

III. HOW TO GIVE A REC PRESENTATION.....	2
Preparing your talk.....	2
Giving your talk.....	3
IV. TALKS AND SERVICES OUTLINES.....	5
DAY ONE.....	5
INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION.....	5
BIBLE ENTHRONEMENT.....	7
THE WORD OF GOD.....	8
BIBLE CEREMONY.....	9
THEME FOR DAY ONE: DYING AND CHANGING.....	10
IDEALS AND CHRISTIAN MATURITY.....	11
THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION TALK.....	13
THE PRODIGAL SON.....	16
METANOIA.....	18
FORGIVENESS.....	20
SERVICE OF ASHES.....	22
SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION.....	25
PASCHAL VIGIL SERVICE.....	26
PALANCA.....	28
DAY TWO.....	30
THEME FOR DAY TWO: RISE AGAIN WITH THE LORD.....	30
THE RISEN CHRIST.....	31
PEOPLE OF GOD AS A COMMUNITY OF LOVE.....	32
CHRISTIAN LIFE.....	35
CHAPEL VISIT.....	37
THE HOOTENANNY.....	39
THE PEACE TALK.....	42
SIGNS.....	43
SATURDAY LITURGY.....	46
SKITS/WITNESSING.....	47
DAY THREE.....	48
THEME FOR DAY THREE: GO FORTH WITH THE LORD.....	48
CONFIDENCE IN CHRIST.....	49
GOD IN OUR RELATIONSHIPS.....	51
INMATE LIFE.....	53
CHRISTIAN ACTION.....	55
PICTURES.....	57
BEYOND REC 1.....	58
BEYOND REC 2.....	60
SUNDAY LITURGY.....	62
PRESENTATION OF CARDS AND CROSSES---CLOSING.....	63

### III. HOW TO GIVE A REC PRESENTATION

At the first team formation meeting each outside team member will receive a folder from the Lay Director. This folder will contain information about the specific REC weekend, schedules, talk assignment, special assignments, etc. In some cases the Lay Director has contacted the team member in advance to discuss and decide about the talk to be assigned. If this is not the case the team member must review the outline for his talk assignment together with these guidelines. If he is not comfortable with the talk he was assigned, he should discuss his assignment in private with the Lay Director as soon as possible but never later than the second team formation meeting. The Lay Director will then decide if he should assign him an experienced team member to work with him as a tutor, give him another talk assignment or no talk at all.

To give a REC presentation the following guidelines must be followed:

#### **Preparing your talk**

Before beginning to write your talk, study this outline and try to answer these questions in your own outline form.

1. The purpose of your talk, and what it is supposed to accomplish. SEE YOUR OUTLINE.
2. Your plan for accomplishing this purpose.
3. How your plan accomplishes the purpose. If you accomplish the purpose your talk should be effective.
4. The central theme of your talk. This is the message you must convey.
5. The major points of your talk. Try to think of your talk as if you were an inmate trying to take notes, and provide as many concrete points as you can without making the talk a simple recitation of facts. You don't need to cover all the points but you must convey the message.
6. What do you want the candidates to carry away with them from your talk?
7. What do you plan to use as an attention-grabbing opening and as an attention-focusing closing of your presentation?
8. How does your talk fit in with the other talks, and with the talk outlines?
9. Be aware of the inmates' ability to comprehend the message of your presentation. Keep the talk simple and to the point.

## **Giving your talk**

1. Limit your talk to the time allowed for your particular talk. The time indicated in your outline is the maximum time allowed for your talk. You should be able to cover the outline within the maximum time allowed or less.
2. Open with a short prayer. Every single talk on the REC weekend starts with an invitation from the speaker to the whole group to join him in prayer. If possible tie in your prayer with the theme of your talk.
3. Stay within the outline. You can make reference to previous talks (never to future talks) if necessary but don't make "community" the theme of your talk if you are talking about ideals.
4. Give the name of your talk even if the Lay Director already mentioned it in your introduction.
5. If you are using taped music, you should have it ready and on cue. You can ask someone else to start the music for you so you don't move away from the podium. If the Music Minister will play the music you should have contacted him and practiced well in advance.
6. If you will hand out any material you should give it before hand to each table leader. Handouts should be given at the end of any talk.
7. Do not quote Chapters and/or verses from the Bible. Paraphrase instead or just mention that "according to John...". Any quote from the Bible must be given to the person with this special assignment. He will write the Chapter, verse and page of the Bible in English and in Spanish on the board or in a special poster with all the quotes for the weekend.
8. Make eye contact with the audience.
9. Check the outline for your talk to see if you have covered all the main points. Eliminate what is not in the outline.
10. You can adapt your witness to the theme of your talk but don't force it. For instance if you are talking about forgiveness don't witness about your recovery unless it has to do with forgiveness.
11. Lead the candidates into the table discussion of your talk by asking them to write down two or three leading questions related to the message in your talk.

## **Team critique of your talk**

You will give your talk to the whole outside team at one of the team formation meetings. Have your talk ready for the day scheduled to be critiqued. The purpose of the critique is to make sure your talk is effective. If you can't have it ready check with the Lay Director to see if it can be rescheduled. Check with another team member if you can switch dates. Write down and listen to

the suggestions from other team members. Make your own decision about implementing any change suggested. When in doubt, check with the Lay Director and ask for advice. Do not over-polish your talk. The most important thing in your presentation is how much you can give of yourself within the context of the outline and not your skill or the words you use.

## IV. TALKS AND SERVICES OUTLINES.

### DAY ONE

#### **INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION**

One hour maximum. Naming of tables. No poster. No discussion.

This is the opening talk of the whole weekend and is given by the Lay Director. This talk is very important because it lays down the rules for the whole weekend and establishes the authority of the Lay Director as the person chosen by God to be responsible and in charge of the weekend. It is also an icebreaker and a way to introduce key participants on the weekend. This is not a witness talk.

There is no standard outline for this talk since this talk must be adapted to the rules and reality of each facility. The location where the retreat is to be held inside the facility, the layout of the room, the place for meals, and more important, the internal regulations for each facility are different. The Lay Director should ask for input to the Facility Liaison person and review this talk with him.

The following points can be covered:

Open with a prayer and explain that every day and every talk will start with a prayer. Stress the importance of prayer. Give a brief description of all the necessary preparation leading to the weekend: team formation meetings, spirituality, prayers, family support, church support, etc. Point out the team candle as a symbol of Christ present during teams preparation. Light the candle as a symbol of Christ to be present during the whole weekend.

#### **Introduction of all the people in attendance:**

In an orderly manner the Lay Director will call table by table and each person at the table will introduce himself. **Time is limited** and introductions must be limited to the name, family status, place of residence, job/trade and any interest or hobby. **NO APPLAUSE** after each person introduces himself. Applause must be reserved for the end, after everyone has introduced themselves. The Lay Director should be the first to introduce himself.

#### **Introduction of people with special roles:**

The Lay Director will call one by one those with a special role on the weekend, such as the Spiritual Director, Facility Chaplain, Deacon, Music Minister, Assistant Lay Director, Inside Coordinator, inside team and helpers, etc. Each individual role should be explained briefly pointing out that the Spiritual Director is available for private talks anytime during breaks. **NO APPLAUSE**

Explain in your own words what REC is. Point out the banner for Day 1 and explain that not only people inside a correctional facility can be imprisoned. Explain that the whole outside team members are strictly volunteers from different parishes and from all walks in life. No one is paid to do REC.

Optional: The first REC in the Albany area was held at Mt. McGregor Correctional Facility in 1985. A group doing REC in Fishkill, NY came up to the Albany area to teach a group of volunteers and prepare them for REC #1 at McGregor. Since then the program has branched out to Washington Correctional Facility in 1988, Hale Creek Correctional Facility (Johnstown) in 1992 and Greene Correctional Facility in July 1993. With God's blessing we expect to be in all the correctional facilities within the Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany by 1995.

Structure of the weekend: The weekend has been planned in detail and we must go by the regulations of the facility. Time is very important. Briefly explain the process: talk-table discussion-poster-participation/sharing. Ask participants to remain at the tables during talks and table discussion. Breaks have been incorporated into the program. Ask the men to take notes, to relax and enjoy, to go with the flow. It is important that everyone wear the name tags so you get to know each other on the first name basis. Ask them to use their first and last name, not the last name like they are required by the facility.

Naming of the tables: Ask each table to choose a name that better describes them but keeping in mind this is a religious retreat. Give 5-10 minutes for this and then ask one person from each table to present the name and explain why that name was chosen. The Assistant Lay Director should write down the name and number of each table for the poster presentation during the Hootenanny.

Housekeeping instructions: Following facility regulations and after checking with your facility liaison person, explain the smoking regulations, breaks, counts, the bell, snacks, taking food out, behavior at the tables, confidentiality of talks and discussions, etc.

Get everybody ready: Challenge the men in terms of their own potential to benefit from REC, not in terms of your own reasons. Explain why you are here doing REC instead of with your family, working around the house, skiing, fishing, on vacation, etc. Give your personal reasons for doing REC and ask the men to ask themselves why they decided to come to REC. Whatever reason anyone may have, the real reason is because God wants us to be here.

The Assistant Lay Director must know when this talk will be over and signal to start the Bible Enthronement immediately. The procession for the Bible Enthronement must be ready and start as soon as the Assistant Lay Director gives the signal.

## **BIBLE ENTHRONEMENT**

(5 minutes maximum)

The Bible Enthronement is a procession from the back of the chapel/room to the altar. One outside team member and three candidates are needed. The outside team member in charge of this special duty will select the candidates as soon as they arrive on Friday morning. They must be from different tables. For the procession they carry 2 candles, one crucifix and the Bible. These items and the lectern to place the Bible must be obtained by the outside team member from the facility chaplain or the inside coordinator. All the procession items must be placed at the point where the procession will start and be ready to use. The route for the procession must have been determined by the last inside team formation meeting. The outside team member should recheck the route upon arrival on Friday in case there was not enough room left between tables.

After the Introduction and Orientation talk the Lay Director will announce the Bible Enthronement and ask everybody to stand up. The volunteer, the candidates and the Music Minister must be ready to start at the signal from the Assistant Director. There should be no reading from the Bible. Immediately after the enthronement the Lay Director will introduce the Word of God talk and the speaker.

NOTE: At the discretion of the Lay Director the same outside team volunteer can be in charge of this ceremony each day. The candidates though, must be different.

## **THE WORD OF GOD**

(10-15 minutes maximum. No poster. No discussion. This talk is given by an outside team member.)

Please limit your talk to the time allowed for this talk. In order to successfully complete the program every effort must be made to be on schedule. Time is of the essence and your cooperation is extremely important.

Open with a short prayer.

Purpose: To familiarize the men with the Bible in general and provide some sharing of the importance the Bible has played in your own life. This is not a witness talk. Your presentation must be straight to the point and alive. Get their attention.

### Points to cover:

1. Briefly explain the preceding ceremony when the Bible was enthroned. Why is this done? We will start each day with the same ceremony. Why?
2. Why was the Bible written?
3. What does it mean that the Bible is the inspired Word of God?
4. What separates the Old from the New Testament (birth of Christ)?
5. How is the Bible set up? Old vs New Testament, Books, Chapters, verses.
6. What are some of the different styles of writing: poetry, teachings, laws, etc.
7. What does the Bible mean to you? How do you use it? Give some examples.
8. How has God revealed Himself to you through the Bible?
9. Briefly explain the following ceremony when each man will receive his own Bible.

NOTE: The first table discussion will be after the Ideals and Maturity talk but you may want to give the men the option to discuss this talk instead. To do this ask the men to write down two or three questions leading into the table discussion. This will provoke and stimulate the discussion and the table leader will take it from there.

Immediately after this talk the Lay Director will proceed with the Bible Ceremony and ask the Spiritual Director to bless the Bibles.

## **BIBLE CEREMONY**

(15 minutes. The ideal time for the talk and the ceremony together is 30 minutes total.)

This is the first service/ceremony where all the people in attendance participate. This service/ceremony should be used as a model for all the other services to come. It should be done in an orderly and organized fashion.

Upon arrival on Friday morning the Assistant Director will review with the ushers the logistics for all the services: the supplies, the movement of people, the lines, the participants, etc. this should also be reviewed with each one of the 3 persons in charge of the Bible Enthronement for each day. The AD will make sure that all the Bibles are stacked up near the altar for this service and should do the same with the supplies for other services (ashes, towels, matches, bowls, candles, etc.). The Bibles must be separated into English and Spanish and be ready for proper distribution.

The AD must know when the Word of God talk will be over and be ready to start with the Bible Ceremony immediately after. The AD will be in eye contact with the Director, the ushers and the Spiritual Director. At the signal from the AD the Spiritual Director and the Director will join him at the altar. At the signal from the AD also the ushers will form one or two lines as necessary and bring table by table to the front of the altar for each man to receive his own Bible.

The Director will explain how to proceed to the front of the altar and will say a few words in connection with the Word of God talk. He will explain that Bibles in English and in Spanish will be distributed. The Bibles will be handed out by the Lay Director and the Spiritual Director with the help of the AD. As each man receives a Bible either Director will say: "this is the Word of God"; and each man will respond: "Amen". The Spiritual Director will bless the Bibles before being distributed.

It is important to establish a flowing pattern from the tables to the front of the altar. The same pattern must be followed when going out of the room for meals, reconciliation or other functions that need the people to go out of the room. If a routine is established, you will save time and work. People will need to be moved for reconciliation, communion, chapel visit, pictures, service of ashes, meals, etc. Residents are used to following a routine and they respond very well if you know how to do it.

Although the responsibility for this service/ceremony is the Assistant Director's, he will always work in conjunction with the Director and whenever possible they will work together sharing responsibilities.

## **THEME FOR DAY ONE: DYING AND CHANGING**

(5 minutes. No poster. No discussion. No summary sharing. This introduction is given by an outside team member.)

Open with a short prayer.

Scriptural source: The theme for Day one is taken from John 12:24 "Unless the grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies it remains but a seed"; and from Romans 6:4 "Through baptism into His death we were buried with Him..."

Purpose: To explain the meaning of dying and changing and how it is rooted in the Scriptures. This is not a full talk but a brief explanation of how the talks on Day One will revolve around the theme of dying and changing. Just like Jesus Christ, in order to have a resurrection we must first die. This is the first mandatory step if we want to change. We must die to our past and recognize how our lives have been self-centered rather than Jesus-centered. We must repent and ask for forgiveness.

### Points to develop:

1. By being here you are showing your willingness to change. No one is here by chance. Take advantage of this opportunity God is offering you. Listen and participate.
2. Explain what happens to a seed after it dies. Parallel the seed story with real life. How can we be like the seed in the story.
3. We are no different from you. We have our own seed stories also and we will share them with you. We are here as God's instruments to help you.
4. Change is always possible. If others have done it why can't you do it also? With the help of God everything is possible. Learn to trust the Lord.
5. Change doesn't happen overnight. Change doesn't come easy, you have to work hard at it. We will offer some suggestions, ideas and tools to help you.
6. There is a better way of living. God is inviting you to this new life. Are you going to accept his invitation? The decision is up to you.

NOTE: At the discretion of the Lay Director the same person can be in charge of explaining the theme of the day each day of the retreat.

## **IDEALS AND CHRISTIAN MATURITY**

(15 minutes. Discussion, poster and summary sharing to follow. This talk is given by an outside team member.)

Please limit your talk to the time allowed for this talk. In order to successfully complete the program every effort must be made to be on schedule. Time is of the essence and your cooperation is extremely important. If you are witnessing, please do it within the theme and within the outline of this talk.

Open with a short prayer.

Purpose: This talk follows the Theme for Day 1: Dying and Changing and it is not only the first formal talk of the weekend but also the first talk to develop the theme of dying and changing. The audience is not ready yet for heavy talks. This talk must be alive and to the point. The dying and changing should reflect the difference between the ideals and goals of your youth versus the mature ideals and goals of adulthood achieved with God's grace and through his will. Without diminishing the importance and seriousness of this talk the speaker should use it as an icebreaker helping the men to feel at ease and relaxed. They still don't know what REC is all about. Don't bore them or put them to sleep from the very beginning.

### Points to cover in your talk:

1. What were your ideals as a child?
2. What were your ideals as a teenager?
3. What did you expect your adulthood to be like?
4. When you were a child/teenager where - if anywhere - did God, church and the sacraments fit in?
5. Now that you are an adult, where does God, church and the sacraments fit in? Is this a change? Why?
6. What is your personal ideal?
7. How have your goals changed and matured?
8. How has God's presence in your life altered or shaped your adult ideal?
9. What are you specifically doing now to reach the ideal that God has set before you?
10. How much and what are you willing to sacrifice in order to fulfill God's purpose for your life?
11. How are numbers 8, 9 and 10 reflected in prison environment and in inmates' personal lives in jail?

Lead the men into the table discussion of your talk. You can ask them to respond to a question and to write down that question. You can challenge them and offer a theme related to your talk for discussion. You can provoke and stimulate the discussion in the best way you can.

## **THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION TALK**

(15-20 minutes maximum. Discussion. Summary sharing. This talk is given by the Spiritual Director.)

Please limit your talk to the time allowed for this talk. In order to successfully complete the program every effort must be made to be on schedule. Time is of the essence and your cooperation is extremely important. If you are witnessing, please do it within the theme and within the outline of this talk.

Open with a short prayer.

Purpose: To continue developing the theme of dying and changing. This talk is the most important talk of Day One. The talk reaffirms the theme of the day based in the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. Comparing our lives to the Paschal Mystery (the death and resurrection of Jesus) the speaker should give the hope of resurrection just like Jesus did in Easter (Pasch, Passover). The Paschal Mystery is also the theme for the whole REC weekend.

Spiritual Director gives the Paschal Mystery. Brief explanation of mystery as a secret of God being revealed. Very brief background to Passover with dimensions of remembering, celebrating and hoping. See this in the Last Supper. Begin to make a connection with the theme of the 1st day - the grain of wheat first has to die. Jesus is God's Word and God's deed. Are we willing to let go, to set a new direction, to take a new step; it includes changing, dying, making a connection, becoming one's real self, freedom from what has crippled and chained and enslaved to freedom for a new life. Ashes beginning Lent mark a beginning. Turn from your sins and believe in the Good News of the Gospel, the Savior, Jesus. This is our paschal mystery being lived out. Acts 2:26ff.

Look at Jesus and see His life changing, growing: grew in wisdom, age and grace; cried at the death of Lazarus, was led to heal, prayed for safety, felt abandoned, entrusted Himself to the Father, rose to new life.

There was change in Him, what about in us. We like changes, more money, status, power; but it's all exterior, showy, comparative with others. For Jesus the change was in Him, going the other direction; though God he began to serve, suffered, even death, death on a cross. He let go, he gave, he was present especially to the weakest.

Tell your story, priest or deacon, person, limitations, conversion, fear, self-acceptance, accepting love of the Lord; the struggle goes on.

This weekend is an opportunity and a choice, to enter into the paschal mystery: Will we accept His love for us, will we accept His life for us, let go of the past, give our hurts to the Lord, begin a new life, share self with Jesus.

Growth means change, struggle. Grow with Jesus, die to self and the past, acknowledge pain and give it to Him, rise to new life with Jesus, share self with Jesus and with others. Take a risk and meet your new Friend.

**Points to cover in your talk:**

- A. Death and resurrection of Jesus and our own participation in this mystery.
  - 1. Suffering brings about growth and new life.
  - 2. Include your own personal witness; your "dying to self" and your struggles and hopes.
  
- B. Growth means a change in attitudes. We become either:
  - More loving or more indifferent
  - More concerned or more apathetic
  - More open-minded or more closed
  - More other-centered or more self-centered  
the choice is ours!
  
- C. Growth means struggle.
  - 1. We fall often but we can always rise again with God's help.
  - 2. We hurt others but we can forgive.
  - 3. We hurt ourselves but God can heal us.

D. Residents Encounter Christ (REC)

This weekend gives us the opportunity to:

- Grow with Christ
- Die to ourselves and our past
- Embrace our pain one more time and then turn it over to God forever
- Rise into a new life with Jesus
- Go forth and share ourselves and Jesus with others.

E. How do we grow with Jesus this weekend?

- 1. Relax
- 2. Forget yesterday, last week, last year and tomorrow and just live with Jesus in this moment.
- 3. Let yourself be open and available to new possibilities.
- 4. Take a risk - meet CHRIST!

Lead the men into the table discussion of your talk, You can ask them to respond to a question and to write down that question. You can challenge them and offer them a theme related to your talk for discussion. You can provoke and stimulate the discussion in the best way you can.

**NOTE:**

Up to this point the outside team has been able to share and develop the theme of the day about dying and changing. Starting with the next talk The Prodigal Son the torch is passed to the inside team. The next five events leading to the closing of day one can be seen as a single unit:

1. The Prodigal Son: Our repentance and the acceptance by a loving Father. We begin to die to ourselves.
2. Metanoia: Our change. A 180° turn around in our lives. We die to ourselves.
3. Forgiveness: The essence of our healing process. If we attain forgiveness our change is completed.
4. Reconciliation: We make peace with our God. Our healing is complete now.
5. Palanca: The community supports our change. There is joy for the lost sheep that came back.

At the team formation meetings the Lay Director will explain the connection of these 5 events so that they can be seen as a unit. This will help to develop a continuity among the first 3 talks and to explain the process of dying and changing to the residents. Each step should lead to the reception of the sacrament of reconciliation and the symbolism of the Service of Ashes. The new man will be born when the ashes are wiped from their foreheads and they receive the stoles. After this symbolic baptism the new man renews his baptismal promises. The mood changes. We have made peace with ourselves, with others and with God. It's a time for joy and day one must end on a happy note. Palanca letters are distributed before the men return to their dorms. You can be sure that they will read all the letters before going to sleep.

## **THE PRODIGAL SON**

(15 minutes maximum. Discussion, poster and summary sharing. This talk is given by an inside team member.)

Please limit your talk to 15 minutes. Try to follow the outline as close as possible. The most important part of this talk is your own story. Please be as much open, honest and sincere as possible.

**HOW TO PREPARE YOUR TALK:** Before writing anything you have to read the story of the Prodigal Son in Luke Chapter 15, verses 11 to 32. Think about the similarities of the story of the Prodigal Son with your own life. You are the most important part of this talk.

Write down the answers to as many of the following questions as you can. You don't have to answer them all, they are only to help you to write your talk. You may answer your own questions if you want. You know your own story better than anyone.

In the story the son squandered everything he was given. Nothing was left. He had nowhere to go, no one to turn to. He faced starvation. He lived like a slave. Ask yourself these questions and write down your answers: Have I been there before too? Have I squandered what God has given to me? Have I been down that low? Have I been that desperate? What did I think of myself? Have I strayed away from God? Why?

The story goes on and the son finally reacts. It was hard for him to take the first step but he made the decision to go back to his father. Ask yourself these questions and write down your answers: Did I make the decision to go back to God too? Was I afraid to make the decision? What made me make that decision? How did I feel after I decided to return to God?

The most beautiful part of the story comes after the son has decided to return to his father. You may want to go back to your Bible and reread the story. The story tells us that the father saw his son from the distance coming down the road. Do you think that the father was waiting for him? Why? Then the father ran to meet his son. Do you think the father was anxious to see him? Why? After that it says that the father hugged his son. What does this hug mean to you? And finally it says that the father threw a party to celebrate the return of his son. Why do you think he did that? Think of the son as yourself and of the father as God. Ask yourself these questions and write down your answers: Did I too feel the loving forgiveness of God the father? How do I feel about the mercy of God in my own life?

Remember the feeling of forgiveness and acceptance by the father. How does it feel to know that God will always forgive you no matter what you have done? This story is about forgiveness and acceptance. You should focus on these two issues and talk from your heart how do you feel knowing what God will forgive you and accept you no matter what you have done. Write down and answer these questions: What kind of life you lead before coming into prison? What do you think about that kind of life? Why? What kind of life are you leading inside this facility after you decided to go back to your father? How do you feel about it? Why? What kind of life do you want

to have after you are released? Why? Do you have any advice to others that may be in a same or similar situation as you?

Finally, in the story the older son got upset. He was angry and refused to go in. He complains to the Father. He brought up all what he had done for his father all these years. He refused to call the prodigal son his brother. He said: "That son of yours" instead of "my brother". Why do you think he did that? Write down and answer these questions: Do I reach out to forgive those who hurt me? Do I forgive and forget? How do I feel when I forgive someone else? How do I feel when someone forgives me?

GIVING YOUR TALK:      Open with a short prayer  
                                      Read the Gospel to everyone  
                                      Read what you have written

NOTE: You must have your talk ready for one of the inside meetings. You will be notified in advance of the date and time. On that date you will read your talk to the teams and they will make suggestions for improvement. Listen to the suggestions and make the necessary changes. Explain your point of view if you don't agree with any of the suggestions. Remember, you are the most important part of this talk, not the words you use or the way you say it.

At the inside team formation meetings the Lay Director will meet on a one to one basis with the assignee for this talk to coach him. The message of forgiveness and acceptance must be clearly understood. Special attention must be given to this message and not turn this talk into a second Metanoia talk. Other issues related or within the outline can be covered as long as the main message of this talk is transmitted to the audience.

## **METANOIA**

(10-15 minutes maximum. Discussion, poster and summary sharing. This talk is given by an inside team member.)

Please limit your talk to 10-15 minutes. Try to follow the outline as close as possible. The most important part of this talk is your own story. Please be as much open, honest and sincere as possible.

PREPARING YOUR TALK: Before writing anything you must understand what "metanoia" means. Metanoia is a greek word that means change of heart. This talk is about your change of heart. This talk is very much like the part of the Prodigal Son story when the son decides to return to the Father. But the focus on this talk is not on forgiveness and acceptance but on repentance, your own repentance.

Repentance means to die to yourself, to turn away from sin and dedicate yourself to the amendment of your life. To repent means to feel regret for what you have done. The main point of this talk is to share with the whole group how you have experienced repentance. Write down and answer these questions. How have you repented? How did you do it? Why? What made you to repent? Did anything special happen to you that made you repent.

This change of heart involves changes in your way of living, in your way of thinking, in your way to treat other people. This change is also the realization that you are not the center of everything. Once you have changed Jesus becomes the center in your life. Jesus becomes the reason for what you do. He becomes your friend and your brother. Write down and answer these questions: How did you make the decision to change? Did anyone help you to change? How did you feel when you made the decision to change? Is there peace in your heart? How do you feel? How do you feel about Jesus becoming your friend and your brother? How do you feel about the person who helped you to change?

This change of heart takes time, it doesn't happen overnight. It takes courage to change your way of living. It's not easy to change your way of thinking. You have to work hard at it. Explain in your own words how do you feel about this tremendous task that you have undertaken. Write down and answer these questions. Can you do it along? How do you feel when you slip? How do you keep Jesus at the center of your life? What happens when you fail to do it?

It is very important that you share why you are telling your story to the group. Your experience may be a lesson to others and you may be helping a lot of people sharing your story. There may be more than one person in the same situation. Write down and answer these questions: What do you expect to accomplish by sharing your story? Why are you sharing your most inner and private feelings with others? Is this the real you or are you wearing a mask?

It is very common to wear masks inside a correctional facility in order to survive. You may want to look tough and wear a macho mask. When you experience Metanoia you take off all your masks, you become a real person. When you get rid of all your masks you are free. Having Jesus at the

center of your life gives you the only real freedom you can ever have. Everyone can fail you, Jesus never does.

You may answer some of the questions, all the questions or none at all. They are here to help you in writing your talk only. You can answer your own questions and share your experience in your own way. Remember, you are the most important part of this talk.

GIVING YOUR TALK:           Open with a short prayer  
  Read what you have written

NOTE: You must have your talk ready for one of the inside meetings. You will be notified in advance of the date and time. On that date you will read your talk to the teams and they will make suggestions for improvement. Listen to the suggestions and make the necessary changes. Explain your point of view if you don't agree with any of the suggestions. Remember, you are the most important part of this talk, not the words you use or the way to say it.

At the inside team formation meetings the Lay Director will meet on a one to one basis with the assignee for this talk to coach him. The message of repentance and the way the resident shows his change of heart in his behavior and relationships must be clear.

## **FORGIVENESS**

(10-15 minutes maximum. No discussion, no poster, no summary sharing. This talk is given by any member of the outside team.)

Please limit your talk to the time allowed for this talk. In order to successfully complete the program every effort must be made to be on schedule. Time is of the essence and your cooperation is extremely important. If you are witnessing, please do it within the theme and within the outline of this talk.

Open with a short prayer.

Purpose: To prepare the residents to receive the sacrament of reconciliation. At the end of this talk the men should have an idea of what the sacrament of reconciliation is. They must be in the right frame of mind to receive it. The need to forgive and be forgiven as part of the process of dying and changing must be clear. The men must understand that they cannot go on in life carrying the burden of sin. They must be convinced that they can overcome any obstacle that prevents them to have a personal relationship with God. Forgiveness is a key step in returning to the Father.

Points to cover in your talk:

1. **SIN.** Sin is not just breaking God's law or doing something wrong; sin is the refusal to keep a loving relationship with ourselves, with others and with God. Sin is an action and also an omission. We sin by doing and by failing to do. Sin is an attitude. Sin is a burden in our life. It is an obstacle to a loving relationship with God. There are many different kinds of obstacles that prevent us from having a personal relationship with God. We are the main obstacle. Do you have any personal experience that can fit into this point?
2. **FORGIVENESS.** Forgiveness is an essential part of dying and changing. There is no true change without forgiveness. One of our human basic needs is to forgive and to be forgiven, better said, to love and to be loved. If we can't give and receive love our life becomes meaningless and we experience a terrible emptiness. We experience loneliness. We need to get rid of the burden of sin. Forgiveness is the great gift we receive when we consciously change our heart (Metanoia-Refer to the talk) and turn back to God. Christ is always ready to forgive. No sin is too great. He will accept us and forgive us (Refer to the Prodigal Son talk). We have to forgive ourselves and forgive others. Do you have any personal experience that can fit into this point? What has forgiveness meant to you?
3. **THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION.** Explain that forgiveness comes through the sacrament of reconciliation. Reconciliation means "to restore to friendship". Through the reception of this sacrament we restore our friendship with God. We make peace, we are friends again with God. We bury the hatchet. When we make peace with God we make peace with ourselves. An enormous weight is lifted out of our conscience. We eliminate all the obstacles that were obstructing our relationship with God.

4. **HOW TO RECEIVE THE SACRAMENT.** For many of the men it has been a long time since the last time they received this sacrament; for others this may be the first time. Before receiving the sacrament they must examine their conscience: What have I done or failed to do to separate myself from God? Do I feel sorry for it (repentance)? Will I do my best to try not to do it again? Any other form of exam of conscience can be suggested. After this tell them to just go in private with the priest and ask him: "Bless me father for I have sinned". Then talk freely with the priest about anything they may feel is bothering them. The priest is bound by a vow of secrecy and he will die first before divulging what he heard. Ask them to relax and pray. Trust the Lord!

## **SERVICE OF ASHES**

(30 minutes total. The Lay Director, Assistant Director, Spiritual Director, Deacon and Music Minister participate. The ushers direct the people. All necessary supplies must be on hand.)

With this service we begin the preparation for the closing of Day One. This and the Paschal Vigil Service should be a short restatement of the theme of Day One. The ashes symbolize the dying and their removal symbolize the changing. The Spiritual Director has full discretion on how to conduct this service. These guidelines are intended to give him some idea of what the service is.

The service is intended to reinforce the message that Jesus is always ready to forgive our sins. He is always there for us no matter where we have been or what we have done.

The service proceeds as follows:

1. The Lay director announces that the next event is the Service of Ashes and calls the Spiritual Director to the altar. The Spiritual Director stresses the Forgiveness talk and explain that after the service we will have the opportunity to receive the sacrament of reconciliation.

**SUGGESTED REMARKS.** Spiritual Director: We have just heard the Forgiveness talk. We as Christians know that God is always ready to forgive. He wants to help us through the Holy Spirit to accept the grace of the Father which allows us to change and accept forgiveness.

2. The Spiritual Director must explain the transition from the old concept of confession to the new concept of reconciliation. Reconciliation is a celebration of how good is God. It is imperative to emphasize the secrecy of the sacrament.
3. The Spiritual Director asks the candidates to reflect quietly (1 or 2 minutes) and to think about the incident, feeling, action, omission or problem which is troubling them the most -- which is their biggest obstacle to accept God's grace and change their lives. The Music Minister plays some background music.

**SUGGESTED REMARKS.** Spiritual Director: I invite you now to quietly think about any incident in your life, any feeling action or problem that is troubling you now and you would like forgiveness or healing. Think of the biggest obstacle you have in your life that is obstructing your relationship with God.

4. The Spiritual Director explains that this is a symbolic service and it is not a substitute for the sacrament of reconciliation. He asks the men to write that obstacle down in a small piece of paper torn from their pads and bring the paper to the front of the altar to be deposited in a special receptacle. The ushers will direct table by table in an organized manner like they did for the Bible Ceremony. After all the papers have been deposited and before burning them the Spiritual Director offers an appropriate prayer.

SUGGESTED PRAYER:

Almighty and merciful God,  
you have brought us together in the name of your Son  
to receive mercy and grace in our time of need.  
Open our eyes to see the evil we have done.  
Touch our hearts and turn us to you.  
Where sin has divided and scattered,  
may your power heal and strengthen;  
where sin has brought death,  
may your Spirit raise to new life.  
Give us a new heart to love you,  
so that our lives may reflect the image of your Son.  
May the world see the glory of Christ  
revealed in your Church and come to know  
that He is the one whom you have sent,  
Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord and brother.  
Amen

5. The papers then are burned into ashes and ashes are made (priest must have brought his own ashes from Ash Wednesday and mix them up). Again the ushers will direct table by table in an organized manner to the front of the altar. It is suggested that only the Spiritual Director and/or Deacon distributes the ashes. The Lay Director, Assistant Director and Music Minister already at the altar, should be the first ones to be "crossed" with the ashes. The Lay Director will hold the bowl with the ashes for the priest.

**SUGGESTED REMARKS.** Spiritual Director: Please come forward as we place a cross on your forehead as a sign of your desire for forgiveness from your sins. Ashes are placed on foreheads with the words: "Turn away from sin and follow the Gospel."

6. After all have been "crossed" with the ashes the Spiritual Director offers an appropriate prayer. All the men pray in silence. Then the Spiritual Directors gives a very short talk from the heart inviting the men to receive the sacrament of reconciliation. Emphasize that even if one is not catholic or may not want to celebrate the sacrament it is still good to speak to the priest. If you are not catholic tell him that you just want his blessing. Don't be worried or afraid the priest will help you through it.

SUGGESTED PRAYER:

Let us pray;  
Lord God creator of the universe  
and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ;  
following the example of your son,

we begin this time of penance and growth.  
Let this ashes be a sign that we want  
to live a new life with Jesus.  
Destroy the power of sin in our lives  
and bring us ever closer to you.  
We pray through Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

The additional priests for the sacrament of reconciliation should have arrived during the service.

## **SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION**

The Assistant Lay Director must be ready for the arrival of the additional priests for the sacrament of reconciliation. An usher can be designated to receive them at the door and bring them to the front of the altar.

After the Service of Ashes is over the Director will welcome the additional priests and they will introduce themselves. The Director will indicate the locations where these priests will be listening to individual reconciliations and will explain who are the Spanish speaking priests and where they will be.

The ushers will be directing the people during this service. Silence must be observed during the whole service. The men can work on their posters, take a break, or do whatever they want but in silence. This is an excellent opportunity for the outside team to talk to the candidates in private on a one to one basis. All candidates must be encouraged to receive the sacrament. It is the responsibility of each table leader to try to get all his table to receive the sacrament.

The secrecy of this sacrament can never be over-emphasized. The Director and Assistant Director must be ready to help the table leaders to talk to the candidates. Show your concern and christian love for these men and talk to them openly and sincerely. Offer to pray with them. Don't be afraid of hugging or crying with them. Refer to the Prodigal Son and Metanoia talks. Bring them to the priest and wait for them to come out. Support and encourage their change.

## **PASCHAL VIGIL SERVICE**

(30 minutes total. The Lay Director, Assistant Director, Spiritual Director, Deacon and Music Minister participate. The ushers direct the people. All necessary supplies must be ready and on hand.)

This is the last service of Day One. The main point is that we are now passing from death to life. We have received the symbolic death in the ashes--death to our old selves; we have been forgiven our trespasses in the sacrament of reconciliation and now we are washed clean and born again to a new life in Christ. This service announces the theme for Day Two (Rise again with the Lord) proclaiming that there is a resurrection; there is hope. A new man will be born. The process of dying and changing has been completed, now we must rise again.

The Spiritual Director has full discretion on how to conduct this service. These guidelines are intended to give him some idea of what the service is.

The service proceeds as follows:

1. After the residents have celebrated the sacrament of reconciliation the SD will give a short introductory talk. The symbolism must be explained as well as each step of the service: removal of ashes-lightning of candles from Christ candle-renewal of baptismal vows-presentation of stoles.
2. Individuals are seated and candles are passed out. In some facilities only one candle per table is allowed. In other facilities tapers are passed out to each individual. The ushers will direct table by table as they did for the Bible Ceremony at the beginning of the day. Each table will come forward to have the ashes washed. The SD assisted by the LD and AD will wipe the ashes off saying (in these or similar words):  
"The Lord has freed you from all of your sins.... has washed them away. Be at peace."
3. In some facilities they allow all lights to be turned out and the SD starts by lighting his candle/taper from the Christ candle (the team candle). The SD passes the light on to the next person, to the next person, and to the next person until everyone has a candle burning. If only one candle per table is allowed a candidate chosen by the table leader will come forward from each table to the altar. The SD will light his candle and he will return to his table. Once everyone or each table has a candle burning the SD reads Matthew 5: 13-16.
4. With the candles burning the SD leads the whole group into the renewal of baptismal vows as follows:

Dear Friends, through the paschal mystery we have been buried with Christ in baptism so that we may rise with Him to a new life. Now that we have admitted our sinfulness and

turned back to the Lord, let us renew the promises we made in Baptism when we rejected Satan and his works, and promised to serve God faithfully in his holy Catholic Church. And so...

*Do you reject Satan?* **I do**

*And all his works?* **I do**

*And all his empty promises?* **I do**

*Do you believe in God the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth?* **I do**

*Do you believe in Jesus Christ, His only son, our Lord, who was born of the Virgin Mary, was crucified, died, and was buried, rose from the death, and is now seated at the right hand of the Father?* **I do**

*Do you believe in the holy spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting?*

**I do**

*This is our faith. This is the faith of the church. We are proud to profess it in Christ Jesus the Lord.*

*SD: God, the all-powerful Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has given us a new birth by water and the Holy Spirit, and forgiven all our sins. May he also keep us faithful to our Lord Jesus Christ for ever and ever. Amen. [The Priest then sprinkles the people with Holy Water ... an appropriate song is sung during this time.]*

5. Presentation of stoles (white baptismal garment). The ushers again direct table by table to the altar. The SD assisted by the LD and the AD will place the stoles on each man while saying:

"On this day you have been freed from your sins. May you be clothed in the glory of the Lord."

NOTE: Stoles are provided by the Lay Director. He should have kept his stole from the previous REC as a sample. Each stole is 42-45 inches long by 3 inches wide. It should be white or off-white material with the Chi Ro sign in red. Chi Ro are the first letters of the name of Christ in Greek.

6. After everyone is back at his table the SD will close the service saying:

"Lord Jesus Christ your loving forgiveness knows no limits. You became one of us to show us how to live and how to love. You were humble and faithful in every trial. May we never lose the gifts you have given to us. May we continue to enjoy the peace that comes from you alone, and share that with all we meet. Amen.

Lights are turned on in some facilities and candles are collected.

NOTE: The Music Minister and the Spiritual Director should discuss during the team preparation meetings the music to be used during this service.

## **PALANCA**

(10 minutes. No discussion, no poster, no summary sharing. This talk is given by an outside team member that has experienced palanca.)

Please limit your talk to the time allowed for this talk. In order to successfully complete the program every effort must be made to be on schedule. Time is of the essence and your cooperation is extremely important. If you are witnessing, please do it within the theme and within the outline of this talk. You may want to share what palanca have you been doing for the success of this REC. Palanca letters are distributed at the end of this talk.

Open with a short prayer.

Purpose: This is the last talk of Day 1 and should send the men to their dormitories with the knowledge that they are in the prayers of hundreds of people outside the walls and have been in their prayers for many months. This is a turning point in REC where the men are shown that they have died to themselves and are now alive in Christ with a community of believers. They are not isolated.

### Points to cover in your talk:

1. Palanca is Spanish for "lever". Explain the function of "palanca" and use a poster if you want.
2. Palanca is a spiritual support. There are many people praying and making sacrifices to push down the lever to raise us up to God.
3. The outside team has been meeting and praying since \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Explain examples of palanca:
  - Fasting
  - Praying: the rosary or our own prayers
  - Giving things up
  - Doing things for others that you don't want to do, i.e. smiling when you are angry, being patient when you are frustrated, etc.
  - Extra masses
  - Meditating
  - Give examples of "palanca" that you have done.
5. How do you feel when you do "palanca" and when you are the recipient of "palanca"? Read a few pieces of general "palanca". Announce that individual palanca letters will be distributed now.

NOTE: The volunteers in charge of palanca should have developed a procedure for the distribution of palanca at the end of this talk. They should be ready to start at the signal from the speaker.

## DAY TWO

### **THEME FOR DAY TWO: RISE AGAIN WITH THE LORD**

(5 minutes. No poster, no discussion, no summary sharing. This introduction is given by an outside team member.)

Open with a short prayer.

Scriptural source: The Theme for Day Two is taken from John 12:24 "If it dies it produces much fruit..." and Romans 6:4 "So that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we might live a new life."

Purpose: To explain the meaning of "rising again with the Lord" and how it is rooted in the Scriptures. This is not a full talk but a brief explanation of how the talks and events on Day Two revolve around the theme of rising again. Just like Jesus Christ rose from the death we can also rise again with his help and start a new life. We are not the same person anymore. A new man has been born. We have returned to the Father.

#### Points to develop:

1. Christ has overcome His death and come to a new life. He offers us this same new life if only we will follow him. We can overcome our past.
2. What does it mean to follow Christ? How do we follow Christ?
3. Explain that new life has sprouted from the seed that died. Parallel real life with the sprout that will become a tree and eventually bear fruits. We can be fruitful.
4. What does it mean to be fruitful? How can we be fruitful?
5. We should learn to have confidence and trust the Lord. We should look for Christ presence in our lives.

NOTE: At the discretion of the Lay Director the same person can be in charge of explaining the theme for each day of the retreat. If the same person did the theme for Day One he may want to develop each theme in a progression.

## **THE RISEN CHRIST**

(10-15 minutes. Table discussion and summary sharing. No poster. This talk/meditation is given by an outside team member.)

Please limit your talk to the time allowed for this talk: 10 minutes for the talk and 5 minutes for the meditation. In order to successfully complete the program every effort must be made to be on schedule. Time is of the essence and your cooperation is extremely important. If you are witnessing, please do it within the theme and within the outline of this talk

NOTE: This talk was originally a meditation. When the Lay Director assigns the talks, he should discuss this assignment with the team member. The Lay Director will make sure which way is more effective and be sure that the volunteer feels comfortable with it. The Lay Director will decide if this assignment will be only a 10 minute talk, only a 5 minute meditation or both.

Start with a short prayer.

Purpose: To explain to the men that with His resurrection Christ has made Himself available to us. He is among us. He is real. We should always be alert to His presence in our lives and try to hear and live His message.

### Points to cover in your talk:

1. Briefly recap Day One's theme: dying and changing.
2. When and how did you first encounter the living, personal Risen Christ?
3. How did this change your life?
4. How do you feel to know that Jesus is truly alive and with you always?
5. Are there times in your life (pain, anger, frustration, disappointment, etc.) when Jesus feels far away?
6. What do you do personally to bring yourself closer to the Risen Christ again? (Prayer, Scripture, quiet walks, music, nature, etc.)

Meditation: Use your own words and format to talk directly to the Risen Christ. Meditate about your personal relationship with Jesus today. Think how have you developed this relationship to be where you are at today. Talk to Jesus and tell Him what His resurrection means to you.

Lead the men into the table discussion of your talk. You can ask them to respond to a question and to write down that question. You can challenge them and offer a theme related to your talk for discussion. You can provoke and stimulate the discussion in the best way you can.

## **PEOPLE OF GOD AS A COMMUNITY OF LOVE**

(10-15 minutes. Written exercise and summary sharing. This talk is given by an outside team member.)

Please limit your talk to the time allowed for this talk. In order to successfully complete the program every effort must be made to be on schedule. Time is of the essence and your cooperation is extremely important. If you are witnessing, please do it within the theme and within the outline of this talk.

Open with a short prayer.

Purpose: To explain that as people of God we are not isolated but rather we live in "community". We need the mutual support of other Christians to strengthen our faith. God has called us to help each other. Community is to help and support each other. We also, as people of God, belong to a Church. As members of the Church each one of us is called to participate and get involved making use of our different gifts and talents for the common good.

Points to cover in your talk:

1. The Church is not the building. We are the Church. The Church is a community, the body of Christ and we are members of this body.
2. We must share our lives with each other as all the parts of our body work together. How can you be "community" inside a correctional facility? What is a Christian community?
3. How each of us serve God and the Body of Christ. How can the residents be of service to their fellow residents?
4. Regardless of our profession or trade, as members of the Church we all are called to be: Priests (to worship and participate in the public worshiping); Prophets (to proclaim the word of God by our own deeds, witness, action) and Leaders (to bring and lead others to Christ).
5. We turn to our Father as children and to each other as brothers in a true family. As a REC participant your family will be all the other residents that have made REC.
6. We suffer with each other and we also celebrate life with each other.
7. How did you come to be a person of God? Who is your community of love? How do you specifically fit into the Body of Christ? How do you contribute to the health of this body/community: prayer, service, sacrifice, etc.

8. Do you see Jesus in all people? How do you overcome your prejudices, anger, hurts, etc. to experience Jesus in all people? How do you experience God through the love we share with each other?

NOTE: At the end of this talk the Lay Director will indicate that instead of table discussion there will be a written exercise at each table. The table leader(s) will conduct the exercise. The Lay Director will have provided copy of the exercise sheet to the table leaders during the team formation meetings. At these meetings the Lay Director will explain and practice the People of God Exercise right after the critique of this talk. Each table leader should know how to conduct this exercise before the retreat.

### People of God Exercise

The table leader will conduct this exercise. The idea is for the candidates to understand the message from the preceding talk and to reaffirm the concept of community. The table leader has complete discretion on how to conduct this exercise. The following words are just a suggestion to introduce the exercise and to provoke the thoughts and participation at the table.

Lord we're here together to help each other accept the call You've given us. Sometimes it's hard to say "Yes" if we're alone. We need the mutual support of other Christians to strengthen us when we're down. The love that You show us through Your people enables us to grow closer as a Christian community.

We ask that You help us to accept the responsibilities of living according to Your teachings and pray that we grow in You as we do Your work.

From the very first, when Jesus called His disciples, He knew that they would need each other for support in accomplishing the task that He had placed before them. There would be times when they would fail and need the encouragement of their friends. There would also be times when they would want to share the jobs of their ministry.

The community that Jesus formed with His twelve apostles should serve as a model for the type of community which our Lord would want us to form. We need to be like the apostles in giving encouragement and comfort to those who need it. We need to share with each other as the Apostles did and, in this way, we can make God even more present in our lives.

Pretend that you have just received a message from God. He wants you to set up a community in the joint in which His will would be carried out.

- Name the group
- State the purposes of the community (what's it there for?)
- Set up some guidelines to achieve the purposes
- What difficulties do you anticipate in doing this, and how might they be overcome?
- Summarize your proposal and appoint one or two table members to present to the group.

NOTE: The ideal would be to get the residents to form a REC community inside the correctional facility. But, reality, population movement and other circumstances don't allow to form a community as we may have it outside. The table leaders and the speaker should then emphasize the main components of community (help and support each other) and try to get the residents to learn and practice how to help and support each other inside the facility.

## **CHRISTIAN LIFE**

(15 minutes. Discussion, and summary sharing. No poster. This talk is given by an outside team member.)

Please limit your talk to the time allowed for this talk. In order to successfully complete the program every effort must be made to be on schedule. Time is of the essence and your cooperation is extremely important. If you are witnessing, please do it within the theme and within the outline of this talk.

Open with a short prayer.

Purpose: The primary purpose of this talk is to offer an explanation of what it means to live a christian life style. The secondary purpose of this talk is to show how a relationship with God is formed through knowing, loving and serving him.

NOTE: the talk must be constructed in such a way that the listener is not prompted to judge what he has observed in someone else. The presenter may use scriptural references but must only point a finger at himself, never at others.

### Points to cover in your talk:

What are the misconceptions of piety?

1. "Holy Joes" -- Appearance is what counts: Folded hands, time spent on knees, etc., concerned only for self and not with the salvation of others.
2. "Mechanical Mikes" -- Only the letter of the law counts, minimum requirements performed out of habit or fear of punishment.
3. "Hypocritical Hal" -- Pretends to be what he is not: performed religious acts for human recognition, not out of the love of God.

What is the definition of Christian Piety?

1. Christian Piety shows a relationship with God through knowing him, loving him and serving him.
2. Knowing -- I am the son of God, brother of Jesus Christ. I have a need to know him, not just about him. Give examples of how you got to know him through scripture, christian reading, listening to christian music and attending liturgy.
3. Loving -- Because I love my brother I talk to him through prayer which can be spontaneous as well as formal.

4. Serving -- I try to live my life as God has called me to live it and this can mean something different to each one of us.

What are the characteristics of a life of piety?

1. Natural -- never phony, sincere expression of what we are like within. It will have the simplicity of a natural father - son relationship.
2. Courageous -- "Let your light shine" (Matthew 5:16)
3. Mature -- the more human I am, the more I am drawn to my ideal.
4. Joyful - The discovery of God in my life brings me peace and happiness.

Lead the men into the discussion of your talk. You can ask them to respond to a question and to write down that question. You can challenge them and offer a theme related to your talk for discussion. You can provoke and stimulate the discussion in the best way you can.

## CHAPEL VISIT

(No specific time per visit. The Lay Director and the Assistant Director are the prayer leaders.)

Immediately after the Christian Life talk the Lay Director will announce the chapel visits. He will explain that each table will have the opportunity to pray in private. He then will ask the ushers to direct table by table in an orderly fashion to the designated rooms. The Lay Director will be in one room and the Assistant Director in another. At this time also the Lay Director will announce any activity for the whole group while each table goes to the chapel visit. He will indicate who will be in charge during this time.

The chapel visit is a prayer meeting where everyone is offered the opportunity to talk to Jesus in a very personal way. This may be a highly emotional event. Some candidates that have been quiet at their table up to this point may open up in a very emotional way. Keep your ears open for any special need or particular problem that you may be able to help later on a one to one basis. This is an opportunity for the candidates to get it out of their chests, to exteriorize their feelings. Some of them may pray yelling at Jesus while some others may do it in silence. Do not force anyone to talk; let God do His work. Always keep a contrite and respectful attitude.

Although there is no specific time allowed for each visit you should always keep in mind that time is limited. Use your best judgement. The ushers will keep the tables moving until each table has been to one visit per table.

Sit in a circle with a lit candle in the middle of the circle. The table leader must be to your left and be the first one to talk to Jesus right after you. If the table has two table leaders one must sit to your left and the other to your right to be the last one to talk to Jesus. You have complete discretion on how to conduct this prayer meeting. The following words are just a suggestion.

Holding a crucifix in your hand and looking at it you can say something like this: "Often, when we love someone we speak to that person; we long to share our thoughts and feelings. Sometimes we express our love in our own words that come from the heart. At other times, we don't say anything out loud, but our love is still there. Our relationship with Christ is the same. Sometimes we express our love out loud in words. But Christ also hears those words spoken silently from our hearts. We hope that at REC you have found a closer relationship with Christ. We want to give you the opportunity to express that love to Christ, to talk with him as a friend, as someone you love.

I have this crucifix in my hand. I will begin my conversation with Christ. When I have finished speaking to Christ in my own way will pass the crucifix to \_\_\_\_\_, he will also talk to our brother Jesus and when he is finished he will pass the crucifix to \_\_\_\_\_ (use first names whenever possible) to do the same. I ask you to feel free to express your feelings. You are among brothers. If you wish you can do it in your own language. If you want to speak to Christ silently in your heart, you are free to do so. Pass the crucifix to the person next to your left when you finish.

Start with your own conversation.

## SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES FOR THE REMAINING TABLES DURING THE CHAPEL VISIT

To keep the men busy at their tables during the chapel visit; and to encourage them to keep noise to a minimum several activities has been suggested. The Lay Director will decide which one is better. He will ask the Music Minister or one of the ushers to be in charge. A prayerful attitude must be encouraged.

1. Teach the men to pray the rosary. Palanca rosary beads should be distributed prior to this. The volunteer in charge will explain what the rosary is and start with the first mystery. Each table leader thereafter will pray one mystery.
2. Practice songs for the Hootenanny. The Music Minister will lead this activity without mentioning the Hoot that is to come immediately after the chapel visits are over.
3. Teach the men how to pray. At the discretion of the person in charge he will discuss different ways of praying and actually lead the men into prayer.
4. Teach the men how to pray the Stations of the Cross. This activity can be done any time of the year but is specially recommended if the REC is around Lent.
5. Explain to the men the different parts of the mass. The SD can be in charge of this activity and explain in layman terms the different parts of the celebration of the Eucharist. Day Two will end with mass and the Signs talk will lead into that mass.
6. Any other activity at the discretion of the Lay Director. He may choose one or more of the above activities or come up with one of his own. One suggestion is to ask each table to work on their best poster. Without mentioning the Hoot they can be told that there will be a poster judgement later and they should select a candidate to explain their best poster.

## **THE HOOTENANNY**

(3 hours maximum.)

The program for this event is prepared and printed by the Music Minister. See Specific Duties--Hootenanny on page 23. The Lay Director is the Master of Ceremony for the first half of the program. The Assistant Director is the Master of Ceremony for the second half of the program.

This is the most impressive event for the candidates. If the palanca letters weren't enough to assure them that there is people who cares, the Hootenanny will convince them that there is an outside community who loves and supports them. They will have a chance to see, talk, hug and share with these persons. For some of the men it has been a long time since they had someone visiting them. It means a lot to them to be treated as equals and not as social refuse; to be called by their names and not by their inmate number.

The order and contents of the program is at the discretion of the Music Minister. Nevertheless the program must be built around two essential components:

1. Socializing with the candidates, and
2. Witnessing by the candidates.

The Lay Director will approve the program and make sure that enough time is given for the witnessing and socializing.

The following is just a suggestion for the order of the program. The Music Minister is free to add or eliminate at his will.

**ENTRANCE SONG:** The outside community.

**OPENING SONG:** All.

**INTRODUCTORY REMARKS:** Lay Director.

**ICEBREAKER** (i.e. Father Abraham): All.

**SONG(S):** Special guest(s) from outside community.

**PEACE TALK:** Outside team member.

**SOCIALIZING:** All.

**COMMISSIONING OF NEXT DIRECTOR:** LD, AD and SD.

**POSTER PRESENTATION:** Each table.

**WITNESSING:** Candidates.

**CLOSING PRAYER/SONG:** All.

Setting up the room for the Hootenanny: The ushers should have figured out the setting of the room at the inside meetings. There should be a center aisle and enough room and chairs for the visitors. Whenever possible the chairs must be facing the altar with the back to the entrance door. The visitors must be seated together with the residents and not separated from them. This can be accomplished by leaving every other row of chairs empty for the visitors to sit. If possible, chairs must be arranged like a horseshoe or a chevron; (see suggested seating on page 101.) The Lay Director will announce when to arrange the room after all the Chapel Visits are over. Everyone should help to set up the room.

Peace Talk: This talk is given by the only female member of the outside team. This talk also concludes the first half of the program. A social hour usually follows this talk. See suggested outline on page 69.

Socializing: the idea of the outside community to come into the facility for the Hootenanny is to show their support for the candidates. It is wholeheartedly requested that the outside community socialize with the residents as much as they can and not with the outside team members. The outside community is a sign of Christ's love to the residents and it means a lot to them to share with the outside community. At the Orientation Meeting for the Hootenanny the Lay Director must emphasize this point. The same point must be repeated in the letter sent to the attendees confirming their attendance to the Hootenanny.

Commissioning of next Lay Director: Very brief ceremony. The Director's cross is blessed by the Spiritual Director and passed on to the Assistant Director. The LD and SD have full discretion on how to conduct this ceremony.

Poster presentation: After the Chapel visits are over and before arranging the room for the Hootenanny, the Assistant Director will ask each table to choose their best poster and one candidate to explain it. A second speaker to explain the name of the table is optional. The Assistant Director must have a list with the name for each table and will call each table to the front to explain their best poster. The Assistant Director must be in control all the time and don't let this event get out of hand. EACH CANDIDATE WILL INTRODUCE HIMSELF GIVING HIS NAME ONLY. NO APPLAUSE UNTIL THE END. NO "THANK YOU's." NO REMARKS. ONLY HIS NAME. THE EXPLANATIONS MUST BE LIMITED TO 1-3 MINUTES. THEY WILL HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO SAY MORE IF THEY WANT WHEN THEY ARE INVITED TO WITNESS. DON'T TAKE AWAY TIME FROM THE WITNESSING.

Witnessing: The best way to thank the outside community for their support is for the candidates to witness where they are at this point. Time for witnessing must be limited to allow a greater number of candidates to witness. Again, the Assistant Director must be in control of this event and don't let it turn into a "talent show" where everyone wants to sing or read a poem. THE AD MUST GIVE CLEAR INSTRUCTIONS TO THOSE WHO WANT TO WITNESS AND ASK THEM NOT TO SAY "THANK YOU" BUT TO SHARE THEIR FAITH. THAT IS THE BEST WAY TO SAY "THANK YOU".

The Hootenanny will end with a closing prayer and/or a song before the outside community departs.



## **THE PEACE TALK**

(20 minutes maximum.) No discussion, no poster, no summary sharing.

This talk is given during the Hootenanny and is the only talk of the weekend presented by a woman team member.

Open with a short prayer.

Purpose: To show the men that adversity and misfortune can happen to anyone, but if we trust the Lord we can have peace in our hearts even in the darkest moments of our lives. This is a pure witness talk.

There is no specific outline for this talk. The focus of the talk is John, Chapter 14, Verse 27: "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

The presenter will share how she has experienced the peace of Christ in her life. She will share how her faith has sustained her in difficult moments of her life and how her faith has been strengthened by the promise of peace. She will witness about the peace and turmoil in her own life and how the promise of peace relates to her and to others. All of the residents have experienced some level of adversity and misfortune in their own lives and they will immediately identify themselves with the witnessing. However, they may have never heard of the promise of Jesus' peace. How, when and why the presenter has experienced this peace will help the men to look inside themselves and strive for their own peace.

A great number of residents have been abandoned by the males in their life and have been raised in the company of women. If not their mother, perhaps a grandmother, aunt, or older sister. What the presenter has to say will be received attentively and with utmost respect by them.

A variety of techniques have been used in the presentation of this talk. The presenter is free to choose the best way for her presentation. John 14:27 must be quoted anywhere in the talk. Some talks have ended with a short song, other talks have incorporated music. In some instances, depending on the facility, the talk has been presented in both English and Spanish.

As a team member the speaker will be asked to attend the team formation meetings. It is strongly recommended to attend at least one of the inside team formation meetings to familiarize yourself with the environment in which you will be giving your talk. It is advisable also to attend one Hootenanny prior to your presentation. The Lay Director will be able to provide you information about REC in other facilities and a contact person for their Hootenanny. If you are recruited by an Assistant Director, he can get you on the list for the Hootenanny in the same facility where you will be giving your talk.

## **SIGNS**

(15 minutes. Written exercise and summary sharing. This talk is given by an outside team member.)

Please limit your talk to the time allowed for this talk. In order to successfully complete the program, every effort must be made to be on schedule. Time is of the essence and your cooperation is extremely important. If you are witnessing, please do it within the theme and within the outline of this talk.

Open with a short prayer.

Purpose: To prepare the men for the celebration of the Eucharist and the reception of the sacrament. Giving different examples, in the first 1/3 of your talk you will briefly describe the meaning behind every day secular signs. Using the same format you will explain the concept of sacrament. In the last 2/3 of your talk you will explain the sacrament of Eucharist and the mass. Keep in mind that this is the first mass we celebrate together, but for some of the men this may be their first mass in a long time or may be the first one ever.

### Points to cover in your talk:

Introduction (5 minutes): Signs are part of everyday life. They are simple things that represent more complex concepts. Signs are symbolic representation of an idea. Secular signs have a conventional meaning and are used instead of words. Signs serve to indicate the presence or existence of something. For instance, we don't see the skull and bones in a label as a representation of parts of the human body but as a warning: poison, dangerous.

There are many kinds of signs: traffic signs ( a red octagon), sport signs, visual signs (a red light), audible signs (telephone tone), etc. Signs are not always easy to understand, if you can't read printed words are meaningless.

Sacraments are signs of God's love, they indicate the presence of God in our lives. Enumerate (do not describe or explain) the 7 sacraments. The Eucharist is the most important of these signs (the sacraments). Understanding the sacrament of Eucharist helps us recognize God's love. The purpose of this talk is to help us "decode" this sign.

The Eucharist (10 minutes): 1. Historical background -- The Last Supper: Jewish ceremony of Passover. Passover Lamb: a sign of deliverance from slavery. Jesus gave us a new Passover: deliverance from sin. 2. Meaning of communion -- we celebrate the union we share with Jesus, and consequently, with one another. Being in union with Jesus makes God our Father; hence we all are brother/sisters. The outside team is here as a sign we recognize you as brothers and that we love you. Palanca letters are signs that others are united with us in prayer and love. 3. Relate Eucharist to the death and resurrection of Christ (Paschal Mystery) -- In the Eucharist we see a speeded up version of the process of dying and rising. The bread is a sign of our lives. When we invoke the Holy Spirit over our lives, we are changed, too. 4. Meaning of "amen" -- a sign that we are in agreement, not just with the doctrine of the Eucharist, but with Jesus Christ. A sign that we want to

be changed so we can be like Christ. 5. Instructional mass -- explain the mass step by step. Tell what we are doing, why are we doing it and what it means. Why vestments? Significance of colors. Significance of candles and entrance song. Sign of the cross; penitential rite, Liturgy of the Word: how God speaks to us; etc.

NOTE: At the end of this talk the Lay Director will indicate that instead of table discussion there will be a written exercise at each table. The table leader(s) will conduct the exercise. The Lay Director will have provided copy of the exercise sheet to the table leaders during the team formation meetings. At these meetings the Lay Director will explain and practice the Signs Exercise right after the critique of the Signs talk. Each table leader should know how to conduct this exercise before the retreat.

### **Signs Exercise**

- I. The purpose of this exercise is to make us more aware of the presence of God's signs in our day-to-day existence.

The signs are there; it's up to us become conscious of them. It's like taking time to look at the flowers as we walk through a garden.

- II. Our life can be precious--growing, wondering, searching, discovering, making friends, finding answers, making things happen. This is our life in His spirit.

The sunrise, the spring breezes, the surge of the ocean, our eyesight -- all are parts of God's gift to us. They're signs of His presence in the world, in our lives and in the lives of those around us.

At this time, we would like to look at how God's signs are real and present in our lives -- in ourselves and in one another.

- III. Fill in 2 or 3 of the following (you can use the back of the sheet).

- One of the happiest times in my life was:
- A time I was patient when I didn't want to be was:
- A time I held back from criticizing or speaking angry words was:
- A time I was gentle with a friend was:
- One time I really trusted someone was:

- IV. If you would like to, share what you have written with those at your table.

- V. How do you think that the things we have shared are signs of God's spirit being with us? Why or why not? Are these just 'ordinary' things? Do we usually expect God's gifts to be more 'extraordinary'?

What kinds of signs do you see present in this group? How do they affect you?

Prepare a brief summary of the signs which were mentioned in sharing at each table. Mention how they affect you, and how they affect those around you. Choose one or two people from your table to present your summary.

## **SATURDAY LITURGY**

This is the first Liturgy we celebrate together on the weekend. The men are spiritually high from the Hootenanny. The Signs talk should have prepared them for the celebration of the Eucharist. This should be a very alive and happy celebration. By now the men know that they can and they should rise again with the Lord. This is a happy occasion and we should celebrate accordingly.

The Spiritual Director and the Music Minister will choose the music for this service. The Spiritual Director will choose the readers for the mass or ask any table leader to choose 2 readers from different tables. In some cases it is advisable to do the readings in English and in Spanish. Four readers must be chosen in this case. The SD in consultation with the LD must decide on the number of readers.

The homily given by the Spiritual Director is his own. He should take into account the themes for Day One and Day Two and the mood of the group after the Hootenanny. Reception of the Eucharist is in a single specie only. The gate clearance will allow the priest to bring in an ounce of wine for his own consumption during Liturgy. In some facilities the SD can be provided with vestments by the facility chaplain. But it is always a good idea to bring your own.

## **SKITS/WITNESSING**

At the discretion of the Lay Director the men will be offered the opportunity to share what they have learned so far, either by doing a skit table by table, or by coming forward to witness individually. If time permits the Lay Director may decide to start with the skits and then open the microphone to end the day.

The skits are fun, less complicated and allows more participation. Each table will present a short skit on any of the talks, themes and/or events chosen by the candidates. The skit must be representative of how they feel about REC so far. Have they learned something? Have they grown spiritually? Is there anything from REC that have impressed them the most? Etc. Each table will be given 5 minutes to discuss, choose and prepare their skit. The table leaders also participate. They should offer ideas for the skit and encourage full participation. After everyone is ready the Assistant Director will MC and call table by table to present their skit.

For the witnessing the AD will proceed as he did in the Hootenanny. Time for witnessing must be limited to allow maximum participation. No "thank you's" for the team, the best way to say thank you is to witness about their faith. Playing music, singing and other similar entertainment activities must be discouraged unless, like with the skits, they carry a message to share.

## DAY THREE

### **THEME FOR DAY THREE: GO FORTH WITH THE LORD**

(5 minutes. No poster, no discussion, no summary sharing. This introduction is given by an outside team member.)

Open with a short prayer.

**Scriptural source:** The Theme for Day Three is taken from Matthew 28:18-20 "As the Father has sent me so I send you..." and Mark 16:15.

**Purpose:** To encourage the candidates to continue the process they started on Day One and to continue trying even if they fail. At the same time, to make a conscientious effort to bring Christ to others and share with their example the new life they have started. To try to make an impact in their own environment and not to look back but towards the future. This is not a full talk but a brief explanation of how on Day Three the candidates will be taught and given some tools to continue their journey with the Lord.

#### **Points to develop:**

1. You have made the decision to change now you must go forward. You have to work hard at it and be constant. You must look for support while you are inside and after you are released.
2. Your attitude is very important. Your own example should be the main tool to bring Christ to others. You have to share your new found life with others. You must support and be supported by others.
3. God is challenging us to go forth. You may quote the scriptural source for Day Three. You must accept this challenge. All of us have accepted this challenge and we will share with you how we have done it.

**NOTE:** At the discretion of the Lay Director the same person can be in charge of explaining the theme of each day of the retreat. If the same person did the themes for Day One and Two he may want to make this introduction the culmination of the developing of themes in a progression.

## **CONFIDENCE IN CHRIST**

(10-15 minutes. Table discussion and summary sharing. No poster. This talk/meditation is given by an outside team member.)

Please limit your talk to the time allowed for this talk: 10 minutes for the talk and 5 minutes for the meditation. In order to successfully complete the program every effort must be made to be on schedule. Time is of the essence and your cooperation is extremely important. If you are witnessing, please do it within the theme and within the outline of this talk.

NOTE: This talk was originally a meditation. When the Lay Director assigns the talks, he should discuss this assignment with the team member. The Lay Director will make sure which way is more effective and be sure that the volunteer feels comfortable with it. The Lay Director will decide if this assignment will be only a 10 minute talk, only a 5 minute meditation or both.

Start with a short prayer.

Purpose: To explain to the men that after dying and rising again the next logical step is to go forward. They have buried their past and now they need to start walking to the future: their new life centered in Christ. This can be made easy if we have confidence in Christ. On Day Three we go forth with confidence in Christ to grow in His love and to gently spread His message through our example.

### Points to cover in your talk

1. Very briefly recap the themes for Day One and Two.
2. Develop the theme that with Christ all things are possible. Explain what personal confidence have you experienced in Jesus. Have you always had confidence in Christ? When did this confidence deepen?
3. Talk about your confidence and trust in the Lord. How do you use your confidence to bring Jesus to others? How would your life be different if you had no confidence in Christ?
4. Explain all of the above from an inmate point of view. How can the inmates become more confident in Christ and themselves? How can it be of help to an inmate to have confidence in Christ?

Meditation: Use your own words and format to talk directly to your best friend Jesus in whom you have absolute confidence. Meditate about how you have developed this confidence to be where you are at today. Talk to Jesus and tell him why do you trust Him. How does your confidence in Christ sustain you. Have you allowed Christ to become real in you? Why and how?

Lead the men into the table discussion of your talk. You can ask them to respond to a question and to write down that question. You can challenge them and offer a theme related to your talk for discussion. You can provoke and stimulate the discussion in the best way you can.

## **GOD IN OUR RELATIONSHIPS**

(15 minutes maximum. Discussion and summary sharing. No poster. This talk is given by an outside team member.)

Please limit your talk to the time allowed for this talk. In order to successfully complete the program every effort must be made to be on schedule. This is of the essence and hour cooperation is extremely important. If you are witnessing, please do it within the theme and within the outline of this talk.

Open with a short prayer.

Purpose: To encourage the candidates to find Jesus in their family relationships. You will also encourage them to continue their growth in their relationships with Jesus, with themselves and with others after this weekend is over. You must take into account that any family relationship for an inmate at this point is sustained by sporadic visits, letters and phone calls. This talk replaces the "Married Life" talk that was given on previous REC's. The relationships that should be addressed here are "family" relationships. Not all the men are married. Some have never been, some are divorced, many have children from different women. Your witness should be applicable to the kind of relationships they will have after release. At this point some family relationships may be strained and the inmate may feel guilty about it. All of the men will be released to a community where they will try to resume some type of relationship (with parents, wives, girlfriends or children). This talk should stress the importance of finding Jesus in each of those relationships no matter how strained they are.

### Points to cover in your talk:

1. What are your primary family relationships? Are you a father, son, husband, boyfriend? What are the joys of those relationships. Give examples. What are the struggles and pains of those relationships? Give examples.
2. What kind of role Jesus plays in your family relationships? What is your responsibility for keeping God at the center of those relationships? How do you resolve problems in these relationships? Is God of any help to solve your family problems?
3. For many of the men, the relationships that they will return to after release or the ones they continue now, are strained or broken by a loss of trust. How can Jesus play a major role in rebuilding that trust?
4. Has God always been present in your family life? How is God shared in your family? How do you give support to the different family members in your family relationships? How do they support you? How can an inmate support and seek support from his family?

Lead the men into the table discussion of your talk. You can ask them to respond to a question and to write down that question. You can challenge them and offer a theme related to your talk for discussion. You can provoke and stimulate the discussion in the best way you can.

## **INMATE LIFE**

(15 minutes maximum. Discussion and summary sharing. No poster. This talk is given by an inside team member.)

Please limit your talk to 15 minutes. Try to follow the outline as close as possible. The most important part of this talk is you. Please be as open, honest and sincere as possible.

**HOW TO PREPARE YOUR TALK:** The purpose of this talk is to tell the men how you are making the best of the situation you are in right now. You will tell them what positive things you are doing while you wait for your release. Your life as an inmate is a call from God. Is something that God wants you to do. You didn't choose your call, but once you are in, you have that call. We each have a call from God. Remember what others have said in their talks about their call. Use examples of a person's call from other talks.

Write down the answers to as many of the following questions as you can. You don't have to answer them all. They are only to help you to write your talk. You may answer your own questions if you want. You know better than anyone what positive you are doing with the time you have.

The most important step that you can take towards positive use of your time in prison is to include God in your activities. First, you must establish a relationship with God. Do you worship at Sunday services? Do you receive communion? Have you been confirmed? Do you pray? How frequent? Do you read your Bible? Do you meditate? What do you do to keep in touch with God?

The second relationship that you must establish towards positive use of your time in prison is with yourself. You must try to do whatever you can to build yourself up and to grow as one of the People of God mentioned yesterday. Are you in any program offered in the facility? Literacy, GED, ASAT, Alternatives to Violence, etc.? Are you learning any trade? In which ways are you improving yourself while serving time?

The third relationship that you must establish towards positive use of your time in prison is with those around you. You can't concentrate only in yourself. You don't exist in a social vacuum. You can show others that you have got it together with God and yourself by your actions. Your example is the strongest message you can give. How are you of service to others? There are many ways of helping your brothers (inmates). For instance: sharing a cigarette, a pat on the back, listening, smiling, talking about Jesus, reading the Bible or praying together, etc. Being friendly is not a sign of weakness, it is a sign of christian love. Are you a sign of God? How?

**If you have done a REC weekend before** you may want to share what was your experience. Ask yourself these questions and write down your answers: What did REC mean to me? Was REC just a weekend? Why? Why did I go to my first REC? Was REC what I expected? How did I feel about me during the retreat? Did REC make me feel different about myself? Did REC make me feel different about my relationship with God? Did REC make me feel different about my relationship with my fellow inmates and for that matter about my relationship with any other

people? Am I going to serve time or am I going to use my time to serve God and my brothers?  
What can I tell to my brothers that are doing this REC for the first time?

GIVING YOUR TALK:           Open with a short prayer.  
  Read what you have written.

NOTE: You must have your talk ready for one of the inside meetings. You will be notified in advance of the date and time. On that date you will read your talk to the teams and they will make suggestions for improvement. Listen to the suggestions and make the necessary changes. Explain your point of view if you don't agree with any of the suggestions. Remember, you are the most important part of this talk, not the words you use or the way to say it.

At the inside team formation meetings the Lay Director will meet on a one to one basis with the assignee for this talk to coach him. The message of using his time in prison positively must be clear. Examples from personal experience must be included as much as possible. The three relationships (God, self and others) that an inmate must establish in order to make the best out of the time served must be clearly defined and explained.

NOTE: With this talk (Inmate Life) we finish covering the Paschal Mystery: death, rising and going forth. We begin now to close the weekend. We have provided the men with enough material to think and make a decision. We will provide them now with tools and examples to put into practice in order to lead a Christ centered life. Very soon we will leave the facility and the men will be left on their own. We will share with them now how to persevere as a christian.

In the previous talk (Inmate Life) the men were introduced to the 3 main relationships that they have to develop in order to persevere in their new life. On the last 3 talks we are going to go deeper into those relationships. We will provide them with the information and the tools of how we have done it; how we struggle and how we persevere.

The Lay Director will make sure that the last 3 talks develop the relationships mentioned in the Inmate Life talk as follows:

Relationship with God: in the Beyond REC 1 talk.

Relationship with my own self: in the Beyond REC 2 talk.

Relationship with others: in the Christian Action talk.

## **CHRISTIAN ACTION**

(15 minutes. Discussion and summary sharing. No poster. This talk is given by an outside team member.)

Please limit your talk to the time allowed for this talk. In order to successfully complete the program every effort must be made to be on schedule. Time is of the essence and your cooperation is extremely important. If you are witnessing, please do it within the theme and within the outline of this talk.

Open with a short prayer.

Purpose: To prepare the candidates to put into practice what has been experienced through this encounter with Jesus. It is suggested that you read the Epistle of James prior to writing your talk. You should stress that christianity is not just a one-to-one relationship with Jesus but also calls for sharing and serving one another. Take it from the previous talk Inmate Life where the speaker explained that one way of positively using the time in prison is by establishing a relationship with others. Go deeper into the subject and develop the theme of service to others.

### Points to cover in your talk:

1. What has Jesus told and taught us about serving? (e.g. His washing of the feet of His apostles). How do you live out the Gospel? How do you practice what you preach? What are some of the major activities that you do to serve others and to bring Christ's message to others? Why do you do it? What are some of the minor things you do? (e.g. a word of encouragement, a phone call, a card, a hello, etc.)
2. What difficulties do you encounter sharing yourself with others? Obstacles that can be found in your christian action: red tape, laws, different mentality, prejudice, policies, culture, etc. How do you deal with those obstacles?
3. Refer by name to the speaker from Inmate Life and develop the theme "Your example is the strongest message you can give." What can an inmate do inside the prison to serve others? Refer to the different programs available in this particular facility. This time the inmates can participate as volunteers to help others. In the Inmate Life talk they were asked to participate as students to improve themselves. Suggest several possibilities of how an inmate can be of service to his fellow inmates.
4. Different kinds of christian action: volunteering, charity, participating, sponsoring, palanca, walking the extra mile, etc.

Lead the men into the table discussion of your talk. You can ask them to respond to a question and to write down that question. You can challenge them and offer a theme related to your talk for discussion. You can provoke and stimulate the discussion in the best way you can



## **PICTURES**

The Assistant Director is the coordinator for this activity. The Lay Director will decide when is the best time to take the pictures. In some weekends pictures have been taken during lunch to save time and to keep everyone at his table. The ushers will direct table by table as they have done before.

The Lay Director will announce this activity and explain how it is going to be done. The Assistant Director will distribute the Release Forms to each table leader. Each table leader will make sure that the forms are filled out correctly and will countersign as a witness each form for his table. The table leader is responsible for returning all the completed forms to the Lay Director before the picture is taken.

One picture for each table is required. The Lay director, Assistant Director, Spiritual Director and Music Minister should be in every picture. The Lay Director and the photographer will decide if a picture of the whole group or from other groups (teams, speakers, etc.) is necessary. No picture can be taken without a Release Form signed and witnessed. See picture release form on page 110.

The Assistant Director should be in control of this activity at all times. He should avoid any waste of time and keep the tables moving until all pictures have been taken.

## **BEYOND REC 1**

(25 minutes maximum 5-10 minute talk; 15 minutes grouping. No discussion, no poster, no summary sharing. This talk is given by an outside team member who groups regularly.)

Please limit your talk to 5-10 minutes maximum. In order to successfully complete the program every effort must be made to be on schedule. Time is of the essence and your cooperation is extremely important. This is not a witness talk, please stay within the outline.

Open with a short prayer.

Purpose: To provide the men with different ways and methods to lead a Christ centered life. You will share with the men how to develop the relationship with God mentioned in the Inmate Life talk. You will go deeper into the subject and share what methods do you use to cope with life by leaning on Christ. At the end you will go through the format of grouping.

Points to cover in your talk:

1. Refer to the Inmate Life talk and the relationship with God mentioned in it. You will now explain how you have developed that relationship outside a correctional facility. Mention different ways to keep in touch with God applicable inside or outside a correctional facility: prayer, mass, palanca, spiritual direction, meditation, etc.
2. Grouping. How do you group? When do you group? Why do you group? Grouping allows you to use several tools in one method; reading, listening, praying, practicing, acting, etc. This is an effective way to build community. Refer to the People of God as a Community of Love talk. Use the blackboard and go through the format of grouping: a small group of people make the commitment to meet once a week to support each other. We open with a prayer and we talk about:

**R**elationship with God,  
**E**ducation about God, and  
**C**aring for others.

Notice the acronym. This will make it easy for the men to remember what to do when grouping. These are the 3 main parts of our spiritual life. Briefly go into each one of them.

Relationship with God: Think of it as your relationship with your best friend. Do you visit this friend? Do you talk to this friend? Do you please this friend? In other words, do you pray, do you attend church, do you receive communion, etc.

Education about God: What have you learned about your God lately? Different ways of learning: reading, group discussion, tapes, listening, videos, movies, music, guided meditations, Bible study, etc. In some facilities the chaplain may have special programs; check it out.

Caring about others: Putting your christianity into action. What have you done lately to help other brothers in need? Refer to the Christian Action talk.

You will be inviting the men to try to group after the weekend is over. This method is working for you on the outside and may work for them on the inside if the facility regulations allows them to group. Check with the Chaplain if grouping is possible before or after weekly mass or if the chaplain can be of help to facilitate the grouping. Tailor your talk to the reality of the facility. Maybe they can group in their dorms, in the yard. Grouping doesn't have to be like it is done outside holding hands, sitting around a table and may be sharing a meal. It can be as informal as two people walking around the yard sharing about the 3 main parts of their spiritual life. The merit is in persevering and grouping regularly. Explain that it is not necessary to cover each area in detail. Sometimes we have a lot to say, sometimes we don't have much to say. Refer to the People of God exercise; see page 62.

Ask the table leaders to start and guide the exercise at each table. Watch the time. After the exercise is complete you will announce the time and date for the reunion and also the monthly follow-ups. Explain that it is very important for the residents to attend the follow-up meetings to keep the REC community alive. If they haven't been able to meet and share with other REC'ers these meetings offer the opportunity to get together at least once a month. A small group of outside team members will come to support and help them. Explain that he will be grouping at these meetings as a way to build community by helping and supporting each other.

## **BEYOND REC 2**

(10 minutes. No discussion, no poster, no summary sharing. This talk can be given by an outside/inside team member.)

Please limit your talk to 10 minutes. Try to follow the outline as close as possible. The most important part of this talk is you. Please be as open, honest and sincere as possible.

HOW TO PREPARE YOUR TALK: This is a brief farewell talk. The purpose of this talk is to prepare the men to go back to the daily routine of a correctional facility. Refer to the Inmate Life talk. In this talk the speaker mentioned the need to develop a relationship with our own self. You will expand this theme. In that talk the speaker mentioned different programs and activities that he is participating in but there are other programs available that maybe he is not participating in. You will mention those programs. You have to make clear that it is very important to improve yourself while you are serving time.

Write down the answers to as many of the following questions as you can. You don't have to answer them all. They are here only to help you to write down your talk. You may answer your own questions if you want. You know better the reality of this facility and the different ways available to build you up.

Ease the fears and/or expectations of the men about going back to the prison reality which is unchanged and different than the REC weekend environment. They should not expect acceptance by the general population of what they take back from REC. Other inmates may not buy any of it. They can surely talk about the weekend, but don't tell details of what happened, that could spoil a future REC experience for someone.

What educational programs are available in this facility? How can you better yourself through these programs? What vocational programs are available in this facility? What are the advantages of being trained for a job while you are serving time? How can you participate in the different programs? Can you participate as a volunteer helping others or as a student? Can you volunteer to help in church? How? You can also volunteer for next REC weekend. Talk to the Chaplain. Talk to the next Director. You can also better yourself attending the REC follow-ups every month.

If you have done a REC weekend before you may want to share what happened to you after the weekend was over. What did you do to keep the relationship with Jesus alive? Do you have any advice for your brothers that are doing REC for the first time?

If you have been already released and volunteered to come back to a facility to help your brothers you may want to share your feelings. What were your greatest fears just prior to release? Did those fears become reality? How did Jesus help you to change from prison to community? How do you keep your faith alive after release? Have you been tempted to relapse? How? What have you done? Do you attend support group meetings? Have you joined a church? Is the struggle over?

GIVING YOUR TALK:        Open with short prayer.  
   Read what you have written.

NOTE: You must have your talk ready for one of the inside meetings. You will be notified in advance of the date and time. On that date you will read your talk to the teams and they will make suggestions for improvement. Listen to the suggestions and make the necessary changes. Explain your point of view if you don't agree with any of the suggestions. Remember, you are the most important part of this talk, not the words you use or the way you say it.

At the inside team formation meetings the Lay Director will meet on a one to one basis with the assignee for this talk to coach him. The message stressing the need to improve one's self must be clear. It is an advantage to prepare and better yourself while you are serving time. You should take the opportunity to build up yourself and aim to a better life after release.

## **SUNDAY LITURGY**

This is our send-off liturgy. In some facilities the rest of the general population join us for mass only. This is a very emotional ceremony. We all know that the retreat will be over shortly and this is probably the last time that the whole group will be together. The mood is not somber but solemn. The celebration should be of hope. The men know that they will be on their own after today.

The Spiritual Director and the Music Minister will choose the music for this service. "Peace is Flowing Like a River" is always a good choice. The spiritual Director will choose the readers for the mass or ask any table leader to choose 2 readers from different tables. In some cases it is advisable to do the readings in English and in Spanish. Four readers must be chosen in this case. The SD should decide with the LD the number of readers.

The homily given by the Spiritual Director is his own, but it should be directed to the Theme of the Day: Go Forth with the Lord! Grow in your love of the Lord by giving it away to others as has been experienced on this weekend. Reception of the Eucharist is in a single specie only. The gate clearance will allow the priest to bring in an ounce of wine for his own consumption during Liturgy. In some facilities the SD can be provided with vestments by the facility Chaplain. But it is always a good idea to bring your own.

The ushers will direct the people to and from the altar during communion.

## **PRESENTATION OF CARDS AND CROSSES----CLOSING**

(15 minutes.) If the general population doesn't join us for mass, at the discretion of the Lay Director this ceremony can be incorporated into the mass. The Lay Director, Assistant Director, Spiritual Director and Deacon participate. The ushers direct the people. All necessary supplies must be ready and on hand.

This is the last scheduled event for the weekend. All the cards must have been signed before. Don't leave this for the last minute. While the men are grouping at each table the Lay Director and the Assistant Director will prepare for this ceremony and have the cards and crosses ready to be distributed.

The Lay Director will explain the ceremony and procedures. The Spiritual Director will present the crosses and the Lay Director will hand out the cards. A few words by the Spiritual Director is optional. The Lay Director will invite the candidates and those team members doing REC for the first time to come forward.

The ushers following the same pattern for previous events (Bible Ceremony, Service of Ashes, etc.) will direct table by table in a single line to the front of the altar. Each person comes forward and the Spiritual Director places the cross about the neck of the person with the words: "*Christ is counting on you*". The person replies: "*And I'm counting on Him.*"

After receiving the crosses and cards the whole group remains standing around the room. We all hold hands in a big circle and sing the Our Father. The outside team goes around to say goodbye or form a line for the inmates to say goodbye if they have to leave before the outside team.