-24)
   This is one of the most unexpected comments ever recorded in Scripture. LISTEN: “And the Angel of the Lord appeared unto him, and said unto him, “The Lord is with you, you mighty man of valor!” (V. 12) HELLO? Is the LORD seeing the same person we are seeing? Gideon’s “valor” is not exactly apparent right here. And in fact, Gideon never does become a John Wayne, or Arnold Schwartzenaeger type guy. Yet later in the book of Hebrews 11:33-34, Gideon’s name is added to the role call of those heroes of faith who “conquered kingdoms, enforced justice...became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight...” And all that is true. Gideon accomplished by faith all those things. But he is also a lot like you and me. All thru this account, he is a complicated mix of courage and cowardice, power and poverty, strength and weakness. Gideon all the way thru this story shows great faith and great doubt. He is plenty bold, and very afraid almost at the same time. This mighty man of valor was secretly a small fry, a no-account sort of guy. He had more questions than answers, more misgivings than confidence. But the angel of the LORD is not drawn into debate. He challenges this fearful, questioning, no-account fellow: “GO IN THIS MIGHT OF YOURS AND DELIVER ISRAEL FROM THE HAND OF MIDIAN; DO NOT I SEND YOU?” (v. 14)

   This verse 14 has been going thru my head and heart for weeks. What STRENGTH is the Angel of the LORD talking about? Gideon has just confessed how absolutely WEAK he is. “I’M THE WEAKEST MEMBER OF THE WEAKEST FAMILY OF THE WEAKEST TRIBE IN THE NATION.” And then the Angel of the LORD responds—AS IT WERE—“Perfect! That’s exactly what I’m looking for--someone who knows how weak they are. That’s exactly the sort of person I am able to do mighty things with. People like that know how empty they are so I am able to fill them with my power. So go in THIS MIGHT of yours and deliver Israel !!!”
Now if that doesn’t shock you, you aren’t hearing me. It should shock you just as much as the Apostle Paul’s words do: “But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him.” 1 Cor. 1:27-29 (NIV)

This is the sort of person God can use. God’s sees great potential in Gideon. He may be a Coward—but he knows he’s a coward—so God can use him to deliver a nation of cowards. The world saw a LOSER—God saw a LEADER.

What’s the lesson here? God can work with honest hearts. Pretension is more difficult. Gideon in these verses asks for sign after sign. He keeps coming with his questions, his doubts, his fears…and God never once scolds him, or puts him down. How patience God is! Our God doesn’t have a problem with honest doubts. He can use someone with an ounce of Faith—“mustard seed” size is just fine (Mt. 17:19-20). God welcomes genuine doubt, when you bring your arguments and disagreements to Him.

Remember how Thomas may have doubted until he saw the resurrected Lord himself? Yet later, as faith took root and Thomas was sent to proclaim the Gospel of forgiveness to the world—he had the same rank as all the other disciples—Christ never minded any doubt—as long as it was brought to Him. God is patient, because this isn’t about OUR STRENGTH, but HIS. All we need is a tiny, itty bitty faith to begin with. God can use that to work miracles. God accepts a small FAITH. Our faith usually starts very small… God loves to take that small faith we give to Him, and do tremendous things.

Someone told me recently how they built the suspension bridge across the Niagara Gorge. it all began with engineers flying a kite across the chasm, playing out the kite string until the kite reached the farther shore. Then twine was tied to the string, and rope to the twine, and wire to the rope, and cable to the wire. In due time, mighty cables were suspended from great towers and anchored on either side in the depths of the earth, and the bridge was built. “Use what faith you have and God will give you more faith.” said John Wesley

The Scriptures are full of accounts of real men and women accomplishing MUCH with LITTLE. God meets such individuals who feel and know their weakness, YET come to Him with an EMPTY CUP, and God fills it with His POWER.

HOW, you might ask, DID THIS HAPPEN? How does God fill our empty cups?

III. IT ALL STARTS WITH A FIRST STEP (vv. 25-40)

Before Gideon can realize his potential, he must prepare himself. Gideon must be conquered before he can be the conqueror. God must lead him to overthrow some things in his own backyard before he can lead a nation to overcome its enemies. He LORD asks Gideon to start by tearing down his father’s idols at home.

Gideon was asked to start in his own home. God couldn’t use Gideon until he had ROOTED OUT anything that possessed his heart other than God. Every idol is a symbol of unbelief. It bends you down in submission to its power. It opens you to a world opposed to God. It tempts you to depend upon your FLESH, your PUNY STRENGTH instead of
God’s great POWER.

Here again we are frankly told that “he was too afraid of his family and the men of the town to do it by day” (6:27) so Gideon took ten men and did the whole thing in the dark of night. But still, it was an act of courage. The next day Gideon almost lost his life over it. You get the sense that Gideon tried to hide out that whole day, pretending he had nothing to do with it. But by the end of the day, that act of courage by a coward transformed his life. He got a new name. He got a new reputation. God’s Holy Spirit was able to come upon Him in his obedience, and by verse 34, when he sounded the trumpet, this timid LOSER had 32,000 warriors following Him as their acknowledged LEADER.

Something powerful happens when a man or woman decides to take the first real step of discipleship, and put an ALTAR to God in the place that formerly housed his idols. You might be thinking, “ME, I DON’T HAVE ANY IDOLATRY IN MY LIFE. HOW CAN I TEAR DOWN AN ALTAR TO BAAL?!” But again, BAAL is a spirit of UNBELIEF. You may have repented of sin, cried out to God for mercy, listened to prophetic warnings, but if you still have doubts in your heart about God’s faithfulness that you haven’t brought to Jesus, you are subject to the BAAL SPIRIT.

Gideon’s father had erected an altar to Baal on their property. It was only a statue of wood. But the spirit behind it had built a STRONGHOLD in GIDEON’S HEART. Each time Gideon walked by, the voice of that idol spoke to his soul: “Look at your poverty, your predicament, your unmet needs. Where is God?” That idol stood as a testimony to every Israelite who saw it: “God isn’t with you. He doesn’t care. He’s too busy with world affairs to be concerned about feeding and protecting you little people. The Lord has forsaken you.”

But when Gideon meets the LORD and receives His PROMISE, he had the power he needed to face that fear! God wants to do that same inside of you. We start by tearing down our ALTARS of BAAL—idolatry is ultimately UNBELIEF—anything that we trust other than the true and living God. He will give you the spiritual power to put the ENEMY on notice: “GOD IS WITH ME, DEVIL. YOU CAN’T HURT ME. AND YOU CAN’T STOP HIS PLANS FOR MY LIFE. THE LORD HAS VICTORIES AHEAD OF ME. I DON’T KNOW HOW HE IS GOING TO DO IT...THAT’S HIS DEPARTMENT. BUT I’M GOING TO START TRUSTING HIM, AND I’M GOING TO START AT THE CENTER OF MY LIFE. I’M GOING TO TEAR DOWN MY IDOLS OF UNBELIEF!” When we stop trusting our idols, our flesh, we begin to actually discover God’s power, and that’s exciting.

But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.” 2 Cor. 12:9 (NIV)

[SHARE A PERSONAL STORY OF YOUR STRUGGLE WITH IDOLARY]

Gideon had a lot of idols put there by his father. Each of us has IDOLS given to us by our parents, grandparents, great grandparents, all the way back to Adam and Eve. Ways of thinking, values, fears, doubts, habits, addictions, that we carry into life, until we come to the place where Jesus frees us. Gradually, we discover that God is WITH US and has put everything we need in the PACKAGE—IF WE JUST SIT STILL AND OPEN IT UP.
There is something in each of us—if we are honest—that doesn’t like this POWER out of WEAKNESS stuff. God’s ways are very different from everything we instinctively feel and think. We by nature want to DEPEND on ourselves, rather than THE LORD by FAITH in HIS MIGHTY POWER. A California friend of mine has traveled all over the world to climb the highest peaks in Alaska, Chile, and Nepal. He often spends weekends teaching novices the art of technical climbing in Yosemite. One of the first lessons they need to learn is the hardest to follow. The novice, the higher he gets, tends to freeze in fear, and lean closer and closer to the mountain—but as soon as you do that, your feet are going to slip. So he would teach people to LEAN OUT…LEAN AWAY from what you think will help you…Instead of leaning into the mountain, LEAN AWAY from the mountain, and you find your feet become more and more secure.

Lean away from your IDOLS, lean away from your own FLESH, your own puny strength. Trust in God’s mighty power. The LORD is looking for someone like you, who knows they are afraid, weak, and empty, whom He can fill with His Power!

IV. GOD’S VICTORY IS ALL ABOUT GOD, NOT US. (7:1-22)

Indeed, this whole talk could be entitled, “GOD’S PRUNING: DOWNSIZING TO VICTORY.” We are not told what Gideon thought about his army of 32,000 men, but we are immediately told that God in effect says, “Gideon, there is something wrong with this army.” Gideon is probably thinking, “Right on. I’m facing a hoard of better armed Midianite and Amelikites 135,000 strong. I’m out numbered 4 to 1! Yes, God, you are so right. I need more men!” But of course, that isn’t what God is thinking of at all. For God, the problem is that there are too many.

Many of us are familiar with the management concept of downsizing—we’re told to “do more with less”. However, nations don’t usually downsize when preparing for war! They mobilize their reserves and cancel all leaves and requests for discharge and retirement.

However, God frequently trims our resources to get us to depend entirely on Him. Sickness, financial reversal, family conflict, and other difficulties cause us to turn our lives over to God. When the odds seem overwhelming, God overwhelms the odds! Napoleon cynically observed that “God is on the side of the biggest battalion.” Gideon’s army proved otherwise, that victory is in the Hand of God.

To guarantee that history would record this battle as a divine victory, God issued an order for a massive reduction-in-force. Actually, there were two episodes of DOWNSIZING, wasn’t there?

A. God instructs Gideon to tell everyone who is afraid of the enemy to leave. 22,000 men go home. God doesn’t want anyone to serve Him out of GUILT or FORCE.

B. You can imagine how Gideon was feeling right then. Gideon must’ve been pondering his slim chance of survival. Yet God says, verse 4: “There are still too many men for me to give the Midianites into their hand…” So God orders a second REDUCTION IN FORCE. Gideon was left with a meager 300 troops. His only option was to trust God or perish. He was left virtually without an army. But when we’re serving in God’s army we become part of the “overwhelming minority.”
Is this what God is doing in your life? Are you experiencing a DOWNSIZING? Is God using Sickness, financial reversal, family conflict, or other difficulties to cause you to depend deeper on His strength? If it is, than THANK GOD for it. You are right on track! Jesus describes this process as STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE in the Kingdom:

“He cuts off every branch of me that doesn’t bear grapes. And every branch that is grape-bearing he prunes back so it will bear even more.” John 15:2 (MsgB)

In his book, HEARTS OF IRON, FEET OF CLAY, Gary Inrig states: “You cannot be too small for God to use, but you can be too big. If you want credit for what God is doing, God will not use you...that is why, as you look around, you will see God working in a powerful way in the lives of some very weak people. They are people who are careful to give God the glory.” Who gets the credit when we’re successful? Do we bask in our victory, or praise God for His work in our lives?

We can imagine Gideon’s state of mind. The odds weren’t very good to begin with, and now they are 450 to one! But God was saying to Gideon “Trust me, don’t worry, I am in charge.”

You see, what seems to look like everything is going wrong may be because something is going right. Now is the time to TRUST & PRAISE God. Cutting back MAY be about loosing but MAY BE about you winning. Remember—

- Jesus took five fish and three loafs to feed five thousand.
- Jesus calls twelve to spread the gospel to the whole world.
- When we have less, but finally rely on God, we actually have more!

With God’s power, Gideon was able to “boldly go where no Jew had gone before”! READ VV. 19-22. Assembling his army of 300, he then divides them into three companies, arming them with trumpets, empty clay jars, and torches (vs 16). It seems like Gideon sent his military band and supply personnel into battle!

This miniscule force had one thing strategically in its favor, the element of surprise. How else could 300 troops take on a multitude? At Gideon’s command, they took positions outside the perimeter of the enemy camp. Then out of the night came the startling cacophony of 300 jars being smashed on the ground, the blinding light of 300 torches piercing the darkness, and the blare of 300 rams horns signaling an attack. With one voice the Israeli force shouted a blood-curdling battle-cry (vs 20): “A sword for the Lord and for Gideon!”

Panic seized the enemy. The Midianite army imagined they were being attacked from all sides. In their confusion they hastily began attacking each other in the dark, not knowing who was friend or foe. The Jewish soldiers held their positions, staying a safe distance from the deadly chaos before them. In a short time, their powerful foe had self-destructed!

Gideon had learned that we experience Power in Weakness, because in weakness we get to experience God’s GRACE. Here’s how Paul puts it...

“Saving is all his idea, and all his work. All we do is trust him enough to let him do it. It’s God’s gift from start to finish! We don’t play the major role. If we did, we’d probably go around bragging that we’d done the whole thing!” Ephes. 2:8-9 (MsgB)
Do you want to really experience the GRACE and the POWER of God? Then get ready to be a GIDEON. Is God doing some PRUNING in your life right now? Is He stripping you of all those ASSETS that you have relied on instead of HIM? Then get ready to BEAR MUCH FRUIT! History is full of God bringing better things out of what looks like losses. SOMETIMES LESS IS MORE.

_Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God._ **Philip. 4:6 (NIV)**

"I can do everything through Him who gives me strength!"

Philippians 4:13

God is God. God does things God’s way as only God could do it. We have a special word for this way God works here in Cursillo…we call it PALANCA…that’s a Spanish word for LEVER, or, if you are a mechanic, CROW BAR. God is going to make everything fit. Remember

"No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day._ John 6:44 (NIV)

“You’re not in charge here. The Father who sent me is in charge. He draws people to me—that’s the only way you’ll ever come. Only then do I do my work, putting people together, setting them on their feet, ready for the End.” _John 6:44 (MsgB)

That’s the BEST part of CURSILLO. Some say that CURSILLO is great because the LAITY are in charge instead of the PASTORS, but that’s not true…CURSILLO is going to bless you because in prayer we have sought to move out of the way and let GOD be in charge.

God will use whatever He needs to…even a crowbar, if necessary, to get you and me to fit into His plans. Maybe some of you felt DRAGGED into this place. Well, who did the dragging? Maybe it was God. After all, you are here. That’s PALANCA! You will hear a lot about palanca, and that’s what it really is all about...letting God be in charge! Getting out of His way so He can do His work in your life!

God uses people to fit you into His plans. There is going to be a lot of GRACE and a lot of PALANCA at this CURSILLO, and God is going to take us fearful, powerless, GIDEONS, with all our problems, and call us together, test our faith, and show us how HE is going to defeat our enemies for us! OKAY? LET’S PRAY!

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**Rollo # 7 & 7 1/2 , Saturday**

**SACRAMENTS: GOD’S MEANS OF GRACE OUTLINE**

Two Talks each 25-30 minutes long

**Situation and Objective**

This talk is situated right in the midst of the three talks (PIETY, STUDY & ACTION) answering the question, “How is this life of grace lived out?” No more appropriate moment could be had for not only talking about, but experiencing anew, the unique gospel grace of Christ. The goal of these two talks (often separated by lunch) are to help expand the Cursillistas’ mind and heart concerning the activity of the Holy Spirit in daily living. When someone comprehends the sacraments, all of
life suddenly becomes sacramental! The ordinary becomes extraordinary, as we experience God’s very earthly presence in our midst, especially within the Body of Christ. It is suggested that either in the chapel, or simply at each Decuria table, following this meaningful Rollo, confession of sin, and Christ’s proclamation Institution, the precious elements of bread and wine be passed into the hands of each participant as a means of grace.

**SACRAMENTS ROLLO OUTLINE, Part One**

I. GOD USES DEFINITE MEANS OF GRACE TO RESCUE US

A. Christ, by His death and resurrection offers Life and Salvation to all. It is by the work of His Holy Spirit that we become partakers (personally) of these gifts.

B. The Holy Spirit always works in orderly fashion. He uses definite means designated by Christ Himself as the channels, the vehicles by which we are brought to New Life. We usually speak of two means of Grace: (1) The **Word of God**; (2) The **Sacraments** (Baptism, The Lord’s Supper).

C. God Has Chosen His Means of Grace. He could of course dispense with the Sacraments, and bring us to salvation in other ways without His word, just as He could arrange for us to live without physically eating and drinking. However, He hasn’t so chosen. Those who refuse to eat and drink will die, for they are violating one of God's basic laws of nature. Those who despise the means of Grace cannot live in fellowship with the God who laid down these means as the only way to fellowship.

II. WHY IS WORD OF GOD SO VITAL?

A. The Word of God creates and nourishes spiritual life.
   - 1 Peter 1:23 (NKJV) “…having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever.”
   - John 6:63 (NKJV) “The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.”
   - Matthew 4:4 (NKJV) "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.' "

B. Without God’s Revelation there is no Salvation. Without the Word of God, there could be no sacraments. Their power lies in the Word of God alone. The **Word** is at all times a **Power** which we resist to our temporal and eternal peril.
   - Hebrews 4:12 (NKJV) "For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword."
   - Romans 1:16 "I am not ashamed of the Gospel (the Word of God) of Christ, for it is the power of God for Salvation."
   - Romans 10:14 "How shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? How shall they hear without a preacher."
   - Ephesians 6:17 "The sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God."

III. WHAT IS A SACRAMENT?

A. It Has Been Commanded By Christ
   - Baptism: "Go... and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...”. Matthew 28:19.
   - Holy Communion: "Take and eat, this is my body, given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

B. It Uses A Physical Sign
   1. Baptism: Water
i. How Much Water? The common Greek word, “baptizo,” means to pour or wash, and doesn’t indicate the amount of liquid to be used in the ceremony. Some churches sprinkle drops. Some pour three handfuls. Others immerse, symbolizing beautifully that in baptism we die and are buried, rising again with Christ (Romans 6).

ii. Lutherans have no biblical or theological preference, and are open to all modes of baptism. The important thing is to wash with water while proclaiming God’s promise. What makes the water special is not magic, or “holy water,” but the Word of God.

2. Holy Communion: Bread and Wine (more about this later)

C. It Carries The Life-Giving Promise Of God’s Word.
- Luther said that God is present everywhere, but God has promised to be present in a special way in the sacraments. His presence in the sacraments carries with it God’s grace, life and forgiveness of sin.

- We are not saved by faith in the sacraments, but by faith the Gracious God who promises to meet us there! It is not the lack of the sacraments which condemns a person, but contempt for them proves a lack of faith in God.

IV. WHAT DOES BAPTISM ACCOMPLISH?

--Forgiveness of Sins

"Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Acts 2: 38-39

"And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.' Acts 22:16 (NKJV)

--Cleansing of Guilty Conscience

(NKJV) “...let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.” Hebrews 10:22

"Not by works done in righteousness, which we did ourselves but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.” Titus 3:5

--Rebirth

"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you are born of water and the Spirit, you cannot enter the kingdom of God.” John 3:5

--Adoption as God’s Child

For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!” Romans 8:15 (ESV)

--Salvation/Promise of Eternal Life in God’s Kingdom

“He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.” Mark 16

"What benefits does God give in Baptism?” "In baptism God forgives sin, delivers from death and the devil, and gives everlasting salvation to all who believe what he has promised."
Luther’s Small Catechism

--The Gift of the Holy Spirit:

"And you shall receive the Holy Spirit." Acts 2:38
"In one spirit you were baptized into one body." I Cor.12:13

--Sanctification

"What does baptism mean for daily living?" answers this way: “It means that our sinful self, with all its evil deeds and desires, should be drowned through daily repentance, and that day after day and new self should arise to live with God in righteousness and purity forever." Luther’s Small Catechism

‘We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.” Romans 6:3-4

V. HOW CAN WE CHERISH OUR BAPTISM?

A. Celebrate baptismal anniversaries with candle, banner, prayer, “extra birthday”

B. Affirmation of baptism (Confirmation), saying "Yes" to what God began in us when we were baptized

C. Confession and forgiveness is always a return to the baptismal font.
   1. With a Pastor, Spiritual Director or Counselor
   2. With other believers in small accountability prayer groups

D. Making the sign of the cross

SACRAMENTS ROLLO OUTLINE, Part Two

I. OUR GRACIOUS GOD KNOWS WE NEED SIGNS OF HIS PRESENCE AMONG US

A. Our Father continually speaks to His Children
   · John 10:27-28 (NKJV) “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.”
   · Isaiah 43:1 (NKJV) “But now, thus says the Lord, who created you, O Jacob, and He who formed you, O Israel: ‘Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; you are Mine.’”

B. Our Father continually provides signs of His presence
   · The children of Israel were led by a pillar of fire at night, and a pillar of cloud by day. God might have mapped the route for Moses and given verbal assurance of His presence, but He wanted to give them a definite sign of His presence.
   · At Mt. Sinai He gave the Ten Commandments, and making a covenant in the midst of unusual thunder and lightning.
   · The Holy of Holies in the tabernacle was a special place be reserved for God, not because He needed a place to live, but to be a visible seal of assurance that the invisible God was really present in our midst.
C. God uses the finite to bear the infinite. Our God has always sought to use visible and material objects or sounds to make more real to the finite mind that which is beyond our understanding. The Sacraments do not give anything beyond that which we receive through the Word, but they do give personal, real and visible assurance of the promise given in the Word.

D. God does not despise the flesh of our humanity. He dwelt in the flesh of Jesus, and he lives in ordinary men and women today. The ruler of the universe hides himself in the common, in the stuff of this earth. Life can be sacramental. Speaking a page of Scripture creates life for eternity. Christ can be present in simple bread and wine, reconciling and sending us to be His body in the world. God uses the waters of baptism to proclaim forgiveness, and claim us as His children. By grace He uses the ordinary—you—to do the extraordinary.

II. IN HOLY COMMUNION CHRIST OFFERS ASSURANCE THAT HE IS ABIDING IN YOU.

A. The History Of The Sacrament. Briefly recount the story of Exodus (Chapter 12)
- The Long years of Slavery
- The Ten Plagues
- The Passover Lamb
- The Angel of Death
- The Passover Meal

B. The Institution Of The Sacrament.
"This cup is the New Testament in My blood, which is shed for you and for many for the remission of your sins. Drink you all of this. This do as often as you drink it in remembrance of Me." Matthew 26:25f — Luke 22:14f — Mark 14:28f — I Corinthians 11:23 ff.
- The Upper Room
- The Passover Meal
- The Foot washing
- The Lord’s Supper
- The Great Commandment

C. What Is The Sacrament Of The Altar?
1. Bread and Wine, plus God’s Word of Promise—"This is my body, given for you" and "This is my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sins."

2. Life and Salvation—"The benefits of this sacrament are pointed out by the words, `given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. These words assure us that in the sacrament we receive forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. For where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation." Luther’s Small Catechism

3. A Communal Meal—Unlike Baptism, this is for the whole Family of God.

4. A Remembering—Jesus’ death for us (Sad Occasion)

5. The Banquet of the Lord (Happy Occasion)—We sing "This is the feast of victory for our God". This song celebrates Easter; the joy of the resurrection.
foretaste of the feast to come in God's Heavenly Kingdom.

III. HOLY COMMUNION IS THE LORD'S SUPPER

A. Jesus is our Host—Jesus is always the One really giving you His Body and Blood in the Bread and the Wine. Never go to the altar to receive communion from a pastor or anyone else, rather than Jesus. Regard the hands that offer it to you as Christ's own. Otherwise it is worthless.

B. The whole Risen, Glorified Christ comes to us in, with and under the Bread and Wine. Jesus gives us His assurance that we truly receive Him, all of Him, for all your needs.

C. Your Faith alone qualifies you for an invitation to His Supper —"When is a person rightly prepared to receive this sacrament?" "Fasting and other outward preparations serve a good purpose. However, that person is well prepared and worthy who believes these words, 'Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.' ... for the words 'for you' require simply a believing heart." Small Catechism

- Psalm 51:17 "The sacrifices of God are a broken Spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, 0 God, You will not despise."
- 2 Cor. 13:5 (ESV) “Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves.”
- Isaiah 41:10 (ESV) “Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”

D. It takes God to be a man or woman. All the Means of Grace are about restoring us to function. A person without Christ is like a car without gas, an oil lamp without oil, a pen without ink. They are all dysfunctional, not fulfilling the function they were made for. Jesus did not come to only get us from hell to heaven, he came to get God back into you, and restore you to proper function, for your good and for His glory!

- John 15:5 “…apart from me, You can do nothing, “
- Phil 1:21 “For to me to live is Christ, Christ, Christ…”
- Matthew 5:14,16 "You are the light of the world... Let your light so shine before others that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."
- Gal 2:20 “I is no longer I who live, but Christ, Christ, Christ..who lives in me.”
- Rom 5:10 “Much more being reconciled, we will be saved by his life, life, life…”

Conclusion--Depending on schedule, you might now go to the chapel, or stay at our tables, for a special service of Holy Communion. [Instructions given by Head Spiritual Director]
Sample SACRAMENTS Rollo

I. INTRODUCTION

Hello, my name is _____________. I attended Lutheran Cursillo ___________. This Rollo is in 2 parts. The first part focuses in the sacrament of Baptism, and the second part on the sacrament of Holy Communion. Following this first part, we will take a break and then have lunch. I will continue with the second part of the sacraments Rollo after lunch.

Let us pray:

II. WHAT IS A SACRAMENT?

A. Child Playing in the Mud

When I was a child, I used to love to play in the mud. We had a mud hole behind the swing set, under the shade of a plum tree. I'd make mud pies and dry them on the seats of the swing. I'd build dams and rivers and islands in the mud hole. I planted clumps of grass, and populated my little world with plastic figures of people and animals. The urge to create and play in the mud is part of us from birth. I believe it's a reflection of God's image in us: the pure joy of creation.

B. God Plays in the Mud

Genesis tells us that "In the beginning, the earth." (Gen. 1:1)

In Genesis we find a description of God as one who loves to "play in the mud" -- God separates the waters from the dry land; God creates rivers; God plants grass and flowers and puts animals and people in the world he created. God created the heavens and islands, continents and trees; and finally, God created. Genesis 2 describes God as molding Adam out of clay and breathing into According to Genesis, God loves to play in the mud.

C. God is a Materialist

God loves his creation, and God loves to reveal himself to us through the stuff of his creation. Creation is full of God's fingerprints. Even when sin entered the world and corrupted the gift of creation; God never stopped loving his material world. God continued to bless his material form, and his blessing usually came in material form. Throughout the Bible, God uses the stuff of his people:

- God blessed Abraham and Sarah by giving them a son.
- God appeared to Moses in a burning bush.
- God fed his chosen people with manna in the wilderness.
- And finally, God put on human form and came to us in Jesus. God comes to us through physical, material stuff because he loves his creation, he loves us, and he loves playing in the mud.

But God's presence in creation is not always visible. God's presence is both hidden and revealed in the world he created.

- Example of stars in the sky: the awesome handiwork of God, or simply tremendous spinning globs of glowing gases?
- Big Bang Theory: instruments have succeeded in peering back to the beginnings of the universe, at wispy clouds of matter which scientists say are the oldest and largest structures in the universe. One scientist said, "It's like looking at the face of God." Or at least, at evidence of God creating order out of chaos.
First John reminds us that "No one has ever seen God face to face"; the light of God's presence is so bright that it would blind us, if God did not come to us veiled in his creation. [Even Moses was only allowed to see God's "backside".]

So FAITH is needed in order to be able to see the revelation of God's grace in the world. Faith is what allows us to look at the Milky Way and see God's telltale fingerprints. FAITH is what allows us to look at a baby born in Bethlehem and see in him the Christ; God's own Son, and the Savior of the world. FAITH is what allows us to see the presence of Christ in the bread and wine of Holy Communion.

D. **Jesus is the Word of God**

Jesus Christ is the Word of God. He was present at the creation of the world. As John I says -- "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made... And the Word became flesh and dwelled among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father."

The creation tells of the glory of God, but Jesus Christ is the ultimate revelation to us of God. Creation shows us God's power and glory; Jesus shows us God's love and mercy. The Holy Scriptures contains Jesu's the Word, Luther says, just as the manger in Bethlehem held the baby Jesus. Jesus Christ, the "Word" of God, comes to us through the "words" of the Bible and the preaching of it, and through the sacraments. Lutherans have used the term "Word and Sacraments" to describe God's chosen means of communicating his grace to us.

FAITH allows us to see and hear Christ as he comes to us through the Word and Sacraments.

E. **Word and Sacrament: Means of Grace [Pipeline/Vehicle]**

God loves his creation, and uses the stuff of creation as a means to communicate his grace to us. Sacraments are the special means God has chosen to communicate his grace to us, using the ordinary stuff of creation. When Jesus ascended to heaven after the resurrection, he left us the sacraments so that we could be assured of his continuing presence in our lives.

Roman Catholic Church teaches that there are seven sacraments. But from his study of the bible, Martin Luther argued that Jesus gave us only two sacraments: Baptism and Holy Communion. Lutherans have traditionally said that a sacrament includes three things.

Definition of a sacrament: [write on blackboard]

1) It has been COMMANDED BY CHRIST:
   - Baptism: "Go... and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit..." (Matthew 28:19).
   - Communion: "Take and eat, this is my body, given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

2) It uses of PHYSICAL SIGN
   - Baptism: Water
   - Communion: Bread and Wine

3) It carries the PROMISE OF GOD'S GRACE.
   Luther said that God is present everywhere, but God has promised to be present in a special way in the sacraments. His presence in the sacraments carries with it God's grace, life and forgiveness of sin
III. HOLY BAPTISM

Intro: Tell story of child who had trouble pronouncing his words right. When he tried to say the word "worship" it sounded like "wash up". When asked, "What do we go to church to do?" He said, "We go to church to `wash up" (worship)".

There's truth in that! Baptism is a spiritual "washing up".

A. The origins of Baptism

The Old Testament: describes ceremonies in which people washed themselves with water, to purify their bodies in obedience to God's Law.

Proselyte Baptism: Gentiles who converted to Judaism were baptized as a symbol of purification from their "unclean" lives.

John the Baptist: John baptized people in the Jordan River. John used baptism as a sign of repentance for Jews. This was God's way of preparing people for the coming of the Messiah who would forgive their sins.

Jesus' Baptism: Jesus was baptized by John in the Jordan River, even though Jesus did not need to repent of any sin. Jesus was baptized as an example for his disciples to follow. It also marked the beginning of his preaching and healing ministry. After John baptized Jesus, the Holy Spirit descended upon him in the form of a dove.

The early Church: In Matthew 28, Jesus commands us to "Go... and make disciples, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." In the book of Acts we read about how the early church baptized new believers. Sometimes whole households were baptized -- parents, children, and servants.

Martin Luther: Luther believed that in infant Baptism we see the supreme example of how God's grace works. God reaches out to us with his grace, even before we are able to ask for it. We don't earn or deserve God's grace, yet he gives it to us freely through the waters of Baptism.

The Lutheran Church baptizes both infants and adults. Adults have the advantage of understanding and appreciating the meaning of Baptism when they are baptized. But the meaning of baptism is the same for both infants and adults: it's God's action and God's promises that are most important. We simply receive what God gives us.

B. What does Baptism symbolize?

Cleansing: God is a God who still loves to play in the mud. Baptism he washes away the muddy stain of sin.

Rebirth: Jesus said to Nicodemus, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you are born of water and the Spirit, you cannot enter the kingdom of God." (John 3:5)

Adoption: Through baptism we become a part of the family of God, the "communion of saints". An adopted child enjoys all the rights of any other child, including the right to inherit all that the parents have. We are inheritors of all the gifts God has for his
C. What does baptism do for us?

Small Catechism: "What benefits does God give in Baptism?" "In baptism God forgives sin, delivers from death and the devil, and gives everlasting salvation to all who believe what he has promised.

Forgiveness of Sins

Salvation/Promise of Eternal Life in God's Kingdom

Gift of the Holy Spirit: in baptism God bestows on us his Holy Spirit. Pastors make the sign of the cross on the forehead of the person being baptized as a sign of who they now belong to. It's like being branded. We wear the mark of the one we now belong to. We have been marked with the cross of Christ and sealed with the Holy Spirit. All of this is God's action. We simply receive God's forgiveness and the promise of eternal life. Even the faith to receive it is a gift from God.

Gives us Victory over Death: Baptism assures of God's presence throughout our life, and assures us that God will carry us across the threshold of death and into his heavenly kingdom.

We no longer need to fear death: story of girl who crosses a cemetery to get home from school. When asked, "Aren't you afraid?" She answered, "No, it's just what I have to cross to get home."

There's a story of baptism in a church in South America: mother carries small casket to the altar as funeral music is played. Father carries bucket of warm water, which he pours, into the open casket. Pastor enters carrying infant; anoints him with embalming oil; then dips the infant three times into the water-filled casket, saying, "I drown you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Then he dries the baby and clothes him in a white robe. The congregation begins singing Easter music; the pastor lifts up the baby and hands the child back to his parents. I'm not recommending that we do that in all our churches, but it gets across the meaning of baptism in a powerful way!

The New Testament teaches us that Baptism symbolizes death and resurrection. Our sinful self-- the "old Adam"-- is drowned, and God raises us up again to a new life free from sin. God sees us as free from sin, because we are now clothed in the righteousness of Christ.

D. Sanctification (a.k.a. "Walking Wet")

The problem, Luther says, is that the old sinful Adam in us turns out to be a very strong swimmer. He keeps popping his head up again and again! So although we are baptized only once in life, it begins a life-long process of sanctification. Sanctification literally means, "to be made holy." We keep going back to our baptism, asking God to help finish the work that He began in our lives when we were baptized. Lord, make us holy!

In the Small Catechism, Luther raises the question: "What does baptism mean for daily living?" Luther answers this way: "It means that our sinful self, with all its evil deeds and desires, should be drowned through daily repentance, and that day after day and new self should arise to live with God in righteousness and purity forever."

"St. Paul writes in Romans 6, `We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.'"
Remembering our Baptism:

1) Celebrating baptismal anniversaries:

Do you know when you were baptized?

At home: meal with candle, red plate, family prayer Church/Sunday School could send people Cards, or set up a congregational baptism banner with names and dates of baptisms (e.g. tree with leaves, sheep on a green field)

2) Affirmation of baptism: saying "Yes" to what God began in us when we were baptized

3) Confirmation: a special time to affirm our baptism

4) Confession and forgiveness: theologically, it is a return to the baptismal font; we reclaim the promise of forgiveness, which we received when we were baptized.

5) Making the sign of the cross

E. Conclusion

1 Peter 2:4-10 describes the blessings we have received through our adoption into God's family through baptism: "Hut you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were no people but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy."

It is all a result of God's action, not our own! God still loves to create. He loves to get down in the mud of our sinful selves, and by blowing the breath of his Holy Spirit into us; he re-creates us and begins to re-fashion our lives into the image of Jesus Christ.

God began that process when we were baptized. Baptism gives us something "concrete" on which to hang our faith. Luther said that even if his faith was weak and he doubted everything else, he still knew that he had been baptized, and that God had made a promise to him at that time. And God keeps his promises. So remember your baptism.

End with benediction reminding us of who we belong to, making sign of the cross "in the name of the Father, + Son and Holy Spirit. Amen."

Invite people to turn to their neighbor and make the sign of the cross on their forehead.
"Remember that you were baptized in the name of the Father, + Son, and Holy Spirit."

End of part 1

Sample SACRAMENTS Rollo, Part Two

NOTE: Palanca and banner(s) have just been delivered.
Read Hebrews 12:1f ("we are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses").

Intro: Joke about highway centerline painter named Pastor ____________.

1st day: painted 3 miles
2nd day: “ 1 1/2 miles
3rd day: “ 1/2 mile
Supervisor, named Pastor _____ asks why he is getting less and less done each day. He answers, "No matter how hard I try, I keep getting less and less done. You see, the longer the painted line gets, the farther I have to go to get back to the bucket of paint."

"Any similarity to actual people is purely coincidental."

Spiritual truth: the further we get from our source, the less effective we are, and the less we accomplish.

To live out the Christian life, we need to stay close to our source, our well, our Lord. We need the Word and Sacraments.

I. SUMMARY OF PART 1

What is a sacrament? Means of Grace; God's chosen vehicles for communicating to us his grace, the forgiveness of sin and the promise of eternal life.

Two sacraments: Baptism and Holy Communion

Baptism: A death and resurrection
Cleansed from sin
Adopted into God's family
Gifted with the Holy Spirit
The beginning of a life-long process of becoming the holy people God has already declared us to be.

Now let's look at the sacrament of Holy Communion.

II. HOLY COMMUNION - it's appropriate that we just ate lunch together!

A. We have been spiritually reborn through Baptism. But newborns need to eat.

Holy Communion is the basic meal for Christians: our manna in the wilderness of daily life.

What is it? Bread and wine, plus the Word of God.

But more importantly, it is a sacrament of love and forgiveness (See John 15:13)

"This is my body, given for you" "This is my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sins - Do this in remembrance of me." Ccf. -Matthew 26:26-291

Small Catechism: "What benefits do we receive from this sacrament?"

"The benefits of this sacrament are pointed out by the words, ‘given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.’ These words assure us that in the sacrament we receive forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. For where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation."

A word of promise: "Given and shed for you, for the forgiveness of sins." All we need is faith, the ability to trust in God's promise.

How do we know Christ is present in Holy Communion? Luther said Christ was present in his cabbage soup, so of course he is present in Holy Communion.

Colossians 1:17 says, "He [Christ] is before all things, and in him all things hold together."
So God is present in Holy Communion just as in all creation. But God promises to that He will be present in a special way in Holy Communion, to convey to us forgiveness of sins, life and salvation.

B. **It is communal:** A family meal for a gathering of the Family of God. It is not something that we do alone.

Example of Episcopal Ad Project poster: Photo of TV with altar cloth, chalice and bread Caption: "With all due respect to television evangelists, when was the last time you received the Lord's Supper from a Sony?"

Communion of saints. It unites us with God's people through all the ages.

Exodus: Passover Meal -- reminder of God's salvation out of slavery
Manna in the wilderness -- dependence on God for food and life

Old Testament Thankofferings, eaten in the presence of the Lord: reminder of God's continual grace as the provider of life and food. [cf. Deuteronomy 14: 22f f, Deut. 261

Remembering Jesus' death for us (Sad Occasion)

C. **It is the banquet of the Lord** (Happy Occasion)
We sing "This is the feast of victory for our God". This song celebrates Easter; the joy of the resurrection. A foretaste of the feast to come in God's Heavenly Kingdom.

Holy Communion is both happy and sad - LIKE WHEN MY GRANDFATHER DIED (TELL STORY) It was a sad occasion because my grandfather had died. It was a happy occasion because it was Christmas, and I got to meet relatives I had only heard about.

D. **It is repeatable** (Unlike Baptism)

Early Church: Weekly

Medieval church: people communed once a year, bread only. Martin Luther and other Protestant Reformers advocated weekly communion. But became less frequent, perhaps out of reverence, desire to keep Communion "special".

Tell Cal Reehl's Story: Communion better than $100 bill
A member of our church (Cal Reehl) once told me that at his previous church in another city, the pastor wanted to serve Holy Communion weekly. Some of the members had a hard time with that. They were good Christian people, many of them life-long Lutherans. But out of reverence for the "specialness" of the sacrament, they thought it should not be given too frequently.

Cal was in favor of weekly communion. He used this analogy when he discussed the issue with another member who wanted less-frequent communion He said, "Now what if Pastor were to invite people to come to the altar rail every Sunday morning and gave each person a $100 bill. Would you rather get that $100 bill weekly, or just once in a while?" The man said, "Well, of course, I'd want it weekly."
Then Cal made his point: "Well, I think that Holy Communion is much more valuable than any amount of money, and I need it as often as possible."

**GRACE = God's Riches at Christ's Expense**

Another way to put the question of how often to have communion: How often do we need to hear "I love you"? ex. of man who never says "I love you" to his wife. Holy Communion is one way that God says "I love you" to us again and again.

**E. What do we need to do to prepare to receive Holy Communion?**

Answer: Simply have FAITH.

**Small Catechism:** "When is a person rightly prepared to receive this sacrament?" "Fasting and other outward preparations serve a good purpose. However, that person is well prepared and worthy who believes these words, 'Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.' ... for the words 'for you' require simply a believing heart."

Belief = trust/faith

**III. CONCLUSION: THE SACRAMENTAL CHARACTER OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE**

We are called to be "little Christ's", carrying God's Grace into the world. Each of us represents Christ wherever we may be. We are like living sacraments, because through our lives we communicate God's love and forgiveness to others.

Mother Theresa describes herself as "a pencil in the hand of God". What kind of message is God writing with your life? You may be the only "Bible" someone may ever read.

LBW Baptismal service uses the words of Jesus in Matthew 5-- "You are the light of the world... Let your light so shine before others that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."

God does not expect us to be perfect. God has given us the sacraments to assure His of his continual love and favor no matter what, if we simply come to him with faith and a heart eager and willing to receive his grace.

Read Gerhard Frost's "Soggy Cereal and Tepid Tea":

When I remember that I am a parent, and think of God as Father, I recall a special breakfast brought to me in bed.

My wife and I woke up early to the sound of hurrying feet. We wondered what they were up to, our four- and eight-year-old [children]; but soon it came - breakfast in bed.

It was an elaborate menu:
chilled burnt toast, with peanut butter; eggs, fried, and chilled too; soggy cereal, 
([because] the milk had been added too soon) 
and tepid tea. [It was] A horrendous mix.

When they stepped out for a moment 
to get something they’d forgotten (heaven forbid!) 
my wife whispered [to me], 
"You’re going to have to eat this, because I can’t! And I did.

I didn’t eat as a gourmet, 
for it wasn’t gourmet cooking; 
I didn’t even eat as a hungry man, for I wasn’t hungry.

I ate it as a father 
because it was made for me; I was expected to: they had faith in me. 
And I ate it because it was served on eager feet 
and with starry eyes.

[When] I think of my poor service to God as 
teacher, parent, 
interpreter of the Good News, 
I know that my offerings are soggy, tepid and unfit. 
But my [heavenly] Father receives them and even 
blesses them - 
not because I am good 
but because he is!

In Holy Communion, God takes our simple offering of bread and wine and returns them 
to us with the promise of his grace, life and forgiveness. The power of the sacraments does not 
depend on our goodness, but God's. Holy Communion gives us the fuel we need to be lights in 
a world still full of darkness. Amen.

Depending on Schedule: We will now go to the chapel for a special service of Holy Communion (or 
stay in our Decurias around the tables). Instructions will be given by HSD.

Rollo #9, Saturday

OBSTACLES TO THE LIFE OF GRACE OUTLINE

40-45 minutes

Situation and Objective

This is the fourth Grace talk given by a Spiritual Director on the weekend. The candidates have now 
been presented with each leg of the tripod: Piety, Study, and Action. They will soon be hearing that 
they are called to be leaders in their environments. The presence of God's grace is now understood 
and has been experienced as we move toward the evening of the second day. Candidates may now 
be questioning whether or not they have the nerve or the ability to pursue this kind of life in the 
face of real or imagined difficulties that they will face after the weekend.

This should be a realistic and positive talk, maybe even humorous at times as we realize our human foibles and fragility (pastors too). Yes, there are some fundamental obstacles in the life of grace,
and we want to deal with them here. We want the candidates to see that sin, for which we bear re-
sponsibility, permeates our thoughts and actions. The devil, the world and our own flesh seek to trip
us up. We want them to be assured that Christ has overcome these forces, that we have forgiveness
when we stumble, and he has promised to give us victory over them.

**OBSTACLES TO THE LIFE OF GRACE OUTLINE**

I. Introduction
The title of this talk is "Obstacles to the Life of Grace". We have seen that God's love
for us is habitual - it is part of God's nature. God has revealed in Christ this permanent,
personal, unconditional love relationship with you. Our piety and study can deepen this
relationship each day. We have considered how God continues to make his grace
available to us to strengthen our resolve to live as Christians. We have realized that to
remain vital our faith has to be active in love.

All this grace talk! If God really loves us so much and literally showers us with so much
grace, why isn't it a reality in everyone's life? Good question - and that's what this talk
this afternoon is about. Obstacles - Obstacles to Grace.

According to Webster's, an obstacle is "anything that gets in the way or hinders". It
need not be insurmountable, but it can discourage and distract from moving ahead.
Think of some of the obstacles some familiar figures faced: Don Quixote's windmill;
Abraham and Lot trying to settle Palestine (water, pasture, dividing of territory); Moses,
and the people of Israel facing the Sea; Noah and his ark (naysayers, animals, sewer-
age).

In this talk we will face the ultimate obstacle, for which we ourselves are responsible:
SIN.

II. God's Plan
A. God's ideal
   1) A perfect creation (Genesis 1 - and it was "good")
   2) Humankind, created in God's image: free, thinking, caring, compassionate,
      loving, spiritual, rational (and it was "very good")

B. God gives the creation into our care and safe-keeping
   1) God gave everything - existence, personality, the world
   2) God placed us into the world to enjoy it - not to assume its ownership
   3) God gave natural, physical laws to which all creation is subject

C. God's intent was to live in relationship with humankind
   1) Genesis 3 - God "walks in the garden"
   2) Established some "spiritual" laws to govern our relationship with him; they
      were gifts, not burdens; life in grace depends upon them.

      • St. Augustine understood it: "My heart is restless, 0 God,
      until it finds it's rest in Thee!"

LCMA's Spiritual Director Manual, Page 74
3) What stands in the way of this satisfying relationship and life?

III. Our Sin
A. Definition
1) Disobedience to God
2) Doing what we want to do rather than what God wants
3) Placing ourselves at the center of the universe - wanting to be equal with God (goes right back to the garden)

B. Sin as Obstacle: whatever keeps us from being what we truly are
1) Forgetting that we are creatures of God - Adam forgot, Cain forgot, Judas forgot, as did Peter
2) Being unwilling to be who we are - the Pharisees tried to live life so perfectly they built walls around themselves
3) Being afraid to be who we are - "I tried, I failed, it's no use"
   Paul: "The good that I would, I do not"
4) Not caring who or whose we are

C. Sin's environment (The Terrible Trinity)
1) The Devil - the personification of the forces of evil that tempt us
   We still decide. We cannot say, "the Devil made me do it"
2) The World - the mores and ethics of society are opposed to the Word
   - Give some personal examples
3) The Flesh - that rebellious part of us rejects God's claim upon us

D. Our sinful self as the obstacle
1) Personal sin is real. It is part of our rebellion
2) Evil in the world results from ours and everyone else's sin magnified
3) God didn't create sin, but has given us the answer to its power over us

IV. God's remedy
A. Jesus Christ's life-giving death and resurrection
1) Cleanses us from all sin
2) Frees us to be ourselves, sinful or good - we are both saint and sinner
3) Allows us to take ourselves less seriously

B. Repentance (Matthew 4:17)
1) Jesus came to call us to genuine repentance - not just "feeling guilty"

2) This is *metanoia* - a changed mind (it may not be emotional at all)
   a. Causes us to reconsider our purpose and strategy for living
   b. Brings us to change our thinking - being transformed by renewing our minds (*Romans 12*)
   c. Stirs us to change our living patterns and choices

3) This is not our work" it is the work of the Holy Spirit

**C. Confession**
1) We sin but we also have an answer

2) There is freedom in confession and power in absolution

3) Our sins are removed "as far as east is from the west" and "to be remembered no more"

**D. Living a grace filled life**
1) Live each day in an increasingly closer relationship with Christ (*Piety*)

2) Enrich your understanding (*Study*)

3) Step out in boldness to make a difference in the lives of others (*Action*)

**V. Conclusion**
Obstacles? What obstacles? Christ died for us and took our sin upon him when he died. As a free gift to us, he removed the only true obstacle we have to living an abundant, grace filled life - our sinful self. We can now truly love ourselves, we can overcome our stumbling in the light of God's forgiveness, and we can be a part of the ministry of reconciliation for others. Sounds like a great life to me. God loves you my friends, and so do I!

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**Sample OBSTACLES Rollo**

Husband wife/new car. She was timid. Here are keys. Take it for a spin. When gone, wondered how long until first dent. Finally she returned. How did you like it dear? Oh, "those air bags are wonderful." We are in a drought. Baptists are dipping and Methodists are giving rain checks.

The score was tied. It was the final quarter in a game between two rivals. It was first and 10 on the 40-yard line. The ball was snapped, handed off to the halfback who could run the 100-yard dash in 10 seconds. He spun through the line like a skater on ice. Suddenly he broke free. His only thought was to keep going. Suddenly he was out in the dear. He was going all the way. But something was wrong. As he cleared the goal line, the mixed sounds from the crowd signaled that something was terribly wrong. A penalty? Was the play being called back? No, what had happened is that he had gotten turned around. He had scored a goal, but it was for the wrong team.
That true story actually took place. The young star to whom it happened never forgot that day. Life is something like that. When there is no resistance, we are probably going in the wrong direction. In the journey of life it is easy to get our morals mixed up.

During the past 2 days you have heard Rollos on many subjects you have learned that it all begins with grace; you have listened to a talk on faith; you have heard about piety, study and action- about how we can effectively change our environment. We have telescoped a short course of Christianity into these hours. If as you have listened, it has seemed to be an easy journey, I have news for you. My talk is about obstacles, barriers and roadblocks, which may hinder us. I can guarantee you a new walk with Christ will meet with resistance somewhere along the way. To put this another way, only the Christian can be tempted. When one has no spiritual direction, there is nothing to tempt.

And make no mistake; there are many who have entered the ring of Christian living. They have been faithful servants, they have worshipped regularly, and they have supported the church. But suddenly, or gradually they gave up. These folks have tasted the good things to come; they have been vibrant and alive; but then the spiritual juices have dried up and their wells have run dry.

Some years ago our church used the Bethel Bible Series, a course used to give an overview of the Bible. I will never forget one of the pictures, which beautifully described the Christian walk. It was a narrow winding path, hemmed in by large trees. The trunks have grotesque faces snarling at the sole person walking down the path. A laser beam of light is the only illumination to guide him. There is a log crossing the path. It is on fire reminding us that keeping the faith is a fiery ordeal. There are broken tablets as a sign that some folks have abandoned God's guidelines for abundant life in favor of using their own agenda. There are many scriptural references, which describe the obstacles we face.

- To the overly confident, Peter says "beware I stand lest I should fall"
- To those who would exchange the grace of God for moral Principle's, Hebrews reminds us: "Jesus is the author and finisher of our faith."
- To those who have begun in the Spirit only to lose their sense of destiny Paul says, "their end is destruction, their God is the belly."
- To those New Agers who say, "every way is a road of enlightenment, Jesus says, "I am the way." There is no other-name by which we can be saved!

All of us have different journeys. Some of us have traveled in the fast lane, until we discovered it was leading us nowhere. Some of us come this place in life because we have discovered the high price for the wage of sin. But this we have in common-No one can or had ever lived the Christian life. Let me repeat that again). It is impossibility. Only Jesus Christ has lived the Christian life. And tonight he calls us not to imitators, but to be followers of Christ. So the secret of keeping the faith is letting him walk with us and in us, as He guides us along this perilous journey. This is not to say that we are all cookie cut Christians, cut from the same cloth. We are unique individuals who become all we were ever meant to be by His presence.

So, how can we identify the enemies along the way? What are the obstacles, which hinder us? To be more specific I would like to introduce you to the unholy Trinity it is taken from words of Martin Luther in the catechism, They are: The Devil, the world and, my Sinful Flesh.
I. THE DEVIL

Some years ago I visited Angeles Temple in Los Angeles. That particular night a Christian Soldier appeared. He was dressed up in all the armament Paul refers to ill Ephesians; the sword of the Spirit, the helmet of Salvation, the breastplate of righteousness. He proceeded to illustrate how in the course of life we discard these gifts which defend us. So he took off his helmet, his breastplate threw down his shield. For a time it appeared like a spiritual burlesque. Well then he was down to his shorts. At that very moment someone dressed as the devil entered, pitchfork and all he chased him all around the church, as this undressed shoulder of faith anxiously looked how to retrieve these garments which were now essential to ward off the enemy. Even though most of us laugh at such a trite example of the evil one, the conflict and the battle is a real as anything among us. Peter speaks of the devil as a "roaring lion" seeking whomever to devour and destroy.

I am not an expert on Satan or "the devil" as he is called in Jesus temptation. But I do know that evil powers do exist. And that "force" is not easy to deal with. I once remember visiting someone in jail. When I asked this person what brought him to this place of confinement he said, "well its this way, the devil is out here and God is up, there; they are both fighting to see who will control me and be in charge of my life. I kept trying to show him that by placing this battle beyond himself was acting irresponsible in avoiding responsibility for his own role here. For us to say something like "the devil made me do it" is to forget that we ourselves need to make choices.

In recent weeks our president has talked about some nations of the world as being an axis of evil. All of us know that some countries are preparing weapons of mass destruction. And certainly we know the "evil" which was perpetrated on September 11. It has marked us with a memory, which will last a lifetime. But if and when Osama Bin Laden is either killed or found dead and if we can remove Sadam Hussein and if we can achieve some kind of peace in the middle East, will that end the evil in the world? The fact is that others will take their place. And we will have another crisis before us.

The fact is that both good and evil invade every layer of our being. That is why we need confession and forgiveness every day. That is why Luther speaks of us as being both saint and sinner in the same sentence. I remember when our daughter as a youngster made us quit upset with some bad words she said. I think the punishment was to wash her mouth out with soap. Our question, which followed, was bad, but her answer was profound. "Now will you be good?" She responded, "good and bad".

So the challenge will always be with us. And we shall be attacked in any shape or form to lure us away from being anything less than what God intends and what is best for our lives.

I heard recently of a pastor who confessed that the thought he would be tempted by someone coming into his office in the beauty and charm of a woman. What he discovered is that this point of vulnerability was a building program, which was never consummated. It was discouragement, which led to his dissipated spirit.

Bishop Herb Chilstrom, formerly presiding bishop of the ELCA pointed out that the evil forces prevented him from facing the reality of his own mortality. Like the lie in the Garden of
Eden when the evil de said, "eat of this fruit and you shall be like God and you will olive forever". The strategy was to get him to deny the reality of his own mortality.

I hope this is a very special weekend for you. It just may be that you will sweep all of the pieces of your Christian life being joined together in a beautiful collage. But if when the smoke clears and you are back in the trenches of daily life, you say, "nothing has really changed." you may easily become discouraged. I love these words of Luther's Mighty Fortress, "His craft and power are great, and armed with cruel hate, on earth is not his equal". And to that we say, "Thanks be to God for the victory we have through Jesus Christ our Lord."

II THE WORLD

Now, it is important to remember that the world is a part of God's creation. Over and Over in Genesis One He said, "it is good." (Just a little insert here; remember when God created man, he said, "I can do better than that." When he created woman what did he say? "Practice makes perfect.") There may be some truth to that. Paul later writes, "for everything created by God is good and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving."

When we speak of the world as an obstacle it might be helpful to look at the Greek word, COSMOS. From it is derived the word cosmetic, the superficial part of that which passes away. (I should say I mention that every time my wife pays her cosmetic bill, but so far it hasn't helped.)

Now our view of this world changes with the times. If life is good we sing: "This is my father's world". But in a time of crisis we cry out, "Maranatha, come Lord Jesus" Or, "Stop the World, I want to get off".

A. HEDONISM The media plays an important role in shaping our views. We are constantly hearing, "you deserve this." or "be sure you get your share." You have heard coaches say, "winning isn't everything; it's the only thing." As consumers we are given subliminal messages which are calculated to appeal to our self directed instincts. Just this past week I have a visit from my cousin. She has terminal cancer and it making what she calls "Aloha visits." When I encouraged her husband he said, "I get my strength from Nancy." So people are dependent on those whom they should serve and suck life away from others. That's why a couple wanted their marriage vow to read: "as long as our love shall last." I believe God has given us 2 hands, one for receiving, the other for giving. Hedonism forgets the giving hand and summarizes life with one question, "what's in it for me?"

Another obstacle in the world is (B) MATERIALISM Many of us today are living at about 110% of our income. The result is that we are hopelessly in debt. Credit cards make that easy. Somewhere I read that the average credit balance in most families is about $8,000. The reason for this is that we have been influenced by what we see around us. Enough is never enough; we are not satisfied with what we have. Think about this "John Jacob Astor a passenger on the Titanic had everything he could want. But on that fateful night everything was not enough. So bigger is not always better. Since moving to Phoenix cars and homes and shopping centers have all grown exponentially. But now we have dirty air, traffic congestion and a life style, which is has not delivered its promises. We have a button on our refrigerator which reads: Let us live more simply so that others may simply live." Materialism can choke the life out of us.
One further obstacle we all face is our (C) BUSYNESSThere are not just enough hours in the day to accomplish what we expect of ourselves. When you think of all the time saving gadgets we have as against the last generation, you might think we would be people of leisure but we are busier than ever. Time becomes a race against the clock; our prayer life becomes wishful thinking, our fellowship with our best friend Jesus fades. I dare say many of you when this weekend began found your head spinning with all the things you left undone. It may only be in these last hours you have felt less driven. What is it that keeps us on this treadmill? And what can be done to push the "Pause" button of life?

A pastor friend of mine developed lung cancer. He never smoked a cigarette in this life. Well, I visited him and lamented his situational. Wyburn said to me: "I have all the time to do the things I must do and not one minute more. Time is a gift and we never know when it will run out.

A businessman had no time for his family. Everything he promised at home was on hold. But one day at the office he received a phone call. His 9 year old daughter had been hit by a car. He raced to the scene and knelt down before her. She looks up and said, "daddy, we never did get that doll house built, did we." With that she died. What a legacy to leave etched into his life forever. I have been a pastor for many years. Never did I hear anyone on their deathbed say, "I wish I had spent more time at the office, or I wish I had made more money."

III MY SINFUL FLESH

The third member of this unholy Trinity is our own flesh. Now those who have studied Greek, FLESH are not limited to sex. It is a comprehensive word, which literally means anything we accomplish by our own will, and strength. Flesh can mean an escalation of Saturday night hormones, but it also can refer to anything, which keeps us from being all we were meant to be as sisters of Jesus.

When it comes to temptation, the scriptures clearly state that Jesus was tempted in every way just as we are; tempted to turn stones into bread when he was hungry; tempted to show His power to avoid being the suffering servant; tempted by the young beautiful Jewish women. But the difference between Jesus and us is that he was obedient. He said no! When Paul says, "have no confidence in the flesh" he means that when we are tempted, we are to remember that as God's redeemed people, it is the Christ within us who is tempted. We may fail ourselves. But Jesus will never let us down.

An equal and opposite weakness we face is PRIDE-Pride is not always an enemy. As a positive force it is a close relative of self-esteem. But in faith matters pride can lead to self-righteousness. And that can become a repulsive goodness similar to what Jesus encountered with the Pharisees. They insulated themselves so that he could never penetrate into their hearts. This focus on the self built a wall, which kept them from the love, and renewal Jesus wanted to give home. It led Jesus to anger and tears. Their whole life was a facade, a caricature of the real thing. And until it was removed they could never see their need for His grace. That is why the scripture says, "God resists the proud, he gives grace to the humble."

Another pitfall in living the Christian life in the flesh is APATHY. This happens when we become discouraged. There are many discouraged Christians today. We pray and nothing happens. We try to find a place where we belong, and we feel left out. Or, we see the behavior of other Christians and conclude, "if that's the way Christians live, I want to part of it."
Some time ago I visited with a woman who was quite depressed. Her daughter had married someone who was extremely jealous. He forbade her from communicating with her parents. This was their only daughter. Contacts were few and far between. Well, 2 years after the marriage the daughter contracted cancer. Again, her parents wanted to see her, but were not allowed. The daughter died and the husband did not even have a proper burial. Now, the mother faces the fact that she must use legal means to retrieve some of her daughter’s most cherished items. Discouragement. You care so much and for so long that finally, nothing is left.

Another obstacle is FEAR. (I think Roosevelt was right when he said, "there is nothing to fear, but fear itself"). Fear is real. It overtakes us when we face a crisis. It can overwhelm us if someone near or dear to us is taken away. Fear can lead to depression, dysfunction, loss of appetite, or any other unhealthy symptom. Recently my son survived the 6th cut at the company where he works. At night, that tension led to a lack of sleep, and during the day, there were knots in his stomach. So there are times when we may have peace with God and yet not have peace with ourselves. In these times it is helpful to-know that Jesus goes before us. So, the unholy Trinity, the Devil, the World, and our own Flesh. How then can we overcome? How can we make it through the forest? What does it take for our spirit to prevail?

Before we address that issue, let me ask where are you? What are the obstacles you face? What is keeping you from begin an eagle? What are the stumbling blocks? Surely you can write you own. They might not even be included here. I would like to offer some suggestions, which might be helpful. Grace has been a central focus on this weekend. Let me use an acrostic for the heart of our faith, the Grace of God. Let’s examine that word.

G...IS FOR GROWING IN THE SPIRIT Paul invites us to grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. In Romans he says, "those who are walking according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are walking according to the Spirit, Grow in the Spirit." We can pray right now: "Spirit of the living God fall afresh on me; melt me, mold me, fill me, use me"

R...IS FOR REMEMBERING We belong to the Lord. He has redeemed us. My brother-in-law's son has two boys. When they leave for school he invokes: "remember, you are an Evenson." Back in the Old Testament the Jews made terrible slaves. The reason was that God has told them they were meant for better things as children of the promise. Remember your baptism. Remember that you were named and claimed by the Lord who created you.

A...IS FOR ACTIVITY use your time wisely. Program yourself in order to seek the things of god. Luther once said, "you cannot stop a bird from flying over your head but you can keep it from making a nest in your hair." I meet every week with a small group to pray and share with others what's on my heart. We are accountable to each other. Our time together sets the agenda for things which are important for me to do in the next week.

C...IS FOR COMMUNITY You cannot be a Christian alone. I have a dear friend in Chicago. We grew up together. When I last visited him he had found a new spirituality which seemed to be most genuine. But as a Catholic he wasn't ready to go back to church. He was afraid it would destroy the beautiful thing he had going with God. Well, our journey needs others to support and encourage us. There may also be times when exhortation is necessary if our goal is to be reached.

E...IS FOR EXPECTATION We are at the end of the Lenten Season. This is a time when we
need to march off the map of our own spiritual journeys. We need to know that right now God wants to do things beyond our wildest dreams. He is always at the drawing board designing for us the impossible possibility.

CONCLUSION

You may remember the movie: "The Poseidon Adventure." It is a tale of the ocean liner S.S. Poseidon which is out at sea when it-encounters a horrendous storm. It’s something ‘like "The Perfect Storm ‘-Lights go out’ smoke pours into rooms and amid all of the confusion, the ship flips over. Because of the air trapped inside the ocean liner, it floats upside down. But in the confusion, the passengers can’t figure out what's going on. They scramble to get out, mostly by following the steps to the top deck. The problem is, the top deck is now 100 feet under water. In trying to get to the top of the ship, they drown. The only survivors are the few who do what doesn't make sense. They do the opposite of what everyone else is doing and climb up into the dark belly of, the ship until-they-reach the hull There after many stress hours; rescuers arrive and hear them banging on the metal. They are finally set free. Jesus says something about that.

"Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is heard that leads to life, and those who find it are few."

Overcoming obstacles means to go against the grain. It means to take your cues not from the world, but from the Spirit. It means to lose your life in order to find it. But in so doing, you will discover a life worth living, and meet a Shepherd who will supply all your needs and provide an abundance which is beyond anything you can find anywhere else. In the words of the hymn: “On Christ the solid rock I stand; all other ground is sinking sand.” That is my hope and I hope it is yours too. "I have fought the good fight of faith. I have finished the course"

Sample OBSTACLES HANDOUT

This is an example of what we would advise all Spiritual Directors to do for most Rollos, providing some outline or help in taking note for the participants, so they retain what you are sharing.

Introduction: Heading toward the right goal!

JESUS CHRIST IS THE ONLY PERSON WHO HAS EVER LIVED THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

Meet the unholy trinity

I THE DEVIL

"Evil infects every layer of our lives"

II THE WORLD

A. OBSTACLE #1__________________________

B. OBSTACLE #2__________________________

C. OBSTACLE #3__________________________
III OUR OWN FLESH

Flesh is not only "sex". It is anything we seek to accomplish by our own personal strength.
A. ______________________
B. ______________________
C. ______________________
D. ______________________

MAKING IT THROUGH THE OBSTACLES

"The Christian life is lived by GRACE"

G. ______________________
R. ______________________
A. ______________________
C. ______________________
E. ______________________

What are the obstacles which are currently hindering your Christian journey?

"I have fought the good ___________ of ___________. I have __________ the __________."

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Rollo #13, Sunday

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE OF GRACE OUTLINE

(Keeping on Keeping On)

35-40 minutes

Situation and Objective

We have come to the final Grace talk of the weekend. This Rollo, together with the other Sunday Rollos, is directing the candidates to life back home. It seeks to deal with the unspoken (or perhaps spoken) question: "How can I keep alive and vibrant this joy and enthusiasm of living in Christ?"

This talk is to help the candidates for the "long haul" of the Christian walk. They have already begun this preparation through the "Environment" Rollo. This sharing should be as practical as possible, but also as inspirational as possible too. A strong emphasis is placed on the Piety—Spiritual Aids—as a way of tying in disciplines that have already been practiced on the weekend itself. Study and Action have received healthy emphasis in other talks, but can be underscored here. Living boldly and positively with Christ and other Christians is a challenge. They will be learning today how this is possible.

Though it may be mentioned at other times during the day, this is an excellent opportunity to affirm a solid commitment to congregational life and active membership in the Body of Christ as a means of increasing one's own faith and the faith of others. The local church is the primary avenue through which our faith is exercised - not Cursillo.
THE CHRISTIAN LIFE Rollo Outline

I. INTRODUCTION
   This will be the Spiritual Directors' final talk of the weekend—I promise. We have been taking a Grace walk with you these three days. We have seen that God is a God of Grace and loves us, no matter what. We have realized that this is not only a neat idea or philosophy, but that God personalizes, actualizes if you will, this grace for us. We have found that God makes this grace concrete and "incarnational" in and through physical and circumstantial means. And finally we found that even though there are obstacles to grace in this world, even those can be used for our building and God's glory (Romans 8:28).

   This talk is called, The Christian Life of Grace. Or as some like to call it, "How to keep on keeping on." Someone has to ask the question, it might as well be me? "Is this Cursillo a sort of temporary insanity? Has the Cook Team been spiking our coffee? Will we wake up sober tomorrow morning? And, if it has been real here, what's the real world out there going to do with people like us?

   Many of us have felt the Holy Spirit tugging on us deeply this weekend. The Word of God, the wonderful Communion services, the prayers of people all over the world, love everywhere we turn - all of this and more has made this an intense experience. So, now what? Is it all down hill from here?

   Some time earlier our Rector shared that for everything you need, Cursillo has made provision. I have good news. You are going to be given some "tools" of faith today, to help you maintain your life in grace tomorrow, and every day thereafter. In fact, you have been using many of these tools already this weekend. Let me explain.

II. THE TOOL CARD ("The Green Card" plus your notes distributed before the talk)
   A. This is a guide for staying alive in your faith

   B. Not surprisingly, the "rhythm" of the Christian life revolves around three elements: Piety, Study and Action

   C. There is a list of Spiritual "aids" to deepen our walk with Christ - Our Piety
      1) Worship/ Communion
         a. Do not attend church! Go to worship!
         b. Receive the meal as often as you can

      2) Morning Offering/ Evening Thanks
         a. Begin the day by offering it to God (we have been doing it each day). Invite the Lord to be present in your relationships and situations
         b. End the day with a short word of thanks

      3) Devotions/Meditation/Prayer
         a. There is nothing like a warm and personal time with God each day
         b. Read a bit of Scripture and/or from a devotional book
c. Form prayers are OK, but also be intuitive - pray what occupies your mind and heart (Remember, this is your best friend)

4) Examination of Conscience (we have been doing this also)
   a. Do this periodically - it does not have to be laborious
   b. This often leads to some action (for example, healing a relationship)

5) Altar/Chapel Visit -- Spend a few moments kneeling at the altar of your church, alone or with a friend

6) Family Prayer
   a. If this has not been a practice in your home, introduce it gradually (Teenagers have been known to "freak out" at the sudden introduction of this practice)
   b. The family that prays together, does tend to stay together

7) Blessing Before Meals (see advice above)

8) Spiritual Direction
   a. Make an appointment to sit down with your pastor once or twice a year to assess your growth
   b. He/she will be honored to share this time - that's why we're there. As a pastor, I must say that these are all possible aids to your walk with Christ. Just doing them (like a check list) will not guarantee a deeper relationship. Any and all of them, however, can be means through which you and your Lord can express your love for one another. Believe it or not, if you did all of them, it probably wouldn't add more than 30-45 minutes to your day. What an investment!

D. Our Study life (refer to the Study Rollo)
   1) Much has been shared already this weekend about the need to deepen our faith through some concentrated study of the Scriptures. This can be done by utilizing: Bible courses
      - Adult education classes
      - Bible commentaries
   2) There are numerous Christian periodicals, inspirational books, and books specifically dealing with aspects of the faith or theology
   3) Ask your pastor for a good approach to your continued study in the faith

E. Making a Difference with Our Lives (Action Rollo)
   1) God has places for ministry for each of us - they may be in the day-to-day routines of our lives, or in special areas of gifts, interest or concern.
2) It is absolutely necessary that we find our ministries and pursue them
(Not Genesis 11:28, Matthew 25, Romans 12: ff, etc.)

III. LIFE IN THE "BODY" - THE CHURCH
A. The primary faith community in your life - not Cursillo

B. Be a positive blessing in your congregation's growth in faith and witness

C. Pray, pray, pray - for your Church, your pastor, your fellow church members

D. Make an appointment to meet with your pastor
   1) Share the joy of the weekend
   2) Ask how to be most supportive of him/her and of the life of the church

E. Utilize your pastor as a "Spiritual Director" in your life

F. No secrets! Feel free to share about the substance and schedule of the weekend
   (minus the surprises)

G. No cliques! Treat all brothers and sisters in Christ in your congregation the same.
   Don't exchange expressions of affection (hugs, etc.) you aren't willing to share with
   anyone. No one is to feel different because they haven't attended a weekend. Christ is
   the great equalizer. Keep a servant heart.

IV. CONCLUSION
There you have it - a prescription for a balanced Christian life. Meeting in small groups
regularly will deepen your Piety, Study and Action. You will be encouraged in that area later
today. A good rule of thumb for exercising your faith on a weekly basis (apart from your per-
sonal devotional life) - FIVE FOR FAITH:

• One hour for worship
• One hour/or large group Bible study
• One hour for small group sharing
• Two hours devoted to specific ministry action

Dear friends, the best is yet to be! The experience of 1,000's before you testify that the week-
end is only the beginning. You will grow, your faith will deepen! Life can be lived in Grace -
the Grace of God in Jesus Christ.

Sample CHRISTIAN LIFE Rollo

A man was feeling depressed. His business was going down hill and he was facing
some difficult family problems. He was experiencing a depression, which was sapping him of
energy. So he went to his doctor. The doctor suggested that he need a new rhythm for his life.
He wanted him to run 10 miles a day, get good sleep and good nutrition. "Call me back in a
month," he said. A month later the man called his doctor. The doctor asked how he was. I'm
feeling better. How is your business going? How do I know, I am 300 miles away from home.
During the last 3 days you have been on a journey. And we have traveled a great distance to-
gether. You have heard about the basics in Christian life, Grace, piety, study, and service. You have heard words about the cross; you have experienced laying on of hands in healing. What more is there to say or do? Well in these next moments I would like to unwrap many of these themes around the subject of this Rollo: Living the Christian Life. Please pray with me. Let us pray. Amen.

Let me begin with a line, which is worth remembering: “no one is able to live the Christian life.” The only one who has ever lived the Christian life is Jesus Christ himself. That is why Paul once said, “for me to live is Christ. When I was at the seminary someone said,” when you preach prepare as though it all depended on you. But then remember it only depends on God.” So if I can but get out of the way that life of Jesus will shine through me. Or another metaphor, “I am crucified with Christ and the life I live, I live by the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me.

Those are wonderful words. They provide a picture of transparency. “Like God wants all of us to be shining for Jesus and letting him live in us and through us. I want to thank my pastor Michael Stoltz for a way this can be illustrated. Here is a picture of Jesus. It’s not that I am to be an imitation, but that others see him in me. I do not try to reproduce Him but let His presence be seen in me.

But that is easier said than done. There was a time when I fought the Lord tooth and nail. I had just graduated from college and had no idea for a meaning or purpose for my life. The summer after graduation my mother was going to a Bible Camp where our pastor was speaking. I told her I would go only if I could bring our choir director - organist along. We were golfing buddies. So mother was in the chapel, and son was out on the golf course. It was one of the worst rounds of my life. When we came up to the 9th green I had an easy shot, over the trap and on to the green. I hit the ball right into the trap. In a fit of anger I threw the club and it hit a tree. It broke in two pieces. Slowly I went over and picked up those pieces. I said to myself. “It’s not this club, but you Les Hoffman who is broken.” The next thing I remember we were seated in the chapel and I was for the first time really listening to what was being said. It was like the fell from my eyes and I could see and hear what God had to say to His people. The rest is history. I can look back and say my spiritual journey took on new meaning ever since that day.

We have heard many times during this past weekend that the Christian life is a life of Grace. And I would confess that when my awakening came, it was nothing I did. The only thing I did was to like a cease fire. I stopped resisting that gentle loving Spirit of God. Most of us today might confess that this has been a spiritually uplifting weekend. And today we can say, "God's Grace has led us thus far... and it will lead us home." So what happens when we return to our homes? Many of us have been touched, our lives have been refocused, and we are changed people because we have been with Jesus. But the world out there will be the same; the 10' clock news will be just as sordid. But our journey can be different, because we will be insulated or isolated from the world around us, but because we will have a new opportunity to live out God's plan for our lives.

One of my favorite texts appeared in our churches just a few weeks ago it's the story of the transfiguration. Remember how Jesus took his close friends, Peter, James and John to the mountain for a short meeting. There he appeared in dazzling white, there he revealed himself in all of His glory. Its no wonder they said, "it is good to be here." Peter especially wanted to...
make a shrine and on that mountain. But Jesus never answered that request. If life was a constant summit it would be impossible to experience any highs. The glory of the mountain was meant to be revealed in the deep valleys of hurt; the grace is meant to be discovered in the suffering and pain which we meet in which me met in our daily lives.

So how then shall we live? As we travel it is good to remember to keep our head in the clouds, and our feet on the ground e dare to celebrate that the victory of Jesus on the cross was decisive enough that neither God nor his people will rest until every knee bows down and every tongue confesses that Jesus Christ is Lord. So what does that mean for me? What kind of road map does God offer? Let me share with you a plan. I would like to use as bases the baseball diamond. We are coming to the end of spring training here in Arizona. It is time to open a new season and play ball.” This weekend has also been training session for each of us. And we too are ready to circle the bases for the Savior. Let's take a look. I would like to use 4 m's as we name each base 1) Members 2) Spiritual Maturity 3) Ministry and 4) Mission.

I. MEMBERSHIP

When Jesus began His ministry he called his disciples with just two words, "follow me. That call has been extended to each of us. It is the centerpiece of baptism is when we are grafted into the body of Christ. It is the heart of communion where we receive in our bodies the life giving promise of his death and resurrection. We live in a world today where many people are interested in spirituality. But they also feel that it can best be expressed in solitude rather than in community. So people say, "I want you Christ but not your church. But community helps us be accountable and responsible. It also provides for our corporate witness. I like to say "you cannot be a Christian alone." We are community. We belong to each other as a part of His body. That was made clear in Jesus ministry. He never gave private communion; His commissioning to baptize was never done in a vacuum. We are grafted into His body.

Every week I meet with brothers to share and to pray. We are held accountable to each other. We give and receive from each other. And that is what the church is all about. It is easy to be critical of the church. It is easy to naively think that the church should be a cut above what we see in the work place or in other organizations. The church is Holy, but it is made up of some human folks. Whenever I see someone criticizing the behavior of someone in a church I often remind them that finding sick people in a hospital is no different than seeing spiritual illness in a church. That’s why it’s called: "a hospital for sinners.” And by the way most Pastors love Cursillo because the community provides enormous support for pastors and the difficult tasks they have to be a shepherd to the diverse needs of a multitude of people.

I remember a man telling me he was looking for the perfect church. Knowing him I said, “Even if you could find that church when you joined, it would not be perfect any more.” But Cursillo has a way of opening our eyes to what is real and important in the kingdom. And we can make a difference. We can be salt to bring taste to a situation; we can be light to illumine
the trivia which often preoccupies us.

The Apostle Paul once said, “if you confess Jesus Christ and believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you shall be saved.” If you take the first two and last two letters from the word church, what is left? What is the church? “U-R”! “You are!”

**II. SPIRITUAL MAURITY**

As we move to second base, it’s a journey into spiritual growth. “Grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.” “Speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up into Him in all things.” Now a person doesn’t grow by standing in the mirror and watching. It happens when you have nutrition, good rest and good exercise. And here let me just share some basics which might help. Studying God’s Word. I remember a friend whose marriage was broken up by her husband’s affair. She showed me the words she wrote in a Bible she gave him. It read, “*this book will keep you from sin, or sin will keep you form this book*” One of the reasons I am a pastor today is what happened when I took a year to enter a Bible School. God gave me a hunger for His word. I like the words of the Old Testament prophet Jeremiah:” *Thy words did I find and I did eat them.*” It’s the bread of life, the food that satisfies. And out of that comes witness.

Some years ago I was driving down the street in Whittier California. A sports car passed me. A few moments later that car spun around in the street and stopped. When I approached the scene I discovered he had hit a little boy, and hurt him badly. Since I was there, and saw it all, I had information which determined the outcome of that case. You and I are witnesses to God’s love. We have "seen and heard and tasted of the goodness of God". We have information, which can change the destiny of people’s lives. Sometimes that witness can be as simple as your attitude, and in other times just words of encouragement.

Last fall I had the opportunity of attending the last and decisive game of the World Series. Behind me was a young man using some very profane language. He was cursing at two men in front of me who were obvious Yankee fans. Well, since he was talking about Curt Schilling, who happened to be on the mound, I just said, “*Sir Mr. Schilling would not appreciate your language. He is a man of honesty and integrity.*” Now, I could have been attacked for such a comment. But for the rest of the game he didn't curse again, and when it was all over he came to me and asked forgiveness.

In my first church I used to go to the Mobil Gas station. It was in the days when the attendants pumped gas. Well, I simply asked those two men if they had a church. They visited. Forty years later they are faithfully committed to Jesus. And one of them has two children who have devoted their lives to Christian service. "Come and see", Andrew said." And Jesus says, "go and tell."

Some time ago, I took a group of people to Southeast Asia on a tour. When we were in a tailor shop a lady was getting a fitting for a new dress. It was the Chinese who asked her, "are you a Christian?" Dumbfounded she replied, "Yes, and I am a Lutheran." He said, "I'm Lutheran too". Sometimes the tables are turned when the witness comes from those whom we once considered lost. They are now seeing our country as the Mission Field.

Another piece of maturity is Stewardship. That word means “one who manages some-
thing entrusted to you.” God has entrusted us to a life. We are addressable and accountable to Him for the way we manage all which He has given to us. My wife and I have been married for 45 years. When we first married we were living below the poverty level. But we committed ourselves to, giving God 1 / 10 off the top. And we discovered something; you can’t out give God. We discovered what I call God’s crazy arithmetic. When you keep everything, you will not have enough. Give to God and you will see that the rest seems to go farther. Many folks today are addicted to a roller coaster stock mark just a couple of years ago some young folks were taking out additional mortgages to get into high flying tech stocks. That kind of lifestyle let quickly to high anxiety as well. You see, when you invest in the kingdom you know the dividends come every day, and you can be sure that we are participating in what has eternal dimensions.

Then maturity is enhanced with a life of prayer. I think it interesting that Luther suggested at one time that Prayer be a third sacrament. We are told that prayer changes things. Well it also changes our attitude. It is asking, but also listening as we place ourselves before the one who gives directions for our lives. I am indebted to Community Church of Joy for helping me to see how prayer and ministry go hand in hand. I no longer tell people I will pray for them. If there is a need, I will pray on the spot. And God has honored those petitions. And He will do the same in your life. That is why the scriptures say, "pray without ceasing."

III. MINISTRY

When we reach third base we have come to a place of great potential. Here we find the gifts, which enable us to be of service. God has given us two hands, one to receive the other to give. To be healthy we need to have equal weight in both hands. Some folks are good givers, but they find difficulty receiving. Well, how can you receive grace if you cannot allow folks to give to you? And some folks are absorbed in receiving. Their needs are such that they have no energy left to share with others. Scripture says, "having gifts that differ, use them." None of us has all the gifts. All that has have been give some gift to serve in Christ’s fellowship, the church. The New Testament lists 27 Spiritual gifts. "Prophecy, teaching, leadership knowledge, faith hospitality, etc. The only ones I would not wish for are "martyrdom" and "celibacy." Those who seek Martyrdom have a toxic view of life and it’s too late for celibacy. By the way, I am much in favor of priests marrying. If you wish to read about these check it out in I Corinthians 13: 13. But each of us has gifts, which have yet to surface. I think of countless numbers of people who have looked beyond, "I've never done that before" and made some marvelous discoveries. Someone has said, God doesn't call you because you are gifted, he gifts you because you are called." Think about that.

One of my favorite films was "Chariots of Fire." It is the story of Eric Liddell, an Olympic runner. He is a Christian who would not run on Sunday. Well, his sister thinks he has compromised his call from God. He was supposed to be a missionary in China. She fears the glory of the Olympics will go to his head. On the night before the race Liddell is alone in the quiet of his own room when he speaks to God saying, “I love to run, you have made me to run fast. And when I run, I feel your pleasure.” That is the key to ministry, not competing, or wanting to stand in the front, but actualizing our potential, and as we serve and using our fits, we not only glorify God, we are also feeling His pleasure.

IV. MISSION
Well, the purpose of it all, membership, maturity, ministry, is Mission. Now most of us are acquainted with this word. Most every organization has a mission statement. And surely you have a mission statement in your congregation. When we last visited my wife’s hometown in Wisconsin. We stopped at the cemetery. Several members of her family are buried there. After we left I thought this was not a morbid experience at all. In fact, it sharpened my interest in asking myself the question, “what kind of legacy will I leave and how do I want to be remembered. You see in a cemetery the key is not the length between the two dates. But more important is that dash. It is what takes place in that dash which defines who we are and what we are about. We just had a visit of a cousin of mine who has terminal cancer. But the truth is that none of us here know how much time we have on this earth. But we do know that time is a gift to be used wisely, and if we have a mission, for ourselves our family and our church, we surely will see glimpses of the coming of the kingdom.

I am told we live in what is called a post modernist world. That means that the foundational principals of this world have all but disappeared. It’s a world come of age in which we can see the disappearance of Christendom as a leading force in our world. In fact, we as Christians are in a minority. But rather than lament the losses we have incurred, I think it is time to give thanks. The church (as characterized in the first century) is always at its best when we are a small but stubborn ministry. It’s the David and Goliath principal. If you want some experience just read the book of Acts. That tiny band left their footprints everywhere. So battles are won today not in the legislator, nor perhaps even at church council meetings, but one on one, when one person influences another, and when you and I with God can make a difference. That’s how mission is accomplished.

So our weekend will soon be coming to a close. But with that our journey will begin. And because we have experienced the presence and His power it will be good. But let us return again to the picture of Jesus. We said in the beginning that the heart of the Christian life is to let Christ shine in and through us. Only our fingers are to be seen. But what can easily happen I the long course if that we want to be seen so we put Christ off to the side. I wonder how we will feel if when we get to heaven Jesus will ask, “why did you upstage me? - Why did you take my rightful place in your life?” To keep that from happening we need only to remember Paul’s confession, “for me to live is Christ, and to die is gain for the kingdom.” With that in mind, there is no end to the grace walk here on earth. And remember, not even the sky is the limit. May the Lord bless your journey. Amen

Alternative CHRISTIAN LIFE Rollo
Purpose: To Hear what one must do for Christ through Piety, Study and Action.

What a great weekend! I am continually amazed at how the Holy Spirit uses these Cursillos in a special way with all of us. We have been talking about God’s GRACE in Christ all week, and we have been experiencing it also! I don’t know what your highlight has been so far…the Rollos, the personal sharing—at my Cursillo, I made friends for life at the table I was at—this morning’s Mañanitas, the Communion Services, the times at the Cross? I hope your have a new sense of the meaning of the Means of Grace! Yes, there are OBSTACLES to grace, and each of us have experienced
them…but God is even using all of that for our good, as we continue to trust Him and love Him (Romans 8:28). We have looked also in real depth at THREE WAYS we can respond to God’s GRACE…in very practical ways…in **PIETY, STUDY & ACTION.**

The purpose of my time with you this morning is to help you get excited & practically motivated as you respond in those 3 crucial ways! Jesus said…

"You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."

Matthew 5:14-16 (NIV)

**THE LIGHT OF CHRIST (HOLD UP A LANTERN.)** Don’t put it under a bowl or bushel basket. I would ask you to think of yourself as one of those who FOLLOWING JESUS, BEARING HIS CROSS, DENYING YOURSELF, are going ahead in COURAGE, lifting up the LIGHT OF CHRIST for your fellow believers, and for the world.

(Optional for men’s weekend: Show Battle of Cowpens scene from THE PATRIOT movie comparing lifting battle flag to light of Christ in spiritual warfare.)

You and I are called to be MEN OF COURAGE and FAITH, lifting high the light of God’s grace to the world! There is a sense in which we have been on a RETREAT. **Getaways** like this are often called RETREATS…an opportunity to regroup, rest up, re-train, and get ready for an ADVANCE again…Jesus compared the Christian life to marching against the GATES OF HELL! And of course, we do this, not with swords and guns, but with the LIGHT OF CHRIST.

All of you have received a "**Christian Growth Card.**" (This "green card" which includes piety, study and action for the small group reunion.) Indeed, much of this weekend focuses on the disciplines that this little card shows. In a way, they were the most important part of the weekend for our continuing life with our Lord. This is teaming up with Christ to have a life of eternal significance! I would ask you to think of each of them now as a PART of holding up the LIGHT OF CHRIST to the world!

Let’s look at these three RAYS OF LIGHT….

1. **GAZING AT THE LIGHT — Piety.**
2. **STAYING CLOSE TO THE LIGHT — Study.**
3. **TAKING THE LIGHT OF CHRIST INTO OUR WORLD—Putting our necks on the line in ministry — Action.**

This little card (which should have been given to you at your tables) is a guide for staying alive in our faith! The "directions" on this card are an outline of:

**I. GAZE AT THE LIGHT: PIETY**

**Personal devotional life** I consider this part to be sort of the "blocking and tackling" of our "Life in Grace." The other practices of piety are important, but they never take the place of a warm and personal devotional life. I believe, and try hard to practice, a daily devotional life that includes the elements of reading, Bible and prayer. This means to me;
A. Reading: I get inspired reading an article from "Guideposts" magazine, or a reading from a book or magazine that challenges and informs me. Currently, I’m reading testimonies from leaders from the Underground church in China, and how they are secretly sending missionaries to the most dangerous mission fields in the world today!

B. Bible: I try to keep a balance of Old and New Testaments. I often follow the method of a Psalm, a Gospel reading, and a part of one of the Epistles. I like to "specialize" in one book of the Bible, reading it over again and again until I really understand and feel like I “OWN” it! Whatever you do, it is important to follow apian and not to just let The Bible fall open. Your pastor would love to assist you in your devotional life.

C. Prayer: This is the most important part of your personal devotional life. Prayer groups, prayer "chains," and many other "tools" are very helpful! But Prayer is where you both speak and let God speak to you. One of the prayers we ought to be praying more is asking God to shine His light upon us!

"Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.
See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."
Psalm 139:23-24 (NIV)

Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.
Psalm 51:10 (NIV)

Another thing that we can do in our prayers is ask God what we should do. What gifts has God given us? What assignment should we take? How can we accomplish the things we are called to do that seem impossible? What supernatural wisdom and insight do we need?
We should never simply volunteer for anything! Wait for God’s Call in prayer.

One of the greatest weaknesses of the modern church is that it is filled with volunteers instead of Christ-called disciples. Jesus never posted bulletins advertising for Kingdom volunteers. He personally sought out (sometimes outwardly the least likely) individuals, looked them in the eye, and called them to follow Him, personally. …I learned long ago, that I couldn’t accomplish much in ministry with volunteers. I’ll tell you why:

1. A volunteer looks upon ministry as another commitment he or she is obligated to fulfill…(in fact, I have often heard the phrase—“Well, I guess It’s my turn…” but one who is CALLED of God looks upon ministry as another opportunity to be used of God.
2. A volunteer looks upon any constructive criticism with resentment…but one who is CALLED of God is grateful for feedback because he wants to be the best he can be.
3. A volunteer tends to sit back and complain—or even bail out—when things aren’t working out…but one who is CALLED of God perseveres, and takes personal responsibility to help improve things.
4. A volunteer can feel threatened by the gifts and abilities of others (competition) but one who is CALLED of God welcomes them as part of his/her team.
5. A volunteer’s main source of fulfillment is getting a chance to use his gifts and abilities. They are doing it out of PERSONAL PREFERENCE…but someone who is CALLED of God knows that being used is the most fulfilling thing.
6. A volunteer when they get into impossible situations can’t handle being stretched, but one who is CALLED by God simply responds with humble dependence upon Him…This is one of the strongest parts of THE CURSILLO MOVEMENT. Everyone is called. WE need to GAZE AT THE LIGHT that is Christ in a life of devotion and prayer.
Secondly, we need to

II. STAY CLOSE TO THE LIGHT -- STUDY

This is different from PIETY, because it is something we do with other members of our "the body" (the church): It is essential that we develop intimate relationships with other men of our body in the church.

Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching. Hebrews 10:25 (NIV)

WHY SHOULD WE ASSEMBLE?

a. You are a bother or sister in God’s Family!
Can you imagine being in a family, and refusing to have communion with your brothers and sisters? There are Christians like that…"I can believe in Christ, but I don’t have to go to church…” they say. The Chinese believers say that when we forget about meeting with other Christians, it is like pretending that we are the only child of our Heavenly Father.
“When one believes in the Lord, he does not become an only begotten son; he is rather one son among tens of thousands.” Watchman Nee

This just defies logic. How can I be a Christian and not be concerned about how my brothers and sisters are doing in life? Yes, each of us comes into the Kingdom personally, one at a time…but as soon as I am born again, I need to open my eyes and welcome my spiritual family. What right have you to separate yourself from the rest of your family?

b. You are ONE of the “living stones” of God’s Holy House!
The Bible tells us that God has a dwelling place—a holy habitation here on earth. In the past, God dwelt in a magnificent house, the temple of Solomon. Now He dwells in the church, made we are told in I Peter of not dead stones, but living stones.

“You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” 1 Peter 2:5 (NIV)

Simon was called Peter (stone, or rock) by Jesus. Peter is a living stone now, because Christ lives in him. But Peter can’t be a temple by himself….God has to put other living stones together very carefully, fitting them just so. That’s what He is doing all the time.

Illustration: What use are you unless you are “fitted” into God’s building? What use is a field of scattered and independent stones? That’s no house—that’s just a rock pile.

Illustration: Christians have frequently compared identifying with a part of the BODY OF CHRIST, the Church, as being in a SHIP. When people tell me that they don’t really need Christian fellowship, that they can make it to heaven on their own, I tell them it’s like trying to cross the Atlantic Ocean on a small boat.

c. You are a vital member of the Body of Christ! In the "rhythm of living" we aren't always going to be "high..” We need A BAND OF BROTHERS to help us with the ups and downs. I know that when someone joins our church, unless they get connected with one of our Cells, or build relationships with at least 6 other people, they won’t experience this a community of faith
we are talking about, and will be gone within the first 6 months after joining a church.

This diagram underscores the importance of finding a group that we can trust, that holds us accountable for our growth in faith, and that meets regularly, **weekly**. Here, others prophetically bring make the WORD OF GOD come alive for me. They can help me see my **BLIND SPOTS**.

*But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. 1 John 1:7* (NIV)

We can pray for one another in our challenges and opportunities. I meet with two or three other men and we share everything...especially prayer requests. I never leave a GROUPING like this without feeling REFRESHED IN MY SOUL...for me it is **like going to the GYM** for my body. Use your pastor or another man of God whom you respect as a "Spiritual Director." Ask them where you need to grow, where you can get the resources you know you need, who you can team up with to use your gifts.

1. **There is a Special Presence**—Jesus says, “Where 2 or 3 come together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” Matthew 18:20

2. **A Special Power**
   “One shall chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight.”
   Deuteronomy 32:30

You would expect the verse to say, “and two put 2 thousand to flight..” but it says 10 thousand. Haven’t you experienced that too? Somehow when we gather with our brothers and sisters to deal with the “enemies”, the “problems and difficulties & temptations and struggles of life”, we find our effectiveness in Christ is multiplied about (according to this verse) TEN TIMES! Why would we want to neglect that?

3. **A Special Purpose**
   “We who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.”
   Romans 12:5
   - Of what value is an amputated ear, nose or eye?
   - What happens when the foot angrily declares its independence? “**I don’t need you guys—I’m going it alone!**” Oh yah? How far do you think you are going?
   - What good is a mature, adult foot on a baby's leg? We need to help each other grow up! Finally, …

III. **TAKE THE LIGHT OF CHRIST INTO OUR WORLD**— Action, or "making a difference": … Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." John 8:12 (NIV)

A. **Recognize Your Sphere of Influence** (your Environment Rollo)

Each of us has contacts and opportunities no one else possesses. All of us know people (DIRECT INFLUENCE) who know people (INDIRECT INFLUENCE). **Illustration**—Brian & Linda know Stacy & her family people (DIRECT INFLUENCE), and have been witnessing to her for 3 years now. This year she and her 4 kids started coming to their home group. Last week she brought her friend (INDIRECT INFLUENCE) Christy and her two
kids. Your witness may very well effect thousands of others for eternity. This ripple effect only happens when we open our mouths.

B. Stick With What you Know

- **Acts 22:15**—“You will be his witness to all men of what you have seen and heard.”
  
  Often we make witnessing impossibly complicated. You can’t testify about what you haven’t seen and what you haven’t heard. There is no need to give a long sermon. Just tell another what you know!
  
  “Before I believed in the Lord, I could not sleep at night, but now I am able to sleep.”
  
  “I had all this fear, and Jesus took it away.”
  
  “I prayed with my friend last week, and guess what happened?”
  
  Just say what you know. That’s witness. In fact, we need to learn not to say too much. Don’t talk about things beyond your comprehension, or win an argument. That’s not witnessing—that’s stirring up dissension. Witnessing is fun! And all of us have a story to tell! Since the Lord has saved such a BIG SINNER as you, how can you shut your mouth and not testify?

C. Welcome God’s Supernatural Help--

…”Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit” says the Lord!”

Closing Action Suggestions:

1. **FIVE FOR FAITH**

WILL THIS CHANGE YOUR LIFE? Absolutely! You can’t do this as a ONE HOUR A WEEK CHRISTIAN. A general "rule" for staying healthy in Christ might be the following as a weekly practice (in addition to personal devotional life). We are talking at least 5 hours a week!

This means …

- DAILY TIMES of personally GAZING AT THE LIGHT
- WEEKLY TIMES of gathering with your Church Family in Worship
- Grouping with a small band of brothers
- Specific Ministry Action
- Corporate Bible Study and Prayer

2. **SPECIAL MINISTRIES**

Personal witness—in our church we are involved in “adopting” sharp Christian students in Mexico who can’t afford to continue their education without help. That’s really gets us involved in the lives of others. We also have partnered with a Central Phoenix HOMELESS ministry. All of us have neighbors with needs. What is God calling you into? We need thousands involved in PRISON MINISTRIES…we need thousands in SHORT TERM OVERSEAS MISSIONARIES MINISTRIES. We need believers involved in POLITICAL ISSUES…

3. **PASTOR TALK**

One of the ministries God may lead you into could be CURSILLO. We are praying that Cursillo does help you move into a ministry of LIFTING UP THE LIGHT OF CHRIST. You might want to get with your Pastor in a couple of weeks, and talk to about what this mean to you, and ask how you ought to be serving in your local parish.

NO HOLY CLIQUES! Be sure that in your parish, there are no special hugs, greetings and gatherings only with fellow Cursillists…Of course it is helpful to share with all your friends in
your church what this weekend has meant to you. But don't let anyone ever feel that they are in any way 'SECOND-CLASS CITIZENS' because they haven't attended yet.

Is your church all that God wants it to be? I know from the experience of serving for a long time in 3 totally different churches, that the pastor is helpless to make progress, without dedicated men and women willing to HOLD UP THE LIGHT OF CHRIST, NO MATTER WHAT THE COST. I know your pastor would love to sit down with you and talk to you about what can be improved and further developed for the Kingdom of God where you worship.

I want to close by reading this parable:

THE ELECTRICIAN
by Jill Austin

The room was cold, dark and damp, but it had become my friend; because I had lived there ever since I could remember. Heavy blankets of isolation, loneliness and fear insulated and protected me from the outside world.

Then one day there came a knock at the door. My heart froze; yet everything in me told me that "He" had come. The darkness swallowed my muffled cries and for a moment it seemed that time was suspended. Once again He knocked, startling me back to reality. With slow and tentative voice I responded, "Come in."

The door opened and there stood THE ELECTRICIAN. He wore radiant white overalls and a hat. Around his waist was a large white leather workman's belt with various tools, wires, and assorted light bulbs dangling from it. Silently he tipped his hat to acknowledge me. The softness in his eyes calmed my unspoken fears. He set his silver-chrome ladder up in the center of my room, climbed up and inserted a small 25-watt light bulb into the bare socket that apparently had been hanging there all that time in the darkness from the ceiling. He came down, folded up the ladder and left, closing the door gently behind Him.

I crawled into the middle of the soft warm light and fell fast asleep. The healing light seemed to restore and strengthen me. It must have been hours later that I awoke and began to walk around the circumference of the light cast upon the floor. That's when I noticed a shovel lying in the midst of all the debris that was caught in the edge of the light. I picked up the shovel and began to clean the area. It was a tremendous amount of work and took days, but finally the area was clean. In the days that followed, I would find myself lying on my back just staring at the bare bulb hanging there in space and loving the light. It had become my friend and comforted me.

Then one day there came another knock at my door. I knew it was Him. I ran and opened the door. There once again stood THE ELECTRICIAN. He smiled at me as he came just inside the door and paused. I could see in His face that He was pleased with what he saw. Having carried in His ladder, just as before, He set it up in the middle of my room and started His climb. He took out the smaller light and replaced it with a larger 75-watt bulb.

In a flash, the light in the room increased dramatically. And for the first time I noticed a chair and a couch. My eyes widened in surprise as I quickly began to discover tills newfound space. THE ELECTRICIAN quietly folded His ladder and left. I loved the light. I loved everything about the room. Except — upon a closer look I noticed the piles of garbage and dirt hid-
den everywhere. As I sized, up the situation I also saw a greasy film over everything. Piles of old books, records, and souvenirs cluttered the view. I've had such an insatiable appetite for things but I noticed that more and more things never filled the void within me. Only the light from THE ELECTRICIAN filled that void now. I knew that all this clutter had to go. So I rolled up my sleeves and over the next several months began to sweep, scrape, scour, scrub, dust, and shovel the debris.

Finally, for the first time in my life, I felt that I could enjoy the home that was mine. How strange it seemed, because I had looked everywhere for fulfillment, and to have had it within my own room all along amazed me. But then, I had never had the light before.

Then one day there was a knock at my door. It sounded similar to that of THE ELECTRICIAN, but somehow I knew it was not Him. I opened the door and there stood people who were lovers of the light. They had come to visit me. This was a fresh and blessed time. In the weeks that followed, they came often and the fellowship grew even more precious.

One afternoon while we were all sitting around talking of the wonderful things that THE ELECTRICIAN had done for each of us, I again heard a knock at my door. This familiar knock let me to know that THE ELECTRICIAN had come once again. I ran to the door and opened it just a crack. It was Him! And He held in his hand a 300-watt light bulb! My heart screamed in silent terror, "Oh no, not now! Everyone will be watching ... I don't want anymore light, not today! Not with everyone here! I don't know what that much light will reveal."

I heard the people in my home laughing and talking behind me in the living room. THE ELECTRICIAN gently took my hand and invited me into the dimly lit hallway where there were several doors. He nodded, inviting me to open any of the doors. Cautiously I opened the first door. A cold and evil wind rushed out of the darkened room. Quickly I slammed the door shut as it took my breath away. The next door I opened blinded me with its brilliant light. I saw glimpses of radiant people walking around inside. Their laughter was like music to my soul. The light was so bright, however, it hurt my eyes. I knew that I had seen some of the glory put out by that light. Opening the last door, I peered in to a room that had a 25-watt light bulb hanging from the ceiling in a lone socket. I recognized it; for I had once bathed in just such a light. But I was shocked now as I realized how dim the light was; how cool and uninviting its dim rays seemed now. I knew I would never be satisfied with that again and could not go back there.

I was beginning to understand that I had already gone farther into the light now to accept anything less. Then THE ELECTRICIAN looked at me with tender eyes and softly said, "Everyone has to make a choice as to how much of the light they want. But there is a cost." I responded, "I can never turn back now, even if everyone sees my dirtiness and decides to leave me."

So I invited Him back into my house. Few of my guests even noticed He was there, they were so busy enjoying the fellowship among themselves. He placed His ladder in the center of my room as He had before, climbed and inserted the 300-watt bulb into the socket. Suddenly the room was ablaze with light; brighter than I had imagined! Just as I feared, garbage and dirt was piled in the corners that were once darkened! Everyone in the room paused in astonishment forgetting where they once were. Many of the people were so shocked at the unsightly condition, they got up and hurried to leave without a word. But there...
were a few who stayed and instinctively they began to take up brooms, shovels, mops and scouring rags, and began to clean the debris.

My heart was in awe that they understood and that they accepted and loved me just as I was. THE ELECTRICIAN came over and embraced me. In His usual patient tone said, "My child, the ones that are staying, live in homes that have even greater light than you. They also had others help them clean their homes, and still do in fact. That is part of the healing process. Many times things have to be cleared out that are too heavy for one person to carry alone. Sometimes there will be stains and another person will pass on the solution I gave them. It's my desire that you all help restore and preserve each other."

All of a sudden, I was curiously aware that around everyone’s waist was a workman's belt, with tools and wires and light bulbs dangling from them. Why had I not noticed this apparel before eluded me. And as they helped to restore my room they would also put light bulbs into my mended lamps making the light grow even brighter. THE ELECTRICIAN said to me, "Dear one, there are still many rooms in your house where I want to bring My light, will you let me? "Oh yes!" I replied, as my heart melted in surrender.

Then with a gesture of His hand, He fastened a workman's belt around my waist and said, "I want you to help me bring light, not only into your own home, but also into the homes of others who will invite you there as time goes on. You are My children... of the Light!"

INTENTIONS COMMUNION
Situation and Objective

This is a sample script for the Head Spiritual Director and/or Rector/a to use introducing a very especial Cursillo Tradition. Since several will be handling the each wafer, it would be good to ask everyone to WASH THEIR HANDS before they come into the chapel. Experience has show that the Holy Spirit has used the Intentions Communion to speak effectively and clearly to individuals, seal determination, and bind the whole community into a new sense of oneness. Keep this simple, informal and short.

This will be a communion service different than any you have ever experienced. It is called intentions communion. Another word for that would be "confessional" communion. We use a corporate confessional when we prepare for communion in any public service. Today we are asking you to consider anything specific you might bring to Jesus as he provides the means by which your sins are forgiven. There is no requirement for you to bring something to be addressed. However it can be a burden you have been carrying. It can be some person who has been a problem to you. It can be an illness, or some unresolved relationship.

When you come forward, I will be holding a vessel, which contains the bread we will later use for communion. I emphasize, this is not blessed bread, it has not yet been consecrated. Just as we ask people to bake bread and present it for communion, you are asked to pick up the wafer, thinking about what you bring to the communion. Carry it up to the altar and place it in the patten dish. Then take a place either to the left or right. You may speak verbally, or in silence. Two pastors will be located on the horns of the altar praying silently for you as you stand there. After you have returned to your seat we will then proceed with the communion service.
There is one other dimension to this exercise. You will probably not get the wafer you bring forward. This reminds us that the suffering and pain of Jesus for all people is present in this meal. When we eat and drink we are mindful of the marks of his suffering and also His joy are for all people. In Paul's words, "when one suffers, we've all suffer, when one rejoices, we all rejoice."

THE HEALING SERVICE
Situation and Objective

This is NOT a sample script for the Head Spiritual Director and/or Rector/a, but rather some thoughts for you to use introducing another very special Cursillo Tradition. Experience has shown that the Holy Spirit has used the Healing Service to release hearts, and heal a whole variety of physical and spiritual ailments. It is important to remember that this isn’t counseling time, but ministry prayer time. Urge those who need more time to schedule appointments with Spiritual Directors later than evening, or the next. Keep your opening remarks to the point, inviting, and consider having a team member give a testimony of what happened for them in a healing service.

Healing is an important part of the ministry of the Church. When Jesus sent his disciples out he said in Matthew 10:7 "The Kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons."

The three components of Jesus' mandate to us are these: preach, teach and heal. We have done well in the first two. Why the neglect of the third? Perhaps it is our Lutheran focus on being more cerebral than emotional. Or, the excesses of "faith healers" have scared us away.

The healing event for a Cursillo weekend can be a centerpiece of God's actions for the participants. Most every participant, and also team member, brings unanswered prayers and needs which can be addressed during this evening observance.

I believe the ministry of healing focuses on all levels, physical, relational, psychological, and mental healing. Here are some passages which are helpful in setting the stage for healing:

A. John 5:1-9 The Lame man. Jesus asked an important question. "Do you want to be healed? Sometimes people receive more support and encouragement when they have a handicap. One would think that in 27 years he might find a way to be first in the healing waters. So willingness and attitude are important.

B. Mark 6:21-43 The stories of Jesus healing ministry. Note the woman who just wanted to touch him. Then also Jairus' daughter. He was a leader in the synagogue.

C. John 9. The man born blind from birth. There was a presumption that a person who was born blind had sinned, or that someone had sinned to make this happen. Jesus took away that assumption. Handicaps are given indiscriminately. Notice that Jesus' healing is a reflection of "the Glory of God."

D. James 5:13-16 "Is any among you sick?" Laying on of hands and anointing with oil are suggested Remember, healing is something God does. We believe not in "faith healing" but in the "healing of faith."
I would suggest reading the Occasional Service book section on healing. As to
procedure, I would invite the pastor to give some illustrations of the ways in which healing has
been in evidence in specific situations. Then divide into 3 teams, using the core staff, one with
each pastor.

Ask when folks come forward, "for what would you like to have prayer?" Also tell people
to focus on either one or two things. Too many healing requests make it difficult and the results
are not as good. I suggest two people laying hands on the participant. The first prays; the
second listens and follows up with another prayer, perhaps remembering what might have
been left out. Follow with anointing of oil.

Also remember, healing is a process. In Mark 8:24 Jesus healed a blind man. When he
asked, "now can you see?" the man said that people looked like trees. So he needed to be
touched again and again, until he had a clear focus.

**CURSILLO CROSS DISTRIBUTION**

**Situation and Objective**

This takes place in the Chapel on Friday immediately after the FAITH Rollo, as part of the initial
Palanca the Candidates receive. It is meant to be brief, but powerful, as each participant and team
member willing receives this symbol of discipleship. Another reason is the sense of apostolic
unity, as everyone, from the HSD and Rector/a to the Candidates, are receiving this together.

The HSD should start with Scripture, proclaiming perhaps I Corinthians 1:18, or Matthew
10:38, or Colossians 1:20, or some other clear, powerful passage, while briefly explaining the
what and why and how of this event. At the end of this explanation, the HSD needs to instruct
everyone to respond, as they receive this special Palanca, “I AM COUNTING ON CHRIST.”
Then he reads aloud the name of every team member and participant (he will need a roster in ad-
ance). As each one comes forward, the Co-Spiritual Directors lovingly place a crucifix around
their neck, with the words, “CHRIST IS COUNTING ON YOU.”
Hugs are permissible, but it is wise to keep a certain solemnity to this occasion, allowing each to
keep their focus foremost on Jesus.

Since typically, Team members and Cooks want to bring their “old” crosses in their fists, so they
can keep the one they have long treasured, use hand motions to make appear that all are being
treated equally. Two or three cooks should receive their crucifixes last in case of a miscount.

**NAILING SINS TO THE CROSS**

**Situation and Objective**

This takes place at least one evening during the weekend at the Rector/Rectora’s timing. The
Cooks will take the leadership in making sure all that is needed—the cross, hammers, nails, paper,
a can for burning and matches are there. They are also there to participate themselves! In this
event, everyone “stands at the level of the cross.” The HSD may announce that he has already
prayerfully made his list, and chose to be the first to nail them to the cross. That way he is avail-
able afterwards.

It’s important to prepare everyone for this in a very brief but clear way. It’s an opportunity to
proclaim the “forgiveness of sins” which Martin Luther claimed always "opens the door of
heaven.” You may wish to quote a Scripture verse, or share a true antidote. Try to having avoid
individuals writing “laundry lists” of sins off the top of their heads that would fit anyone’s
situation. At the same time, this is NOT the time to write down a list of the faults that “bug” and offend each of us personally. Rather, this is a list of sins which OFFEND the ALMIGHTY and HOLY GOD! This is a time for each one present to ask the Holy Spirit, very seriously, what is going on in our lives that “dishonors” Him, or “quenches” His work!

In your prayer preparation, ask for honest-hearted divine repentance to fall upon everyone, yourself first of all, resulting in true freedom, release and change as all experience God’s fresh cleansing from the persistent sins in their lives. Be sure everyone understands that this is not a “timed” event, and they have as much time as they desire to seek from God what should be written. Remind them that NO ONE BUT GOD will see what they have put down.

Tell them that after all the lists have been folded and nailed to the cross, the whole group will follow as the cooks lift and carry the sin burdened cross to the place where the unread lists will be removed and placed into the fire, as a sweet smelling incense to God. After you have spoken, fold up your list, and demonstrate by nailing your prayerful list first, and continue in prayer for all your brothers or sisters. Show visible patience, making sure no one is rushed.

Expect a fresh anointing of the Holy Spirit in the Community. It is appropriate to proclaim an absolution or prayer (as you are led by the Spirit) during the burning. Encourage the Worship Leader to lead everyone in a hymn. This is an informal event, and as such one is never exactly like the next one.

AGAPE FOOT WASHING (Optional)
Situation and Objective

This plan requires clear preparation, but works very effectively and takes very little extra time on the evening of the Agape Meal. It’s also a lot of spiritual fun. What makes it so effective is the organized, loving silence, which allows the Holy Spirit to minister in His own way, touching, encouraging, releasing, and preparing each Cursillista for what is to come. Done right, and it can help shape the entire weekend.

PREPARATION NEEDED
- A Marked cardboard box for each Decuria – so their shoes can be deposited in it and retrieved later
- 3 TUBS for the water to overflow into
- Water bottles (as many as you need full of clean, fresh water)
- 3 Chairs for participants to sit in when their turn comes up
- Rolls of Paper Towels
- Wastebaskets for the used paper towels
- Flip-flops or hospital blue booties for each participant, and Rollo team members too, if you are involving them also (this means keeping this a secret from all but the EIGHT core leaders and cooks you choose to involve).

PLAN OF ACTION
1. Pastors and Back Table Leaders leave Rollo Room and assemble on Stage with key cook leaders—8 total.
2. Table leaders leave Rollo Room with their Decuria group one at a time at @ 4:30 Saturday, to go to Agape Dinner, by way of the back stage stairway. Shoes are placed in their separate “marked” cardboard Decuria Box, either in Hall Way, or in back of Stage.
3. There are three stations for foot washing. What follows is the same for each.
4. Each participant is welcomed by one core team member who leads participants and the rest of the Rollo team, one at a time, to an open chair for them to sit in for @ 20-40 seconds while two other core team members, (six in all) kneeling at each of the three chairs...
lovingly “wash” one foot while kneeling on either side, by pouring a tablespoon of water out of bottle and drying foot with paper towel.

5. After the “washing” these same core leaders each put a blue bootie on “their foot.”

6. As soon as the feet are dried, and booties placed, each participant is encouraged by the eighth core member to go down the stairs to their place at AGAPE TABLE.

- Singing or a worshipful recording should be playing at this time (as is usually the case anyway).
- It is vital that all of this is done NON-VERBALLY.

The goal is to have each station FOOT WASH FOUR PEOPLE PER MINUTE, so that in 8 minutes, 64 people could be completed. It is important that this does not take too much time. The goal is to have participants reflecting on the meaning of this act at their seat at the Agape Table when the natural “un-comfortableness” of the act is a memory, not a present reality to “react against.” We have found this makes it more powerful. It all takes place before they realize what is happening. By doing this quickly, simply, and not making a BIG DEAL of our SERVANT HOOD act, we find it helps everyone understand that their HOST and their real FOOT WASHER is JESUS, not the Pastors and Team Leaders.

**HSD’s TALK PRIOR TO CLOSURA**

The Head Spiritual Director assists the Rector in preparing the participants for the Clausura. He refers to the joy of the community they have built and the community out in the church waiting to receive them. He introduces the idea of public witnessing at the Clausura to the participants. He explains their need to witness and the community's need to share their journey. The following sample lifts up some vital points to be covered:

The Community which has loved and supported you for these 3 days is waiting to greet you. They come to be close to you because they have been to a Cursillo and they know Jesus is here. They come to be close to Him. They are waiting to hear what your weekend has been for you.

On Thursday night we promised you that you would not have to do any speaking, so you are not obligated to say anything; however, your sponsors, your church friends, and the community would love to hear what impact the weekend had on you and what you will take away from the weekend for your future faith walk. Remember, everyone in the community has been where you are right now, and they know how hard it is to put these things in words. Nobody is expecting a speech; they just want to hear your heart.

You have been given a card to write some thoughts down on, use it if you're nervous. I’m asking you to think about your answer to some of the following questions: (choose 2 or 3)

- WHAT HAS GOD GIVEN YOU IN THESE 3 DAYS?
- WHAT DO YOU MOST WANT TO KEEP THAT YOU HAVE FOUND HERE?
- HOW HAVE YOU CHANGED THIS WEEKEND IN RELATIONSHIP WITH CHRIST AND HIS CHURCH?
- HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THAT?
- HOW HAS YOUR VIEW OF JESUS CHANGED THIS WEEKEND?
- WHAT CHANGES IN YOUR LIFE DO YOU WANT OR EXPECT TO HAPPEN?
If you feel shy or simply don’t wish to stand and say anything at this time, that is a decision we will all respect and support. At the same time, this will be the ONLY opportunity you get to do this. Be sure you are comfortable with your decision.

On the other hand, if you are really excited and decide to share something, remember, this is a BRIEF testimony, it is NOT a Rollo. Either way, the Rollistas at your table are available as a resource to help you organize your thoughts.

- When you speak, say your NAME and the CHURCH you attend.
- Remember how each of us on the team has loved you, but please do not turn it into an Academy awards speech of thank-you’s. They want to hear about YOU, not THEM. This Cursillo was a gift of unconditional love, so no thanks are necessary.

If you desire, you can ask the Rollistas to go up with you for moral support. You may go up individually, with a buddy, or as entire Decurias if you wish. If someone at your table wishes not to testify, they may stay in their pew, or come up and allow someone else at the table to simply introduce their the name and church.