

Via de Cristo

A Via de Cristo is a three-day learning, sharing, and inspirational experience of living in a Christian community. The Spanish words “Via de Cristo” mean “way of Christ.” The purpose of Via de Cristo is to help Christians learn how to be better followers of the way of Christ.

The History

Via de Cristo is the Lutheran version of the Cursillo spiritual renewal movement. (Cursillo is pronounced “ker-see-yo” and means “a short course.”) The Cursillo movement began in the Roman Catholic Church on the Spanish island of Majorca in the late 1940’s. It was originally designed as a three-day study course for men as a method to encourage them to become more active in their parishes and communities. As its popularity grew, Cursillo weekends were also offered for women. The first Cursillo in the United States took place in Texas in 1957.

By 1972, many Lutherans had attended Catholic and Episcopal Cursillo weekends. That year, Lutheran groups in Florida and Iowa decided to organize their own weekends, adapting Cursillo to Lutheran traditions.

The first Lutheran Cursillo weekend in Arizona was held in March 1982 in Phoenix. The first Southern Arizona Lutheran Cursillo was held in Tucson during October of 1996. We recently adopted the name “Via de Cristo” in place of Cursillo to bring us into closer cooperation with other Lutheran groups throughout the United States.

The Via de Cristo Purpose

Via de Cristo is a means for spiritual renewal. It is meant to strengthen the faith of Christian men and women, and encourage them to become more fully committed to serving God in every area of life.

The Via de Cristo weekend comes to you wherever you are in your Christian walk. Participation in a weekend has positive results in a person’s life and in the Christian community. The influence of Christ on the individual is transferred to family, church, school, work and social circles. The goal of the Via de Cristo movement is to make Christ the prime influence in one’s life and in society.

Via de Cristo is grounded in the theology of the Lutheran Church, and is one of many renewal movements of the Church.

Via de Cristo is:

- a chance to strengthen and renew one’s faith
- a useful tool for Christian growth
- a Christian community
- a way of encouraging Christian action in the Church and the world

Via de Cristo concentrates on the person and teachings of Jesus Christ. It gives those who attend Via de Cristo a deeper understanding of Christian truths and the desire to live more fully the message of Jesus. It also provides a means to continue the Christian formation which is begun in the Three Days of Via de Cristo.

The Three Days

The Via de Cristo begins on Thursday evening and lasts until early Sunday evening. Thirty to forty men or women participate in the weekend with a team of clergy and laypeople. This “team” spends weeks working and praying in preparation for the weekend.

Thursday begins with a get-acquainted time. The remainder of the evening is quiet. This time of reflection and meditation lasts until Friday morning.

Beginning Friday morning, fifteen talks are given, ten by laypeople and five by clergy. The talks emphasize the true meaning of grace, the sacraments, worship, the nature and need of prayer, living one’s daily life in union with God, studying to understand the gift of God, and introducing Christ to others by word and deed.

During the talks, participants take notes, just as they would in a class. Talks are followed by a discussion.

The atmosphere of the Three Days is one of joy and grace. The Via de Cristo is filled with talking, singing, laughter, reverence, prayer, worship, reflection and inspiration.

During the Three Days of a Via de Cristo weekend, a person not only hears inspiring talks on what it means to be a Christian, but actually experiences the joy of building and being part of a genuine Christian community.

The Fourth Day

A Via de Cristo can be made only once in a lifetime. Therefore, the time immediately following the Three Days of Via de Cristo is known as the Fourth Day. The Fourth Day encompasses all the days following the Three Day Weekend. On the Fourth Day, the new pilgrim (one who has been on a Via de Cristo) is encouraged to:

- expand his/her own prayer life
- embark on a life of personal study
- become a more active disciple
- attend community gatherings in the form of Ultreyas
- take part in group reunion

In the Via de Cristo movement the community spirit is continued after the Three Days by ultreyas (“ul-tray-ahs”), or reunions of the community. These reunions help renew the sense of community of the Three Days. These meetings build the Christian community on a wider basis.

Group Reunion, or “grouping”, is an informal weekly gathering of two or more, who share their faith in Jesus and encourage, support and sustain one another in Christ.

The Via de Cristo weekend lasts only three days, but the experience lasts a lifetime!

Specifics

Applying

Application forms are available from your congregation’s Via de Cristo parish representative or from your pastor. Applicants must be 21 years old, baptized, active adult members of a Lutheran congregation. Applicants may have to wait to attend a Via de Cristo, due to the limited number of spaces available. If limited space prevents an applicant from attending a Via de Cristo, their application will be given priority for the next Via de Cristo weekend.

Choosing Your Weekend

The married, the single, and the single again are welcome to attend a Via de Cristo. Three types of weekends are available—Men’s, Women’s & Co-Ed. Married couples are expected to attend back-to-back weekends or the Co-Ed.

Sponsors

Every participant has a sponsor. Sponsors accept the responsibilities of preparing a participant for Via de Cristo, initiating that participant into the Fourth Day and assisting him or her in living a Christ-centered life.

Cost

You do not pay anything to attend a Cursillo weekend. The expenses are paid by donations from others who have previously attended a Via de Cristo.

For more information or an application form, contact your Via de Cristo parish representative or your pastor.

What is Via de Cristo?



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