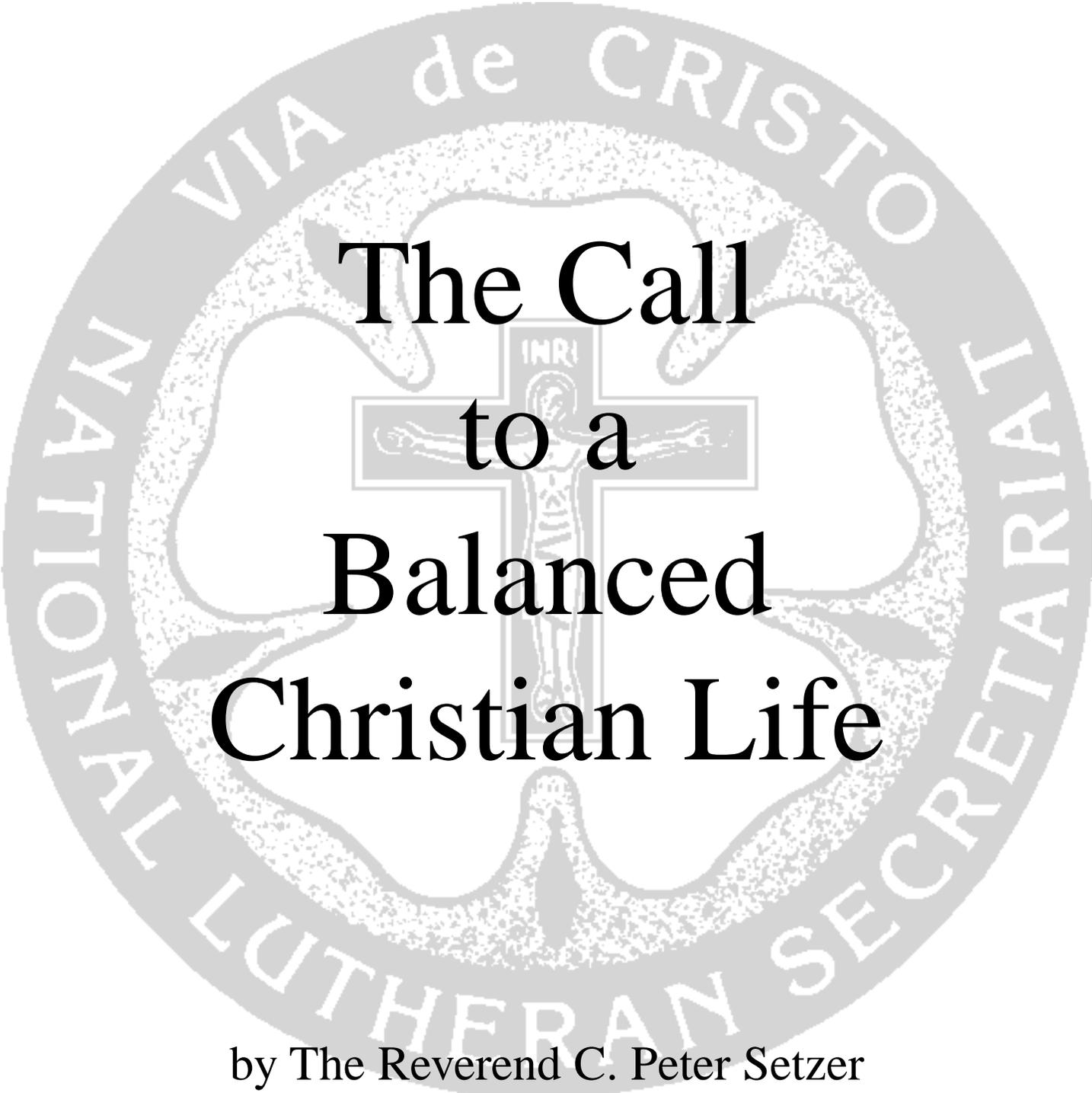


The National Lutheran Secretariat  
for  
Via de Cristo

The logo is a circular emblem. The outer ring contains the text "NATIONAL LUTHERAN SECRETARIAT" at the bottom and "VIA de CRISTO" at the top. Inside the ring is a stylized cross with a figure of Christ on it. The figure has arms outstretched and is wearing a loincloth. Above the figure's head is the word "INRI". The background of the inner circle is a textured, stippled pattern.

**The Call  
to a  
Balanced  
Christian Life**

by The Reverend C. Peter Setzer

# Via de Cristo - The Call to a Balanced Christian Life

The three-legged milk stool appears at every Via de Cristo weekend to illustrate the essential and interconnected features of the Christian life — piety, study, and action.

Founders of the Cursillo method didn't just pull these three words out of a hat. They represent something foundational in the Christian life. To illustrate the point during the keynote address at the recent Annual Meeting, I projected onto a large screen the first five tiers of a diagram, entitled, "Charting the Balanced Christian Life." (See chart next page.)

The second tier of words matches the legs of our milk stool to the three basic human functions. Our "feeling" relates to piety, our "thinking" relates to study and our "doing" relates to action.

The third tier shifts the focus to a closely associated capacity, the "emotional," "rational" and "volitional." The point here is to illustrate that piety, study, and action, together comprehensively embrace our entire human experience.

If we want to wax poetic, we can describe the three functions in terms of our body parts traditionally ascribed in literature. The "heart" is the center of our emotional self, the "head" is the center of our rational self, and the "hands" are descriptive of our self reaching out to relate to others.

The Action emphasis in Via de Cristo is of two kinds, witness and service, so we need two body parts to provide complete coverage. "Mouth" refers to the verbal proclamation of the gospel and our invitations to bring other to Christ.

The fourth tier names the "heresy" (false teaching) that results when we dwell exclusively in one of the three areas to the neglect of the other two. All of these distortions of the faith can be traced throughout Christian history and are currently a threat to the Church and the Via de Cristo movement.

For instance, European Christianity in the generation after Martin Luther became weighted too heavily in the middle area, "Study." It is called the "scholastic period" by historians because it is noted for its intense scholarly activity. Lutheran preachers of this period delivered sermons that were

directed more to the head than addressing the heart or motivating Christian action. Reason was highly valued; emotions were regarded with suspicion. The Christianity that resulted was aloof, intellectual, cold and often moribund. Scholastic leaders in the church inadvertently mirrored the "rationalism" in philosophical circles that they were trying to counteract.

The pietism movement that followed attempted to regain the lost balance by emphasizing matters of the heart, the subjective experience with Jesus. On the action side they emphasized missionary activity and charitable works, and formed institutions for both purposes. Unfortunately, the intellectual aspects of the faith were often neglected. People who dwell entirely in the piety area, neglecting study and action, probably deserve the charge that they are emotionalists and quietists. With respect to political action, Lutherans in general have been charged with "quietism."

"Activists" are those who care little for matters of faith and care little for learning to think clearly about the faith. Performing social and political action in the community, perhaps in the name of Christ is their passion.

A related heresy is "moralism," a false perception that what really matters in Christian life is being good, or doing good. Moralists duck out on God's redemption through Christ. They would rather do it themselves!

The charting of these heresies warns us to avoid becoming "unbalanced" in our Christian life, emphasizing one area to the neglect of the other two. Unfortunately, such balance does not come naturally to us. Most of us, if we are strong at all, will be strong in one of the three areas and weak in another. Preferring success, we continue to operate in the area of our strength and avoid the area of our weakness. So the imbalance worsens. Via de Cristo provides a method to help us gain needed balance, by offering a Group Reunion that equally stresses piety, study and action. The other pilgrims hold us accountable for overcoming our weaknesses and growing into a healthy balance.

Tiers six through nine in the chart were not included in the keynote address, but were explained to the pastors in the Spiritual Director's Committee meeting. Tier six assigns the congregational ministry most associated with that area. Reading across the tier, a pastor or layperson will take note that the four key ministries of the Christian congregation are included, "worship," "education," "evangelism" and "social ministry." Healthy congregations are strong in all four areas, and so are healthy individuals.

Tier eight occurred to me during a talk by our Bishop in the North Carolina Synod to a group of Via de Cristo pastors who had gathered at synod headquarters to confer



about the movement and seek his guidance and support. He noted that historically, Lutherans are better with the intellectual dimensions of the faith than we are with the emotional. We do best at theology and catechism. Via de Cristo strives to address the heart more effectively. But in the process we need to be alert that we not lose touch with the transcendent dimension of God, the majesty and mystery. The "Historical" dimension of God in the third column under action reminds us that the God of the Bible enters into history with mighty acts of deliverance.

The final two tiers, again, were suggested by my Bishop. He often calls the contemporary Church to demonstrate the marks of God's Church as described in the Nicene Creed. We are each internally a unity of piety, study, and action, and "one" as a Church body in the Spirit. "Holiness" relates to piety, "Catholic" to study, (in the sense that what we believe and teach is first checked out with the whole church), and "Apostolic" to action, (we even call it that, "Apostolic Action").

So we see the trinitarian model operating at many different levels, an observation that I hope and pray expands our appreciation for the Via de Cristo method and ignites a passion for using it as a tool for renewal of individuals, Church and society (our "environments")!!!

Rev. C. Peter Setzer, D.D.  
Spiritual Director,  
National Lutheran Secretariat

## What Are the Strong Points of the New Group Reunion Card?

*(First in a series of three articles on the new card)*

1. **Group Reunion Card** - A title more descriptive of what we actually use, this is the official name for the new card. The "Service Sheet" will be discontinued. Its history goes back to a time early in the Cursillo movement when two forms were given each person attending a weekend, a card and a service sheet. The two evolved into one form years before most of us came into the movement. The Group Reunion Card provides the "agenda" for the weekly Group Reunion. "Order of Reunion" on the old card was often misunderstood to be referring to the prayer for the Holy Spirit. Hence, the heading on the front panel of the new card: "Group Reunion".
2. **The Opening Prayer Is Printed in Optional Responsive Reading Format.** Originally, the first half of the prayer was arranged in classic versicle form, similar to the fashion printed in the new card with the second and fourth line in bolder type. The third and fourth lines are from Psalm 104:30. The Prayer for the Holy Spirit, an ancient collect, begins with "O God, who by the light..." Hence, some early forms have the invitation, "Let us pray" immediately preceding them. The versicles and prayer are on the front cover to permit room for a balanced presentation of PIETY, STUDY and ACTION on the inside panels.
3. **Balance** - The new card is arranged so that PIETY, STUDY and ACTION, basic components of the Christian life, are each assigned one of the three inside panels of the card. As the card is "balanced" in appearance, so we who are prone to over-emphasize one area to the neglect of other areas, are to encourage one another to a healthy balance in our daily discipleship.
4. **"My Balanced Weekly Plan for Growing in God's Grace"** is printed across the top to make the point that the "plan" embraces all three areas, Piety, Study, and Action. It's placement near the end of the old card left many with the impression that the "plan" applied only to Apostolic Action.
5. **Four Scripture Passages** give the card solid biblical undergirding. "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Phil. 4:14) brings back a verse quoted in earlier versions of the card. A verse dear to the hearts of many, it was originally directed at PIETY, but here applies to the entire 3-part plan for growth, and makes the point that our efforts to grow will be self-serving and futile unless inspired and directed by Christ himself. The other three verses are carefully chosen to focus on one aspect of the Christian life.
6. **"My Balanced..."** and **"Our Piety"**, etc. Both singular and plural possessive pronouns are used to reflect both the individual and corporate character of the reunion group. Each individual has a plan for growth, but there is an accountability expected of one another in the reunion group. The "your" in the heading of each major section focuses us on listening to and encouraging the other pilgrims.
7. **Under "Our Piety"**, Matthew 11:28 quotes Jesus' invitation to come to him, where true piety is nurtured in a "vital union with Christ," a phrase Luther often used synonymously with "faith."
8. **Emphasis on Congregation** - Although most pilgrims are leaders in their congregations, and most pastors use the movement as a tool of parish renewal, the word "congregation" does not appear in the old card. "Congregation Worship" is the first "aid" under the piety section of the new card, underscoring the intent of the VdC movement to strengthen the local congregation rather than compete with it for the time and commitment of our pilgrims.
9. **Evening Thanks** - A prayer of thanks at the end of the day may be as important as a morning offering at the beginning. Let bookends of prayer enrich our days!
10. **Devotions** - This added aid suggests use of traditional devotional booklets with other family members in the same home for quality time and spiritual sharing of special joys and needs of the family.
11. **Blessing Before Meals** - This tradition of grace before (and sometimes also after) meals extends back to biblical times, originating in Jewish piety. Christians, taught by the Lord to pray for "daily bread" rightly receive every meal as from the hand of God. The practice has additional value in family settings and offers a worthy witness in public dining environments.
12. **Close Moment with Christ Expanded.** Perhaps the most important question on the card is "What was the moment in which you felt closest to Christ?" The question encourages pilgrims to nurture a more conscious sense of the presence of Christ at all times. (Consider Brother Lawrence's "Practice of the Presence of Christ.") Note how the question has comparable forms in the other sections of the new card, in questions #5 and #9.
13. **Altar/Chapel Visit** - Terminology and practices vary across the Via de Cristo movement. Some secretariats speak of "chapel visits", meaning prayer in the chapel. Others speak of "altar visits".



In old Catholic practice this referred to visits to venerate the Host, but among Lutherans it refers to an individual or reunion group kneeling at the altar communion rail for private or group prayer. The NLS encourages such prayers at the altar as the final act of the weekly reunion group. At the altar the sense of Presence is often most intense and has the greatest impact on the prayers and the persons praying. Many pastors conclude their sessions for spiri-

tual direction with such an altar visit with the person who has come for help.

I hope these comments are useful to you. Other parts of the new reunion card will be explained in the next edition of Conexiones.



C. Peter Setzer  
Spiritual Director, NLS

### Important Notice

A revised version of the Pilgrim's Guide is being published to accompany the new revised Group Reunion Card. Both of these new instruments will be green in color for easy identification.

<p>Pray together in closing:</p> <hr/> <h3 style="text-align: center;">Prayer of Thanksgiving</h3> <p>We give you thanks, Lord God Almighty, for all the benefits you have given to us; to you who live and reign forever and ever! <span style="float: right;">Amen</span></p> <p>I pray that all my intentions, actions and works of this day may be directed solely to the greater glory of God's divine majesty. May the grace of God dwell always in me!</p> <hr/> <h3 style="text-align: center;">Prayers/Altar Visit</h3> <p>Praise, Thanksgiving, Confession, Intercession and Petitions.</p> <p>Lord's Prayer</p> <p>Sharing of the Peace</p>	 <p style="margin-top: 20px;">Name: _____</p> <p style="margin-top: 10px;">Weekend table and date: _____</p>	<hr/> <h3 style="text-align: center;">Group Reunion</h3> <p>Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in us the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit, and we shall be created, and you shall renew the face of the earth.</p> <p>O God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit instructs the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Holy Spirit we may be truly wise and ever rejoice in his consolations; through Christ our Lord.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Amen</p>
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## My Balanced Weekly Plan for Growing In God's Grace

*"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Phil. 4:13)*

<h3>Our Piety</h3> <p><i>"Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest." (Matt 11:28)</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>With what spiritual aids have you nourished your vital union with Christ this week?                      Congregational Worship/Communion                      Morning Offering/Evening Thanks                      Devotions, Meditation and Prayer                      Examination of Conscience                      Altar/Chapel Visit                      Family Prayer                      Blessing Before Meals                      Spiritual Direction                      Other</li> <li>What was the moment you felt closest to Christ?</li> <li>What is your plan for next week to deepen your piety?</li> </ol>	<h3>Our Study</h3> <p><i>"If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." (John 8:31)</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What have you studied this week to better understand Jesus Christ and his mystical body, the church?                      Adult Education Class of Congregation                      Bible Study Course                      Private Bible Study                      Bible Commentaries                      Books on the Christian Faith &amp; Theology                      Christian Periodicals                      Pastor Guided Reading                      Other</li> <li>What was the most helpful Spiritual insight from your study?</li> <li>What will be your plan for next week to enrich your study?</li> </ol>	<h3>Our Action</h3> <p><i>"As the Father has sent me, so I send you." (John 20:31)</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What have you done this week to share Christ with the world so that others might know his saving love?                      How have you witnessed to the gospel in:                      family                      workplace                      profession                  total environment                      In what way were you successful?                      In what way were you disappointed?</li> <li>What have you done to bear the burdens of others in obedience to Christ?</li> <li>What was the moment of your most burning witness? most sacrificial service?</li> <li>What is your plan for next week to enlarge your witness and service?                      Plan a Reunion Group activity.</li> </ol>
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## What Are the Strong Points of the New Group Reunion Card?

(Second in a series of three articles on the new card)

The last issue of Conexiones (December, 1995) included the first article in this series. It explained the title of the new revised card, the front page, the balanced formatting of the three basic emphases, Piety, Study and Action on the inside three panels, and a detailed explanation of each item under PIETY.

Let's now take a close look at the middle panel of the new revised card that encourages us to STUDY.

1. **Our Study** - Study is done in the context of the Christian community. It is the Spirit-inspired reflection of the people who make up the body of Christ as to what it means to be his disciples today. "OUR" Study reminds us of the unique nature of Christian study, and the aim to share some of the fruits of our study with our brothers or sisters in the reunion.
2. **Scripture Text under Study** - This reminds us of Christ's invitation to his disciples to study, and the promise of benefits to be derived from it. Our study is basically a study of God's Word, and especially of Christ ("If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples).
3. **The Question** - Following the text above, the question is asked (#4), "What have you studied this week to better understand Jesus Christ and his mystical body, the church?" This question, recycled from an older version of the card, is much better than the question on the current card, "What have you done to better understand the gift of God?" What "gifts?" We study Christ, and his mystical body of which we are a part, to come to inspired self-understanding.
4. **Expanded Scope of Study** - Note that in the new green card the space given to STUDY is identical to the space given to the other two emphases, piety and action. In the old card, STUDY space was short-changed, lending fuel to the charge that we emphasize feelings over thinking in the movement.
5. **Adult Education Class in the Congregation** - Churchwide, this is the major study time, and we should encourage it. In addition, most congregations provide a Bible Study course. In my last two parishes, Via de Cristo pilgrims consistently comprised the large majority of the participants. They were hungry for it!
6. **Private Bible Study** - This encourages Bible study of a devotional character, with rigorous self-examination and personal application.
7. **Bible Commentaries** - High on the list, commentaries here stress the fact that the Bible is our primary source of study. We want well-educated heads to inform our pilgrim hearts!
8. **Books on Christian Faith and Theology** - Next in rank of importance, books on Christian faith and theology help us think clearly and understand our Lutheran emphasis on grace and justification by faith. Luther's Small and Large Catechisms, The Augsburg Confession and other confessional writings are among our best resources.
9. **Christian Periodicals** - "Christian" periodicals, such as The Lutheran, clarify the intent of what was simply "periodicals" in the old card, which could have been anything from The Watchtower to Bird Lore.
10. **Pastor-Guided Reading** - In keeping with our respect for the pastor's role as shepherd and "spiritual director" of the congregation, we encourage our lay pilgrims to seek the assistance of their pastors in selecting books that would be most beneficial. Pilgrims need exposure to the best books available.
11. **Most Helpful Spiritual Insight** - This question has been added to the STUDY section to parallel the question under piety seeking our closest moment with Christ. "What was the most helpful Spiritual insight from your study?" In my experience, my "closest moment with Christ" is often during study time. It may happen while meditating on a devotional in a booklet like "Light for Today." Should I not share both the word from Christ that stirred me, and the personal circumstances that were illuminated?
12. **Plan for Study** - The question regarding planning ahead, coming at the end in the old card, is included under each of the three areas in the new card and is tailored for each. "What will be your plan for next week to enrich your study?" I've found that addressing it specially for each area leads to an increase in initiatives!
13. **Why is the New Card Green?** - When I originally presented a proposed draft of the new card at the Annual Meeting in July of 1995, it was green because



green is the color of growing things, and we want to grow in Grace. But another reason for keeping it green was offered by delegates from Texas. They hear frequently of the "green card" carried by immigrants from Mexico. Actually, the U.S. card is green for all immigrants. It is their official proof that they belong here in America although this is not their permanent home. Like so, we Christians are just pilgrims (immigrants) passing through. We "belong" by virtue of our baptism, but heaven is our permanent home.

Use this card regularly, pilgrim. May it help you with your journey!  
C. Peter Setzer  
Spiritual Director, NLS



"Humility & fear  
of the Lord bring  
wealth and  
honor and life."  
Proverbs 22:4

## What Are the Strong Points of the New Group Reunion Card?

(Last in a series of three articles on the new card)

The last issue of *Conexiones* (March, 1996) included the second article in this series. It covered the *Study* panel of the card and explained why the new reunion card is green. Now let us examine the third panel of the new revised card that encourages us to *Action*.

### 1. Our Action

This third leg of the three-legged milk stool brings our Christian life into healthy balance. Our *Piety* and our *Study*, if centered in the saving Christ, will propel us into *Apostolic Action*. The word "Apostle" in Greek literally means, "one who is sent". After nurturing the disciples for three years in his unique form of piety, and teaching them the Truth, particularly becoming the saving Truth through his death and resurrection, Jesus transforms his disciples into *Apostles*; he sends them out into the world to proclaim the great Easter faith. Hence, the scripture verse for this portion of the card lifts out one phrase of our risen Lord's commissioning of his twelve: "As the Father has sent me, even so I send you!"

### 2. What Have You Done this Week to Share Christ with the World so that Others Might Know His Saving Love?

The primary apostolic action is proclaiming Jesus Christ to unbelievers. The method urged in Via de Cristo: "Make a friend; be a friend, bring that friend to Christ." The apostles in the New Testament were first and foremost proclaimers of the Good News of the Gospel.

### 3. How Have You Witnessed to the Gospel In: Family, Profession, Workplace, Total Environment?

While we expect faithful pilgrims to be witnesses to others in their congregation and work through the congregation's outreach ministries, Via de Cristo, historically, emphasizes Christianizing our *environments*. Home and workplace and community are prime locations where our witness needs to be done. Spelling these out specifically for weekly reporting in the reunion group keeps us reminded to tackle the toughest tasks, making an impact for Christ where the gospel is most alien. If the original apostles had shirked this calling, where would we be?

### 4. In What Way Were You Successful? In What Way Were You Disappointed?

Of course we are called not to be "successful" but to be faithful. However, much is to be gained in assessing the effectiveness of one's attempts to witness to the grace we have received. Sharing with reunion friends one's "crash and burn" experiences as well prompts us to depend on Christ and learn from our mistakes.

### 5. What Have You Done to Bear the Bur-

### dens of Others in Obedience to Christ ?

This question brings a clearer focus to our *Apostolic Action*. There are two forms of *Action: Missionary Witness and Loving Service*. The Via de Cristo movement has gained from these twin emphases in the Lutheran pietism movement of the 18th century. Lutheran pietists coupled their extraordinary missionary efforts (which planted the Lutheran church in such diverse areas as India and the American frontier!) with compassionate efforts to lift the burdens of the poorest and most needy sufferers in society, e.g. schools for poor children, orphanages, hospitals, etc. Historically, witnessing has been more effective when accompanied with equal effort to lift the burdens of others. Surely, Christ sends us to *serve*, too! The question asked here provides encouragement to share these "good works" done in response to God's grace.

### 6. What Was the Moment of Your Most Burning Witness? Most Sacrificial Service?

Question #9 on the card carries out an *action-oriented* form of the more familiar question, "What was your closest moment to Christ?" Our closest moment with Christ may often be during the process of witnessing to other people about him. Our hearts may "burn within us" as we share words of faith that opens another person to the presence of Christ. The question here nudges us into describing those faith moments in more detail for the edification of others. Likewise, the "close moment to Christ" may be experienced while feeding the hungry at a food kitchen, or building a Habitat house.

### 7. What Is Your Plan for Next Week to Enlarge Your Witness and Service?

Note how each of the three sections of the card calls for planning. The old card included it at the end, when time was running out for reunion groups. Planning holds our feet to the fire. It urges us to take initiative so that next week I will not be caught again with no significant *action* to share with my friends. It also enlists the prayer support of the reunion group for the challenging action I plan to take.

### 8. Plan a Reunion Group Activity.

This is not intended to be a social event. It may be a combined visit on a lonely sufferer, a common helping ministry in the community, a joint witness project (canvas the neighborhood, or the office area, or plan to invite all the persons in a common profession in the community to attend a weekend together)!

### 9. Prayer of Thanksgiving

This prayer is identical to the one in the old card. It is used widely in reunion groups across the nation. The second petition is really a statement of commitment and recalls the GRACE that saves, comforts, and



equips us for witness and service.

### 10. Prayers/Altar Visit

Some reunion groups meet in places where there is no altar available. The 16 pastors attending the Annual Meeting of Via de Cristo in the summer of 1995 strongly urged the leaders in the movement to encourage reunion groups to end their gatherings by going to the altar where we are weekly nurtured in Word and Sacrament, to kneel together and lift one another up in prayer. Groups that do so witness that the prayer experience is more intense when kneeling "on holy ground" so rich is spiritual symbolism.

### 11. Praise, Thanksgiving, Confession, Intercession and Petition

I'll never forget hearing a person say, after dropping out of his reunion group, "The prayer time was boring. It was the same old petitions, over and over, repeated by each person." If all persons will keep these five dimensions of prayer in mind, they will find their prayer life expanding in many directions, especially as they are applied to the matters just shared in the reunion group.

### 12. Lord's Prayer and Sharing of the Peace

What a great way to end prayers at the altar! Embrace one another in love and bless them on their way!

### 13. Christ Is Counting on You!

This reminder, printed on the back side of the reunion card repeats the charge given when the crosses are presented during the weekend. Seeing the words again brings flooding back wonderful memories of that grace-filled hour. The Via de Cristo seal is in the background. The old card had no identifying marker of the Lutheran movement. Our National Lutheran Secretariat of Via de Cristo seal is similar to Luther's seal. Our version has the body of Christ on the cross, since most of our weekends have chapels in which hangs a crucifix.

### 14. Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Weekend Table and Date: \_\_\_\_\_

The old card had a space for writing in the names of those who sat at the same weekend table. This new card eliminates that section because the emphasis in the Fourth Day is on

the reunion group, not the weekend table members, and one hardly needs to write down the names of persons in a reunion group to remember them! However, if we are ever called upon to serve on a weekend, we will need to know the date and table since that information is expected in all introductions to the community. This space stores it for handy reference.

**15. Idea:**

Why not take the three articles on the new Group Reunion card and read through them with your reunion group? They may serve as a helpful tool in evaluating your group and seeking ways to make it even more inspiring. The same could be done at congregational or regional ultreyas.

**16. Do We Need this Card?**

We have given much attention to the reunion card because it summarizes the essence of the movement. Because it is used by so many, it shapes the movement. It shapes what happens in reunion groups. It shapes how pilgrims grow in their Fourth Day. This card has been revised mainly to keep the right balance in our Christian life. We urge all of our secretariats to use a common card upon which we can all agree as an expression of our unity. Let's use the card for what it is, a blessed gift, a frequent reminder to us of our *Call from Christ to Piety, Study, and Action!*

C. Peter Setzer  
Spiritual Director, NLS

"In 1944, we had the first Cursillo, we said we are not going to stop until we have a Cursillo on the moon. We haven't done that yet."

*Eduardo Bonnin, founder of the Cursillo*

**Important Notice**

A revised version of the Pilgrim's Guide is being published to accompany the new revised Group Reunion Card. Both of these new instruments will be **light green** in color for easy identification.

<p>Pray together in closing:</p> <p><b>Prayer of Thanksgiving</b></p> <p>We give you thanks, Lord God Almighty, for all the benefits you have given to us: to you who live and reign forever and ever! Amen</p> <p>I pray that all my intentions, actions and works of this day may be directed solely to the greater glory of God's divine majesty. May the grace of God dwell always in me!</p> <p><b>Prayers/Altar Visit</b></p> <p>Praise, Thanksgiving, Confession, Intercession and Petitions.</p> <p>Lord's Prayer</p> <p>Sharing of the Peace</p>	 <p>Name: _____</p> <p>Weekend table and date: _____</p>	<p><b>Group Reunion</b></p> <p>Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in us the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit, and we shall be created, and you shall renew the face of the earth.</p> <p>O God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit instructs the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Holy Spirit we may be truly wise and ever rejoice in his consolations; through Christ our Lord.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Amen</p>
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**My Balanced Weekly Plan for Growing In God's Grace**

*"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Phil. 4:13)*

**Our Piety**

*"Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest." (Matt 11:28)*

1. With what spiritual aids have you nourished your vital union with Christ this week?  
 Congregational Worship/Communion  
 Morning Offering/Evening Thanks  
 Devotions, Meditation and Prayer  
 Examination of Conscience  
 Altar/Chapel Visit  
 Family Prayer  
 Blessing Before Meals  
 Spiritual Direction  
 Other
2. What was the moment you felt closest to Christ?
3. What is your plan for next week to deepen your piety?

**Our Study**

*"If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." (John 8:31)*

4. What have you studied this week to better understand Jesus Christ and his mystical body, the church?  
 Adult Education Class of Congregation  
 Bible Study Course  
 Private Bible Study  
 Bible Commentaries  
 Books on the Christian Faith & Theology  
 Christian Periodicals  
 Pastor Guided Reading  
 Other
5. What was the most helpful Spiritual insight from your study?
6. What will be your plan for next week to enrich your study?

**Our Action**

*"As the Father has sent me, so I send you." (John 20:31)*

7. What have you done this week to share Christ with the world so that others might know his saving love?  
 How have you witnessed to the gospel in:  
 family                      workplace  
 profession                  total environment  
 In what way were you successful?  
 In what way were you disappointed?
8. What have you done to bear the burdens of others in obedience to Christ?
9. What was the moment of your most burning witness? most sacrificial service?
10. What is your plan for next week to enlarge your witness and service?  
 Plan a Reunion Group activity.

# New Group Reunion Card

Summarizing the content of the previous three articles.

## Balance

The new card is arranged so that **Piety, Study and Action**, basic components of the Christian life, area each assigned one of the three inside panels of the card. As the card is “balanced” in appearance, so we who are prone to over-emphasize one area to the neglect of other areas, are to encourage one another to a healthy balance in our daily discipleship.

## Scripture

A verse of scripture for each panel reminds us that our growth comes through the power of the Holy Spirit, leading us to a vital union with Christ (faith), deepened study at the feet of Christ, and apostolic action at the command of Christ.

## Congregation

Although most pilgrims are leaders in their congregations, and most pastors use the movement as a tool of parish renewal, the word “congregation” does not appear on the old card. “Congregation Worship” is the first “aid” under the piety section, underscoring the intent of this movement to strengthen the congregation, not competing with it for the time and commitment of our pilgrims.

## Evening Thanks

A prayer of thanks at the end of the day may be as important as a morning offering at the beginning. Let bookends of prayer enrich our days!

## Blessing before Meals

An addition, this commonly practiced act of piety is important enough to warrant inclusion on the card.

## Mystical Body

Question 4 under **Study** brings back the form of this question used in an earlier card. It roots our study firmly in Christ and the Church.

## Adult Education of the Congregation

Sunday school is the primary education time for discipleship in the congregation, and we want to encourage all pilgrims to be active participants.

## Bible Study Courses

In addition to *private* Bible study, done usually at home, we encourage all pilgrims to enroll in formal classes, offered by most congregations.

## Bible Commentaries

The old reunion group card shortchanges **Study** with a very short list of aids. We encourage vigorous study to stimulate minds as well as hearts. Scholarly resources such as commentaries and books on Christian faith and theology are recommended.

## Pastor Guided Reading

As we seek “Spiritual Direction” from our pastors, we also need the benefit of our trained pastor’s guidance in selecting books that clarify our Lutheran emphasis in justification by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. Pilgrims should become familiar with the great classics of Lutheranism.

## Christian Periodicals

The word “Christian” was added to the word “periodicals” in the old card to make clear that the intent is to encourage use of excellent resources like *The Lutheran* to stay abreast of current issues in church and society.

## Spiritual Insight from Study

Here we add a question that is parallel with the question asked under the **Piety** section. “What was your closest moment with Christ?” Sometimes our “closest moment” may come while engaged in study. Should not this specific insight, and its application to our personal life be shared with our reunion group? Members would be encouraged to bring to the group a sample of enriching reading.

## Apostolic Action

The primary apostolic action is proclaiming Jesus Christ to believers (“Make a friend, be a friend, bring that friend to Christ”). The apostles in the New Testament were first and foremost proclaimers of the Good News of the Gospel. The love of Christ also compels us to serve our needy neighbor. Note how this area of the card provides for both, while giving primary emphasis to proclamation. Other outside the Church will do good works of mercy, but if we in the Church do not bring others to Christ, no one else will do it in our stead!

## What Have You Done to Bear the Burdens of Others?

This question guides us to be specific about our acts of love.

## Moment of Most Burning Witness? Most Sacrificial Service?

These twin questions continue the series that started in the **Piety** section, Question #2, and continued in the **Study** section with Question #5. Our reunion friends will be encouraged by our report of a witness given and of a costly service rendered.

## Plan

Questions 3, 6, and 10 all urge us to plan ahead, three times in this card, so that we become more intentional about maintaining a healthy balance in each section of the Christian life (and card).

## Plan a Reunion Group Activity

This was in the old card, often overlooked. It is supposed to be an activity in one of these areas, such as a service project, a joint effort to witness, to lead others in Bible study, etc.

## Prayer of Thanksgiving

This was in the old card, but here it is moved to the back panel, and the lines that were in the old card for writing in the names of those sitting at your table on the weekend are dropped off. The group to be emphasized is the reunion group, not the weekend group, and the reunion group, meeting weekly, hardly needs written names to jog our memories.

## Prayer/Altar Visit

Some secretariats do not encourage the altar visits, but suggest that reunion groups pray in the room where they are meeting. We include mention of both practices. In North Carolina we urge reunion groups to have their closing prayer at the altar where a sense of Presence frequently is stronger and has greater impact.

## Praise, Thanksgiving, Confession, Intercession, and Petitions

These five emphases of prayer, if kept in mind, will stretch the boundaries of our prayer life and keep prayers from becoming rote, or one-dimensional.

## Sharing of the Peace

Many reunion groups end with this affectionate embrace. We want to encourage it.

## Name/Weekend, Table and Date

A place to write it in permanently will aid those who will need this data if ever called upon to give a rollo.

## Green Color of the Card

Green is the color of growing things, and we want to grow in grace. Have you heard of the “Green Card” carried by immigrants? It is their official proof that they belong here in America although this is not their permanent home. Like so, we Christians are just pilgrims (immigrants) passing through. We “belong” by virtue of Baptism, but heaven is our permanent home.

Use this card regularly, pilgrim. May it help your journey!

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