

The Role of Via de Cristo Within The Congregation

"*You are Peter and upon this rock I will build my church.*" (Mat. 16:18) The Church is Christ's chosen method for evangelizing the world and sustaining the people of God. It is the Church that has received Christ's command to go into the world making disciples and teaching them to obey everything Christ commands. Tragically, the Church has been torn in pieces by not only false teaching but also by good teaching emphasized inappropriately. The Via de Cristo method seeks to *appropriately support pastors* and congregations in their home churches. Although the Via de Cristo is not for everyone (and does not profess to be), it has demonstrated an effective method for renewal. Since Cursillo began in 1943 it has spread around the world, encouraging the lives of many and building up the Christian Church.

Via de Cristo is a tool for Church renewal. A tool always works best when it is used for the proper purpose and in the proper way. Via de Cristo is a corporate experience of the Gospel for the whole person. It is neither a head-trip nor a heart trip. Practiced correctly, it will speak to the whole person. It is not an individual experience, but one to be shared with others. As such, it is *not* a tool for individual conversion, but for corporate growth. Via de Cristo is for the renewal of the Church. It is a leaven within the Body of Christ.

The Via de Cristo is designed to allow the layperson a significant partnership with the clergy. In fact, one of the most beneficial outcomes is that after a weekend the participants are able to view clergy as friends and co-workers in the gospel. It is well said in Via de Cristo materials "the Via de Cristo is a movement of the Church, lay in leadership and commitment to winning the world to Christ."

The Via de Cristo participant should bring strength and renewal to the whole Body. Everything that is taught and occurs within the movement is to be consistent with and derived from the original teachings of the Church; those in existence since its foundation. Nothing is taught on the weekend that is not consistent with Lutheran theology. Because of its corporate nature, Via de Cristo should not be mixed with other kinds of more individual tools. It is not a vehicle of the neo-Pentecostal experience.

The Via de Cristo method is intended to be a lifelong discipline for every participant within the movement. On a three-day weekend new participants, *both lay and clergy*, are taught a method which, when practiced, will encourage openness to the Holy Spirit and effective work for Christ. We describe this method in terms of Piety, Study, and Apostolic Action.