

# Ultreya

A Manual for the Training of Leaders  
in the Via de Cristo Method of Renewal



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for  
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## ULTREYA

### OVERVIEW

“Ultreya!” This word is introduced to our candidates and pilgrims on Via de Cristo weekends along with many of the other Spanish phrases inherited from our foundations in Cursillo®. Ultreya is a Spanish word that which means “Onward!” “Persevere!” “Press On!” “Hang in There!” The expression was originally associated with those who were making a pilgrimage on foot to the Shrine of St. James at Compostella in Spain, where the last part of the journey was a climb up a steep hill. Groups of pilgrims would call this word of encouragement to each other as they climbed up the hill.

Ultreya was adopted as the rallying cry of Cursillo® and many of its spin-off movements. In the Via de Cristo movement, one line in our De Colores song says, “All in color...all in color the diamond will sparkle when brought to the light.” This entire movement, with it’s roots in the Roman Catholic Cursillo®, is like that diamond, with a multiplicity of facets, each and every one of them configured to reflect the light of Christ throughout the world! One cannot remove facets from a diamond and retain the sparkle. Ultreya is regarded in the foundation literature from the Roman Catholic Cursillo® as being “central to the health and well being of the Cursillo® movement.”

“Ultreya” was the name of the church social center in Majorca, Spain. In the beginning, not many people could attend the Clausura, because during the foundations of Cursillo, the Closing was held early Monday morning! The community would gather there Monday evening after each weekend for news and sharing with the candidates. Thus, Ultreya was born of past weekend attendees and new babe-chicks sharing during the first week of their 4th Day!

### WHAT IS “ULTREYA”?

The simplest description of the Ultreya is a meeting of Group Reunions. Here we witness together to the life in grace and we challenge each other to persevere on our journey to a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ. While the primary Group Reunion is weekly, the Ultreya is usually monthly. At the Ultreya you will reaffirm friendships you made on your weekend. You will also make many new friends and receive encouragement and support.

The Ultreya fulfills many roles on the road to perseverance. For new participants, it is the place to discover what the Group Reunion is like. The Group Reunion is not learned from only one or two attempts. It requires a period of time so that its rhythm becomes a method of life. The Group Reunion is one part of the process of community, the other part is the larger community, the Ultreya. Neither one is complete without the other, and growth is linked to the vitality and depth of both groups.

The purpose of the Cursillo® Movement, and Via de Cristo as a distinct part of it, is to make it possible for us to know Christ, to share Christ, and to bring Christ into our communities, environments, and into all the world we know, linking Christians together in action. What is the role of the Ultreya in this? It provides the linkage.

## WHAT IS ULTREYA MEANT TO BE?

A place where all the Group Reunions can come together for revitalization by sharing with others; where blessings and successes can be multiplied and hurts and failures healed;

A place where new Cursillistas become part of the larger community;

A place for growth in Christ for all of us:

- (1) where help is provided in beginning a relationship for personal spiritual guidance;
- (2) where personal support through sharing of each other's experiences of living with Jesus Christ can be found;
- (3) where inspiration is available from the witness talks to be courageous in transforming our environments for Christ.

The place where the church at large meets Via de Cristo and where potential candidates or pilgrims are welcome to "look over" the movement. Ultreya is Via de Cristo's witness to the church that we are a Christ-centered movement, and not a "para-church" or "super-church".

Ultreya ideally carries out the spirit of Via de Cristo, which is the awareness that we are saints and apostles - not only in the exciting atmosphere of the weekend, but also saints and apostles in the natural and normal and sometimes not so exciting events of our day-to-day living. We learn more deeply that we are not alone. We are linked together in the love, the fellowship, the encouragement of our brother and sister saints and apostles.

Many struggle to fit the experience of Via de Cristo into their existing lives and cultures. Ultreya gives us the tools to do the opposite...to fit our lives and cultures into the ideal and vision of Via de Cristo! Without Ultreya, the weekend soon just becomes another happy weekend, full of love and inspiration. With Ultreya, the weekend becomes a true foundation, a "kick-off" point for increased living and acting as the Body of Christ!

Each sponsor has agreed to take their candidate to the next available Ultreya. This, perhaps, needs attention on the part of Secretariat leadership, in that many sponsors do not have the experience of Ultreya to share with their candidates! In some cases, rollistas delivering the Total Security in the Fourth day talk have also not participated in Ultreya. These cases add to the difficulties initiated during the three-day weekend of explaining the use of that spiritual tool we call Ultreya. Just as one cannot enthusiastically recommend a product one has never used, one also cannot "sell" a life-changing concept one does not employ! It is firmly suggested that, in areas where Via de Cristo Secretariats have not been able (for whatever reason) to initiate or sustain the regular meeting of the Ultreya, the leaders familiarize themselves with the times and places of Ultreyas and Gatherings for other local movements such as Roman Catholic or Episcopal Cursillo, Walk to Emmaus, Tres Dias, and/or Kairos, among others, and encourage their candidates to participate, so as to have and share this important phase of the movement.

## THE ULTREYA FORMAT

Each Secretariat has the responsibility for determining how and where Ultreyas will be established. The size may vary from just enough people for one Group Reunion, plus a Spiritual Director to as many as one hundred, though seventy to eighty is optimum. The quality of Christ-centered participation, coupled with open and honest sharing is more important than large numbers.

Before the Ultreya, the leaders should meet, and after setting up the space properly, for a half hour they have their own Group Reunion, pray for the Ultreya, and initiate action to build a true community of support.

There are some universal elements of all Ultreyas: They are:

- Opening Prayer

- Music

- Lay witness or speaker

- An opportunity for response from the community (from community or Spiritual Director)

- Time for reflection on the talk (informal Reunion Group)

- Worship

- Food!

Lay speakers at the Ultreya give witness to their growth in living union with Christ so that others may be encouraged to do likewise. Ultreya witness talks expose Cursillistas to a great variety of witnesses so they may encounter a broad range of possibilities for growth and action. The speaker should offer concrete examples of how to live what is fundamental for being a Christian in their environment. What the speaker should accomplish is sharing a practical way that should inspire others to follow the example or to imitate the actions of the speaker. A witness talk is by definition a talk delivered as a living experience of what the speaker is or believes. Hopefully, the speaker will be able to share something recent in their experience as a living example of how they are living their Fourth Day as learned during their weekend experience. The witness talk should not be an instruction nor an intellectual exercise, but a personal sharing of one's experience during their Fourth Day. The speaker should keep it short (this is not a rollo), simple and upbeat.

Singing is a good way to begin the Ultreya. Songs commonly sung on Via de Cristo weekends are a good way to bring the community together again. After the Lay speaker has given their talk, the leader may instruct those present to break into small groups of three or four for a Reunion Group format sharing time. The purpose of Ultreya Group Reunion is to provide contacts with Christians from as many different backgrounds as possible. In that way each person gains insights into the ways others live as Christians and each of us contributes to the growth of others. Often it is in this informal reunion group that people find others with whom to form a permanent Group Reunion.

The Ultreya may continue with Worship and Holy Communion as we honor God and His call to always give God glory and praise.

The evening ends with snack and fellowship time.

## BASIC ADVICE: KEEP IT SIMPLE

The theme of each Ultreya should be transforming the world of Christ, and it is important not to be distracted from that crucial task. Each Ultreya is meant to be Christ-centered, not Via de Cristo centered, concentrating not on the workings of Via de Cristo but on Jesus working within us to bring the whole world to Himself.

Any open and committed Christian should feel welcomed and perfectly at home at an Ultreya regardless of church background or spiritual experience, finding strength and courage to take Jesus Christ back into events and surroundings of everyday life. Any such person should be welcome at Ultreya and Group Reunion; it is not necessary to make a three-day weekend part of the fourth day program. In fact the entire Via de Cristo 4th Day program is no more and no less than a model for normal Christian life, combining the elements personal piety and spiritual guidance, a small group of Christian friends (the Group Reunion), and a larger community for the support and encouragement of Christian life and witness in the world (the Ultreya). This is a major reason that Via de Cristo is not in competition with, but rather an integral part of the institutional Church.

Finally, although Worship and Holy Communion may be part of the Ultreya, it is important to the well-being of both the Via de Cristo Movement and the life of the congregation or congregations represented in the Ultreya, that everyone understand that this worship time should never appear to be a substitute for or a rival of each person's deep involvement in the liturgical life of his or her own church community.

## THE ULTREYA LEADERS

The success of the Ultreya, the literature tells us, presupposes several things: existing permanent Group Reunions to build the pattern of open sharing and mutual support and a group of dedicated leaders. What about them? Who are they and what do they do?

First of all, the Ultreya leaders should be a servant group. They are a working Group Reunion who attend the Ultreya for the sake of others, not chiefly for themselves. The leaders group in charge of Ultreya might include five or six people, one being the spiritual advisor, one a coordinator, one who is chiefly responsible for selecting and working with speakers, and one to take care of the set-up, supplies, and so on. Other members might share tasks as they arise. There is no set way for this group to be formed or selected, such as election or appointment.

Each Ultreya evolves its own leaders group under the guidance of the Secretariat. Ultreya is the place where the solid, continuing work of strengthening Christ's people goes on. It is where we are continually confronted with Jesus' divine commission to bring all of our environments under His lordship and to be bearers of His good news of love and freedom. That work is as challenging as any mountain pilgrimage. We need each other's encouragement to be faithful companions as we journey with Jesus on the road to His Fathers' Kingdom.

## GUIDELINES FOR ULTREYA SPEAKERS

“Ultreya!” A cry of encouragement! We meet to encourage one another; to inspire one another in our endeavor to bring the world around us to Jesus Christ. You, as a speaker at an Ultreya, have an important part in encouraging your brothers and sisters.

THE WITNESS TALK - ten minutes long (may be shorter, but not longer!) is:

1. About Jesus Christ - the talk should relate how you live with Christ and how you are trying to bring others to know Him. The aim of the witness talk is not to tell people what they should do, but rather how you love Jesus and how in loving Him you try to bring all those He loves closer to Him in the ordinary circumstances of your life.
2. About a recent living experience - tell how, through piety, study and action, you are trying to bring others with you to Jesus in the normal flow of your own life. Make just one or two points and build your talk around them.
3. Concrete and practical - make your talk vivid by describing who, how, where, why and when, as you tell of carrying out action, which you planned, to bring one of your environments closer to Christ. Tell what happened as a result, whether it seemed like a success or a failure. Be concrete in your conclusions.

Do not feel that you are unworthy of giving a talk. All of us, in striving to be Christians have many failures in our lives. But we have some successes too. We all have had moments and experiences in our lives that can be lifted out to share with our friends. This is what your talk should be.

Next is what your talk should NOT be!

sensational - a big, flashy production number,  
a sermon or instruction in Christianity,  
a Bible teaching,  
too emotional

The focus is on Jesus Christ in your life!

### *QUESTIONS YOU MAY ASK YOURSELF TO HELP IMPROVE YOUR TALK:*

Does this talk show that Christ is in my life?

Will it show how much I want to follow Him?

Does Jesus Himself hold the most important place in the talk? Will this experience I am sharing stimulate people to think of things they might plan to do to transform their home, work, congregation, recreation or other environments for Christ?

## HOW SHOULD THE WITNESS TALK BE GIVEN?

1. Pray all the way. Jesus reminds us, "Without me you can do nothing."
2. In only ten minutes you cannot say too much. It is better to make only one point and make it well and to tell about one experience and tell it clearly than to add more detail or examples. Do not over-prepare: the simpler the better.
3. Speak clearly, slowly, but informally, as if talking with friends because you are!
4. If possible, give the theme of your talk to the spiritual director to help in his or her response. Try to do this a few days in advance of Ultreya, together with any scriptural references you might plan to incorporate.

### ECHO OR RESPONSE SPEAKERS - one or two minutes each

Several echo speakers may be chosen in advance, or volunteers may be requested after the witness talk. Their response should be spontaneous and related to the theme of the talk. It is best if these speakers are from different professions and life situations than the speaker, so that they can show that they share in their own experience the same principles of living with Christ and of being witnesses for Him in their different environments.

### SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR - five or ten minutes

Because there is no experience that cannot be related to Scripture, one of your functions is to pull everything together and link it to the Gospel. You are asked not to prepare a formal written talk. The lay witness speaker has been requested to let you know in advance about the theme of his or her talk, together with any Scripture to be used, to help in your preparation. After listening to the witness talk and responses, your task is to draw on your background in the Scripture and relate the talk and responses to some part of the Gospels. Like the witness talk this Gospel summary should be simple and informal. This is the important teaching phase of the Ultreya and is the means by which the Cursillistas grow spiritually in their attempt to interpret the Gospel in relationship to their daily living.

### REFERENCES

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