

## **II. REC IN THE ALBANY ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The history and growth of the Residents Encounter Christ (R.E.C.) Program in the Albany Roman Catholic Diocese has seen tremendous growth in the past 10 years. In Mark 4 Verses 31-32, "The Parable of the Mustard Seed, "A man takes a mustard seed, the smallest of all seeds, and plants it in the ground. When it grows it becomes the biggest of all plants. It puts out such large branches that the birds come and make their nests in its shade." This parable can be compared to the beginning of the R.E.C. Program, its growth and the number of individual lives it has touched and affected throughout the past ten years.

### **History and the Beginning of R.E.C. in the Albany Diocese**

We learned that this prison ministry began in a county jail in Lawrence, Massachusetts, in the latter part of the 1960's, when three Franciscan priests offered a weekend retreat to its inmates. Residents Encounter Christ (R.E.C.) began as an offshoot of Teens Encounter Christ weekends, and was brought to New York's Greene Haven Correctional Facility in 1972 when inmates gave it its name. The program was first known as T.E.C. for prisoners, and later became known as R.E.C. - Residents Encounter Christ.

R.E.C. weekends continue to be held in downstate correctional facilities; Greene Haven, Fishkill, Taconic Correctional Facility, Eastern New York Correctional Facility, by a group of dedicated men and women in this prison ministry. Some of these men and women helped us learn how to establish the R.E.C. program in the first upstate facility, Mt. McGregor Correctional Facility in Wilton, New York. We are truly grateful to them for their help, support and encouragement (Dr. Ernie Valera, Chris Wood, David Dobbs and Richard Kollesar).

Dom Alonzo's construction firm had various jobs in different correctional facilities upstate. It was Dom Alonzo who saw the need to do something in a Christian way for the inmates. R.E.C. began in the Albany Diocese in the Fall of 1983 when Dom Alonzo discussed a possible prison ministry with Rich Polsinello, Tom O'Connor, Stan Kiersznowski and Mike Tidd. A group of meetings were held with Albany Cursillistas in Corpus Christi Church, to discuss this prison ministry and have individuals participate in this program, as a way to reach out to this environment in a special way.

Matthew 25, Verses 39-40, "When did we ever see you sick or in prison, and visit you? The King will reply, "I tell you, whenever you did this for one of the least important of these brothers of mine, you did it for me!"

Dom Alonzo made contact with Dr. Ernie Valera who coordinates many of the downstate New York Resident Encounter Christ retreats. It was through Ernie Valera's efforts that two meetings were held with Dom Alonzo, Rich Polsinello, Stan Kiersznowski and Mike Tidd, and members of Downstate R.E.C. teams. At these meetings information was provided to assist us in preparing for the first R.E.C. weekend upstate. (Mark 4 Verses 31-31).

Father Peter Young, Mt. McGregor Chaplain contacted Tom O'Connor and indicated that 800 Catholics were in the facility, but only a few were attending mass on Sunday. Could something be done by the Albany Cursillo Community to help correct this situation? Father Leo O'Brien, the Cursillo Spiritual Director reached out to the Cursillo community to assist and support the first R.E.C. program in the Albany Diocese.

Father O'Brien has been with the R.E.C. Program since its inception, and is the Spiritual Director for the R.E.C. Council. Fr. Leo's love, support and encouragement for this program is a major factor in R.E.C. success and growth.

Rev. Peter Young, Mt. McGregor Chaplain assisted in establishing the first R.E.C. weekend with the support of Joseph Kennedy, Superintendent of Mt. McGregor Correctional Facility. The R.E.C. weekend was held September 13-15, 1985 and Dom Alonzo was the first director. Father Neil McGettigan was Spiritual Director, Father Bill Whalen was Spiritual Assistant, and team members were: Rich Polsinello, Stan Kiersznowski, Jose Campos, Larry Martone, Jerry O'Brien, Chuck Glogowski, Paul Dudla, Chris Wood and Eddie Pagan (Inside Director). The Peace talk was given by Sister Carol Conley at the Hootenanny. The first R.E.C. weekend proved a success for the inmates and R.E.C. team members. After the weekend, Stan Kiersznowski coordinated the follow-up and return visits back to the facility on Sundays.

The Most Reverend, Howard J. Hubbard, Bishop of Albany, visited Mt. McGregor during the first R.E.C. weekend and spoke to the inmates and team members. Bishop Hubbard has been most supportive of the R.E.C. program, and endorses this prison ministry throughout the Diocese. He has encouraged us to put on more R.E.C. programs in other correctional facilities, and assisted us in obtaining priests and deacons to be spiritual directors for our weekends.

### **R.E.C. Council**

To coordinate future weekends, organize and plan the R.E.C. movement in the Albany Diocese, a R.E.C. Council was established and continues to meet on a monthly basis, usually the third Monday in each month.

The first Council members were: Fr. Leo O'Brien, Spiritual Director, Dom Alonzo, Rich Polsinello, Mike Tidd, Stan Kiersznowski, Jim Upton, Tom O'Connor, Ken Gardner and Bob Ottaviano. The R.E.C. Council continues to meet and we recognize Rich Winslow, Joaquin Bermudez, Walt Forney, Don Butner and the other R.E.C. Council members for their special gifts and talents to the growth of the program in the Albany Diocese.

### **Other Facilities and Weekends**

On April 15-17, 1988, the first R.E.C. weekend was held in Washington County Correctional Facility and Mike Gerardi was its Director. (R.E.C. weekends have been held in Mt. McGregor and Washington Correctional Facilities twice a year since the original weekends in 1985 and 1988).

On April 24-26, 1992 the first R.E.C. weekend was held at Johnstown Correctional Facility and over 50 inmates participated. Fred Echeverria was the Director for this weekend. The R.E.C. Council has made a commitment to hold two weekends a year at this facility, which is now called Hale Creek Correctional Facility

On July 9-11, 1993, the first R.E.C. weekend was held at Greene Correctional Facility and Guy Morone was its Director. The R.E.C. Council has made a commitment to hold two weekends a year at this facility.

## **N.Y.S. Corrections Department**

The growth of the R.E.C. Program in the Albany Diocese could not have occurred without the cooperation of the New York State Department of Corrections, its Commissioner Thomas A. Coughlin III, the Superintendents at each facility, and Pauline Kubizne of Volunteer Services. We have learned to be flexible and adapt to changes while recognizing that we must work with the N.Y.S. Corrections staff at each facility, and follow their rules and regulations in carrying out the R.E.C. Program. Through the years, we have learned that each facility is unique, and R.E.C. must adapt to changes and be flexible for our growth to continue. We must work within the system.

## **Commitment of Team Members**

There is a considerable amount of time, work and expense to be a R.E.C. team member. The three-day commitment for the weekend and team preparation meetings before the weekends requires the R.E.C. team member to spend time away from their families, friends, work and other interests, in order to allow R.E.C. to continue and grow. Individuals pay their own costs for room and board when staying at motels near the facilities during the weekends. Many individuals have been on numerous teams and R.E.C. weekends. We are truly thankful to have such dedicated individuals as part of the R.E.C. Program.

## **A Special Person**

While many people need to be recognized for the growth of R.E.C., and it would take pages and pages of names to list to do so, one individual does stand out, and he needs to be recognized - Michael Payne (deceased). Mike, an ex-inmate, supported our R.E.C. program when he was in Mt. McGregor, and after his release worked on many R.E.C. teams. May he rest in peace with our Father in heaven and be recognized for the fine work he did for our program.

## **Closing**

We believe that Jesus has called us to serve our brothers in prison, and by the Grace of God, R.E.C. will continue to grow and to serve our brothers within the prisons of the Albany Roman Catholic Diocese.

### **III. MISSION OF REC**

It is the mission of R.E.C. to serve the Lord within our diocese by encouraging the inmate prison population to become more active Christians during and after their incarceration. Our service to the Lord is done primarily through an intense 3 day program and timely follow up meetings. The major theme for the experience is: to know, love, and serve the Lord or to die to self, rise again in the Lord, and go forth together (the Paschal Mystery). The basic techniques used emphasize personal and community growth. A person grows by changing attitudes, struggling with internal/external situations. A community grows by developing its members (not isolation) and by improving its environment (not avoidance).

### **SCOPE**

This document is intended to be used as a guideline to ensure consistency in maintaining the focus on accomplishing the mission of REC. Good judgement and prayerful consideration are always critical factors in decisions regarding REC.

### **IV. DEFINITIONS**

**REC COUNCIL:** The administrative body of REC. It consists of a group of volunteers, including a Spiritual Director, a Secretary, a Treasurer and several council members. The Lay Directors and Assistant Lay Directors are part of the Council during the preparation for their respective REC weekend retreats and may remain as members of the Council after the weekend if they wish to do so.

**LAY DIRECTOR:** A Catholic volunteer chosen by the REC Council to organize and coordinate a specific REC weekend retreat.

**ASSISTANT LAY DIRECTOR:** A volunteer chosen by the REC Council to assist the Lay Director and to be trained to be the Lay Director on the following REC weekend retreat in the same facility.

**SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR:** A Catholic Priest or Deacon chosen by the Lay Director to be part of the outside team.

**REC TEAM:** A group of catholic volunteers (typically 16 to 20 men) brought together by the Lay Director with the assistance of the Assistant Lay Director and with the guidance of the REC Council to conduct a specific REC weekend retreat.

**REC WEEKEND:** A three (3) day retreat experience conducted within a correctional facility by a group of catholic volunteers for the benefit of the facility residents. It usually starts on a Friday morning and ends on a Sunday afternoon. The actual starting and ending time depends on facility regulations.

**MUSIC MINISTER:** A volunteer chosen by the Lay Director as part of the outside team who is in charge of all the music in a REC weekend.

**RESIDENTS:** Inmates in a correctional facility selected to participate either as candidates or as inside team members during the weekend.

**FACILITY LIAISON:** An active REC Council member chosen by the REC Council to interface with a specifically designated correctional facility and with the New York Department of Correctional Services.

**FORMER RESIDENTS LIAISON:** An active REC Council member chosen by the REC Council to keep contact with former residents living in the area for the purpose of participating in REC weekends.

**INSIDE TEAM:** The outside team counterpart made up entirely of residents. Three of the talks are given by inside team members. They assist also as table leaders and helpers.

**INSIDE COORDINATOR:** A resident chosen by the Lay Director to help and coordinate the recruiting of candidates, the assignments of talks, set up, clean up, food service and other duties as the Lay Director deems fit.

**FACILITY CHAPLAIN:** The Catholic Chaplain in the facility. Works directly with the Lay Director, the Facility Liaison and the Inside Coordinator. The degree of involvement on the weekend depends on the facility. The Chaplain may not be a Priest.

## **2. DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

**I. REC COUNCIL:** The Council evaluates each REC and all associated activities. In planning for succeeding weekends, it utilizes the experience gained through evaluations and attempts to improve where necessary. It develops and maintains guidelines for the weekend. When needs of the program arise, the Council acts to fill them.

The REC Council meets in Mechanicville (171 Saratoga Ave.) on the third Monday of each month, unless otherwise announced, at 7:00 PM. The membership is open to all those who have made a REC weekend and are committed to the program. The Lay Directors and Assistant Lay Directors of REC weekends are de facto members of the Council while they are preparing for their REC weekend. They can remain as members if they wish to do so.

Council decisions are made to make REC grow and flourish. Its members are dedicated and committed to help plant the seed of Christ in fertile ground. REC's primary function is service to residents within the facility. Residents requesting assistance from REC team members at time of release or thereafter should be directed to the "Diocesan Commission of Criminal Justice", Diocesan Pastoral Center, Albany, New York.

REC Council duties include but are not limited to:

1. Selects the Lay Director.
2. Provides guidance to the Lay Director in team selection.

3. Provides assistance and support to the Lay Director with preparations for REC weekends.
4. Evaluates each weekend and associated activities and takes appropriate action to resolve problems.
5. Plans future weekends attempting to improve the weekend based on evaluations of previous weekends.
6. Makes decisions for REC to grow and flourish, including decisions to expand to other Correctional Facilities.
7. Procures financial support for REC weekends.
8. Fulfills other duties as they are identified.

**LAY DIRECTOR SELECTION:** A candidate for Lay Director may be proposed by a current Lay director or any member of the REC Council. Special consideration will be given to the candidate proposed by a current Lay Director. Nevertheless, there should not be any discussion with a potential candidate for Lay Director prior to REC Council selection. When a Lay Director is selected he makes a commitment to work in two consecutive REC weekends. He will serve on the first REC weekend as the Assistant Director and then serves as Lay Director on the following weekend. The first weekend will serve as a training for the second weekend.

The REC Council will select the Lay Director for each REC weekend based on the following criteria:

1. The council will prayerfully seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the selection of the Lay Director.
2. Each candidate must have participated in at least one REC weekend.
3. Candidates must be committed to serving the Lord and spreading the Good News.
4. Candidates must have organizational and administrative ability.

The team should be made up of the following approximate ratio:  
1/3 of the team - individuals who have not been on prior REC weekends (require prior approval of REC council).

1/3 of the team - individuals who have been on one or two REC weekends (no prior REC council approval required)

1/3 of the team - individuals who have experienced more than two weekends (no prior REC council approval required). It is suggested that a member of the REC Council be included on the team whenever possible.

A potential source of new team candidates is the Albany Diocese Cursillo community. A list of cursillistas can be provided to the Lay Director if desired. The Lay Director shall submit the names of prospective new team candidates to the REC Council for approval prior to contacting these individuals.

Experienced team members can be selected from the "REC Team Participation List for the Albany Diocese". Prospective team members from this list do not require prior approval before being asked to be on team. The names of experienced team members should be submitted to the REC Council for informational purposes.

It is not the intent of the REC council to dictate to any potential team candidate as to how he can service the Lord. However, due to the heavy demands of team formation, it is strongly recommended that potential team members give prayerful consideration before committing to be on a REC and Cursillo weekend simultaneously. Consideration may be given to comparing a list of potential team members with the Rector of the Cursillo weekend if there is any potential for contention.

## **II. THE LAY DIRECTOR**

The Lay Director is the person responsible for organizing, coordinating and conducting the whole weekend. With the help of God and the assistance of all the teams' members he should be able to prepare until the last detail. The Lay Director is chosen by the REC Council. To be a candidate for Lay Director it is necessary to : 1. Have participated in at least one REC weekend; 2. Be committed to serving the Lord and spreading the Good News; and 3. Have organizational and administrative abilities.

Not all the duties and responsibilities of the Lay Director can be summarized in this section; not even in this whole book. It is strongly recommended that the Lay Director familiarize himself with all the contents of this book. A valuable tool to learn about duties and responsibilities is to keep a notebook during the training period as Assistant Director. It is impossible to give specific rules to follow for every REC. Each REC is different. Each REC stands on its own. This section will cover only general guidelines that will help the Lay Director to adapt and guide his team thru the different situations in each retreat. From recruiting to follow-ups, from team formation meetings to last minute changes, from despair to joy, from deadlines to inmate counts.

The only thing that makes REC work is prayer, private and communal prayers. During the weeks and days before the retreat the Lay Director should spend as much time as possible preparing himself spiritually. The guidance of a Spiritual Director is encouraged, if possible the same Spiritual Director for the weekend. The team formation meetings should be an occasion for spiritual growth. A very important part of these meetings should be the team spirituality and the building of community. The role of the Lay Director at these meetings should not be limited to that of a facilitator for the meetings. The degree of personal interaction with each one of the team members depends on the Lay Director. It is highly recommended to develop a close relationship with each one of the team members. Telephone contact, attending mass together, giving suggestions for their talk in private, palanca letters, thank you notes, etc., are just some of the ways in which the Lay Director can get closer to his team.



Outside team selection: The role of the Lay Director is that of a shepherd and as the Good Shepherd he should know each one of his sheep. His main responsibility is to turn a group of volunteers into a catholic/christian community with a common goal, that is to form a catholic/christian community within a correctional facility so that Christ can radiate to all gathered on the retreat.

The Lay Director selects his prospective team. The recommended qualifications for team candidates are that they are male catholics who have experienced a religious weekend, e.g. Cursillo, Marriage Encounter, Engagement Encounter, Adult Seminar, Retorno, Life in the Spirit Seminar, etc. Any exceptions should be brought to the REC Council. Women may be selected for the Peace Talk.

In addition to the selection and recruitment of his prospective team, the Lay Director also has the following duties and responsibilities.

1. To attend and participate in the REC Council meetings. These meetings are held on the 3rd Monday of each month, unless otherwise announced, at 171 Saratoga Road in Mechanicville. The meeting starts promptly at 7:00 PM. At these meetings the Lay Director may propose a candidate of his choice for Assistant Lay Director of his own weekend.
2. To make all the necessary decisions for the success of the weekend. The functions of the Lay Director are in no way restricted or limited to this list.
3. To follow the REC Council guidelines in the recruitment and selection of his prospective team. The Lay Director also should keep in direct contact with the REC Council regarding anything that has to do with his weekend.
4. To be available to all the team members for support and guidance. Work closely with the Facility Liaison in all dealings with the facility. Work together and keep permanent contact during the weekend with the Assistant Director, the Spiritual Director, the Music Minister, the facility Chaplain and the inside Coordinator.
5. To assign all the talks for the weekend. Based on his knowledge of the speaker and the message of the talk the Lay Director must be able to choose the right person for each talk. Consultation with the Assistant Director or with team members is advisable to arrive to the best decision. He must make sure talks are effective. Not every team member must have a talk assigned. Some team members can be only table leaders without giving any talk.
6. To organize, schedule and facilitate all the outside and inside team formation meetings. The spirituality of his teams is the main concern of the Lay Director and he should make every possible effort to foster and develop it. See the guidelines for team formation meetings on page 25.

7. To assign and delegate specific duties for the weekend at the first team formation meeting. To follow up with each assignee and make sure instructions are carried out. See specific duties on page 21.
8. To assign the table leader(s) and co-table leader(s) for each table. The Lay Director must take into account the experience and skills of his team members. New volunteers should be paired with experienced volunteers whenever possible. Upon arrival on Friday morning the LD must check the list of candidates with the facility chaplain and/or the inside coordinator. Each table should have an equal number of candidates whenever possible. If a candidate wants to switch tables it must be approved by the LD after consulting with the facility chaplain. Each table must have at least one outside team member and one inside team member. Utilize the people you have in the best way you can. Use your best judgement.
9. To make the necessary arrangements and provide all the stoles to be used in the Paschal Vigil Service. See guidelines on page 56. He should provide also the team candle.
10. To decide about the layout of the tables, location of the podium, blackboard, flip chart, altar, etc. and the general set up of the place for the weekend. This should be worked out with the ushers and the inside team. See guidelines on page 24.
11. To participate in all the services and ceremonies in the retreat. Make sure with the Assistant Director and/or the assignees for specific duties that all the necessary supplies for each service are ready and in place before the service. To review and approve the usher's plan for these events.
12. To introduce each speaker and the name of the talk to be given. During the team formation meetings the Lay Director should obtain from the speaker the necessary biographical information. It is a nice touch to add something personal about the speaker. May be he is a relative, a fellow parishioner, a personal friend, a role model, etc. At the end of the talk the Lay Director should congratulate and hug the speaker and all the team members should do the same. He should also announce any follow up to the talk: table discussion, poster, summary sharing, etc.
13. To introduce the priests that come in for the sacrament of reconciliation indicating where each priest will be located to hear confessions. The Lay Director can also let the priests introduce themselves and he just give an explanation of what is going to happen at that point of the retreat.
14. Review and approve the program and layout for the Hootenanny. Be the Master of Ceremony for the first part of the Hootenanny until the commissioning of the Assistant Director. See guidelines for the Hootenanny on page 67.

15. Review each day at the end of the day after leaving the facility. This is usually done at a nearby restaurant before the team retires for the evening. Implement necessary changes.
16. Organize, schedule and facilitate the monthly follow ups at the facility.
17. Organize, schedule and facilitate a meeting of the whole outside team after the weekend is over to critique the weekend. Report to the REC Council any suggestions from this meeting.
18. Hold a closing meeting after the weekend is over with the facility liaison and the Superintendent of the facility.
19. To organize and schedule an orientation meeting for new volunteers and people attending the Hootenanny. He should work with the Facility Liaison and the Department of Correctional Services on this.
20. Make sure that each outside team member understands his role as a table leader. Make sure that each inside team member knows how to assist the table leader and how both should work together for the benefit of the candidates.
21. To sign the REC cards together with the SD.
22. To lead each table in prayer at the Chapel visit. See outline on page 65. Upon arrival on Saturday morning the LD working with the AD and the Inside Coordinator will set up the rooms for the Chapel visit. Don't leave this for the last minute. You will save time if the rooms are prepared before the first talk is given on Saturday.

Upon arrival on Friday morning the LD should introduce himself to the Correctional Officer assigned to the chapel/room and offer to help with the counts. The CO will decide how to do the counts. Make the CO feel as part of the weekend. Ask the food servers to serve him snacks and refreshments whenever they are served to the group. Do the same thing with any other Correctional Officer assigned on another day or in a different shift.

The Director and Assistant Director have their own table separated from the rest of the team and the candidates. Although they have no table assignment they should be available to all the tables and be ready to help the table leaders whenever necessary. If the Music Minister has no table assignment, he should sit at the Director's table. The same applies to the inside Coordinator. Both the Director and the Assistant Director should circulate among the tables during the discussions or poster making and participate in either activity.

The Director and Assistant Director must be in permanent contact during the whole weekend. Time scheduled for each activity is limited and the Director must be in control all the time. The Director should be the first one to pay attention to the bell and start each activity promptly.

### III. THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

The Assistant Director is the eyes and ears of the Lay Director. He shares most of the LD duties and responsibilities and they both must work as a team. As with the LD it is impossible to accurately describe all the duties and responsibilities of the AD. The best suggestion is to familiarize with all the contents of this book and to keep a notebook during the whole preparation and training for the weekend.

The Assistant Director is chosen by the REC Council. His commitment is for participation in two REC weekends; on the first one as a director in training and on the second one as the Director. As with the Lay Director, the AD must: 1. Have participated in at least one REC weekend; 2. Be committed to serving the Lord and spreading the Good News; and 3. Have organizational and administrative abilities.

The importance of prayer cannot be overemphasized. The AD must give prayerful consideration before accepting his nomination. Prayers are the life of REC and the AD must spend as much time as possible preparing himself spiritually. The guidance of a Spiritual Director is suggested.

Some of the duties and responsibilities of the Assistant Lay Director are:

1. Attend and participate in the REC Council meetings. These meetings are held on the 3rd Monday of each month, unless otherwise announced, at 171 Saratoga Road in Mechanicville at 7 PM. By accepting his nomination the AD becomes a de facto member of the REC Council during his training period and while he is a Director. After his weekend is over he can remain as a member of the REC Council if he wishes to do so.
2. He must work in direct contact with the Lay Director and be ready and available for any assignment the Lay Director may give him. He will substitute for the LD when the LD is not available.
3. He will learn about the recruiting, organizing, scheduling, directing, etc., for a REC weekend. Suggestions for improvement should be brought up to the LD for proper implementation. Changes for future weekends should be brought up to the REC Council for discussion and approval.
4. He must attend all the teams formation meetings and the follow ups at the facility after the weekend. Follow ups are not only a very important component of the REC program but an excellent opportunity to start building community and recruiting the inside team for the following REC weekend.
5. He must participate with the LD in all the activities and ceremonies of the weekend. He is in charge to make sure all the necessary supplies for each activity and/or ceremony are on hand and ready to be used. This should not be left for the last minute or to be improvised as the weekend develops. Time is limited and the weekend must be kept on schedule as much as possible. The AD should notify all

the participants in any given activity ahead of time and ask them to be ready to start at his signal.

6. He is the time-keeper and as such he should try to keep the schedule as close as possible. Working with the LD he must be ready to ring the bell whenever necessary. Keeping the time is extremely important and the AD must be aware of it at all times.
7. Working with the volunteer in charge of supplies the AD must make sure that all the necessary supplies are brought into the facility. During the weekend he should know the whereabouts of materials to be used. See list of supplies on page 111.
8. The AD is the Master of Ceremony for the second part of the Hootenanny. After he has been commissioned as Lay Director for the next REC weekend he takes over as MC. During the outside team preparation meetings, he should have worked with the Music Minister and the Hootenanny volunteers on the program for this event. The AD will be in charge of the poster presentation and the witnessing by the candidates. Again, time is limited and the AD shouldn't let the Hootenanny turn into a "talent show". He should have notified each table before the Hootenanny starts to have their best poster ready and to choose 2 speakers; one to explain the table name and other to explain the poster. The AD must have ready the name and number for each table before the poster presentation. See guidelines for the Hootenanny on pages 67.
9. The AD will make sure that all food and beverages brought into the facility is stored. Access to the storage place must be limited. The AD will work with the inside coordinator and the facility chaplain to ensure an organized distribution of the snacks. Snacks will be served only when the AD indicates that is proper to do so. Snacks should not be served when a talk is about to start or has already started.
10. The AD must work directly with the team members with specific duties. See specific duties on page 21. He must make sure that every one understand and knows their specific assignment on Friday morning before the weekend starts. For instance the volunteer in charge of posters must know where the posters are and when to change them; the volunteer in charge of the Bible quotes should have a list of all the Bible quotes ready and also should know how he is going to accomplish his duty; the volunteers in charge of the Bible Enthronement should know the route of the procession and have his helpers and the supplies (candles, matches, book stand, Bible, crucifix etc.) ready, etc.
11. The AD will lead each table into prayer at the Chapel visit. See outline on page 65. Upon arrival on Saturday morning the AD working with the LD and the Inside Coordinator will set up the rooms for the Chapel visit. Don't leave this for the last minute. You will save time if the rooms are prepared before the first talk is given on Saturday.

The AD has no table assignment, nevertheless he should circulate among the tables during the course of the weekend without identifying himself with any table. He should give the candidates the opportunity to know him and at the same time he should try to know the candidates. He can join a table for the discussion and become a part of the table while he is sitting there. He should mingle with the candidates during breaks and after meals. Any concern must be brought immediately to the Lay Director for appropriate action.

Different from the Lay Director the Assistant Director has no specific talk assigned. If the Director decides to give a talk assignment to the AD, it is suggested that he is given the Word of God talk. This way the weekend opens with the Orientation talk given by the Director followed by a talk given by the Assistant Director. It is a good way to introduce the two main responsible people for the weekend from the very beginning.

#### **IV. THE SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR**

The Spiritual Director is selected by the Lay Director. He should be a priest or a deacon. He is asked to be available to all inside and outside team members as well as to the volunteers for spiritual guidance and counseling. He works directly with the Lay Director during the team formation meetings. He must commit himself to be at all team formation meetings to help build up the team community, to appreciate each member and to make connections between the talks of others and his own. The Spiritual Director is also a table leader.

Not all the duties and responsibilities of the Spiritual Director are explained in this section. His pastoral experience and creativity are very important to adapt to the different situations that may develop during a given weekend. The table sharing or the candidates witnessing should make him aware of the spiritual needs of the men and he should act accordingly. He should check with the table leaders for any men at their tables with a particular need and offer his help. Any special need or particular problem that may need special care should be brought up to the Lay Director or the facility chaplain at the discretion of the Spiritual Director.

Some of the duties and responsibilities in every weekend are:

1. To bless and help distributing the Bibles after the Word of God talk.
2. To help to recruit other priests to come into the facility for the sacrament of reconciliation.
3. To give a short explanation of the sacrament of reconciliation. He must keep in mind that some of the men may have had never received the sacrament and the great majority of them do not know about the confidentiality of what is said to a priest during reconciliation.
4. To give the Death and Resurrection talk. This talk is the most important talk of Day One and is also the main theme for the whole weekend. The Paschal Mystery must be explained in simple laymen terms paralleling the opportunity that we all have to die-rise-and-go forth like Jesus Christ.

5. To participate in all the services and ceremonies with the LD and the AD. The SD is in charge of the Service of Ashes and the Paschal Vigil Service. He has full discretion on how to conduct these services. See suggested guidelines on pages 53 and 56.
6. To celebrate mass on Saturday and Sunday unless there is another priest to cover for him. He should check with the table leaders for candidates to do the readings in English and in Spanish when necessary. He should select and review with the Music Minister the music and songs for the masses. See suggested outlines on pages 72 and 85.
7. To hear confessions on Friday.
8. To commission the Assistant Director to be the next Lay Director. At his discretion the SD may say a few words and bless the cross transferred to the AD.
9. He must sign together with the LD all the REC cards to be given to the candidates at the closing on Sunday.
10. To bless and help distributing the crosses for the candidates at the closing on Sunday.
11. To celebrate the Eucharist with all the outside team members and their families on the Wednesday before the weekend starts. See suggested outline on page 29.

Friday is a key day. We are strangers on the turf of the residents. For the Spiritual Director it is a challenge to be a person, a human being, so that the men will see the Spiritual Director as a friend who has come to listen, as one among others who has come to tell a story, his own story and the story of Jesus.

Listen with the others to the Word of God following the enthronement, and to the Theme. Sit with residents at lunch and enter into the discussion of Ideals and Maturity. This is important work; don't do the talking, but encourage the men and direct their conversation to one another. See if more than one can be involved in the poster.

## **V. THE MUSIC MINISTER**

Music is a form of prayer and as such it is an integral part of the REC program. Music must be part of every REC weekend from the first team formation meeting until the last follow up. The Music Minister is the person in charge of all the aspects of the music for the weekend: preparation, practice, selection, teaching, etc. He must work directly with the Lay Director and use his musical skills to enhance and improve the weekend. Music is a way of building community and bring the team together. The Music Minister has complete discretion regarding the music.

It is advisable that the Music Minister has no talk assignment, he has plenty of work only with the music. If the team is short of volunteers and the Lay Director needs to assign a talk to the Music Minister he should discuss it with him before giving him the assignment. If the Music

Minister agrees to give a talk and be a table leader, the Lay Director must make sure to pair him with an experienced volunteer. Being the Music Minister, giving a REC talk and being a table leader doesn't leave much time to be at the table and effectively participate in the discussions. If it is really necessary for the Music Minister to give a talk the Lay Director should try to assign him a short talk and if possible on day one. The Theme for Day One is suggested. This will free the Music Minister of at least one of his responsibilities.

The Music Minister must be aware of the time, keep in eye contact with the AD and pay attention to the bell. The following suggestions can be implemented at the discretion of the Music Minister:

1. Open each day with music. Before the first talk of the day while the candidates are still arriving get the team and/or the candidates to sing. Get the people in the mood and lift their spirit.
2. Check with the volunteer in charge of the Bible Enthronement if he wants music for the procession. You can practice this song as one of the songs to open the day. It may be the same song every day or a different song each day.
3. Check with the Spiritual Director the music for the mass: entrance song, response, offertory, recessional, etc.
4. Check with the AD for music and/or songs during breaks.
5. Some speakers may want some music background or may be a song. If there is a meditation the speaker may want some musical help.
6. The music for the Hootenanny or for the Saturday liturgy may be practiced/learned during the chapel visit. This will not only keep the men at their tables but will enhance either ceremony.
7. Prepare the music and program for the Hootenanny. The Music Minister has complete discretion in preparing the Hoot but he should work in conjunction with the AD and the ushers. See guidelines for the Hootenanny on page 67.

## **VI. OUTSIDE/INSIDE TEAM MEMBER**

Each team member has to be available to the candidates, be a witness of faith and help form a small Christian community. The REC table leader is the most important person of the team. He is the only one who knows where the candidates are emotionally and physically. He is in a better position to let the Holy Spirit work through this retreat. Do not fail the candidates by thinking you are not important! The weekend is for the candidates and you are present to help them.

The only thing that really makes REC work is our prayers, both private and in a group. During our preparation meetings please spend as much time as possible preparing yourself spiritually. Ask for help and guidance to the Spiritual Director whenever needed. Prison ministry is not for everyone and you need to be sure this is your call.

As a team member you need to follow the instructions from the Lay Director and the Assistant Director. You must attend an Orientation Meeting before the weekend to become a volunteer in the New York State correctional system. This meeting is mandatory. Be sure to ask any question you may have about the system and that you understand all the rules and regulations of the Department of Corrections applicable to volunteers. You need only one Orientation Meeting. You will also need to have ready before the weekend any medical exam required by the facility. Your Director will provide you with all the necessary information at the team formation meetings. You will be finger printed and issued an ID before the weekend.

Being an outside team member is a commitment. If you are asked to give a talk on the weekend, you must have your talk ready for critique on the day assigned by the Lay Director. You are also required to attend all the team formation meetings. Special cases should be brought up to the attention of the Lay Director. In any event if you cannot attend at least 75% of the meetings maybe you should decline the invitation at this time. You can always request to be on team any time you are ready to make the commitment. You can be a team member without giving any talk at the discretion of the Lay Director. You can be only a table leader during the weekend. You should discuss this possibility with the Lay Director.

As an outside team member every member has the following responsibilities:

1. To be alert and sensitive to the general tone of the group. Any suggestion for improvement should be brought to the Director.
2. Try to know each one of the candidates in your group. Be very conscious of the uniqueness and great potential power lying deep inside each person. Take advantage of breaks and meals for one on one discussions or small group discussions. Try to get to know as many as possible of the candidates from other tables also.
3. Refuse to be the discussion leader at your table. You are to direct the progress of the discussion. If the group looks at you for answers, throw the question back to them. Help guide the discussion slowly progressing from a "listener-observer" to a "table leader" encouraging each one to contribute something to the discussions and posters. If a natural leader emerge in your group, work with him. If you have another team member at your table, work together. Be alert, approachable and available.
4. Report any problem to the Lay Director. We have a short meeting outside the facility on Friday and Saturday night to review the day and implement any changes that may be necessary. Don't wait for this meeting if the problem needs immediate solution.
5. Take notes and participate in everything. Keep your table moving during discussion, posters and summaries. Have the discussion on talks relate to their own lives, not just a feedback.

6. Respond to the bell! Time is of the essence. We are in a very tight schedule and we need to keep the program moving. Refer to your schedule and: don't anticipate, participate. When the bell rings get your group to return to the table. Keep your group at the table. There are plenty of breaks for snacks, socialize, go to the bathroom, etc. This is specially important for the inmate count. All inmates must be present, inside the Chapel and at their respective tables when the Correctional Officer does the count.
  
7. Set the example for your table. Let the light of Christ shine through you!

On Friday morning upon arrival you should make yourself available to the Lay Director for any necessary assignment before the retreat starts. First thing must be to find out your table. Check the position and number of chairs. Work with the ushers and make sure all the necessary supplies for your table are on the table. Help the ushers with other tables. If you have a list of the candidates at your table, make sure you use first name and surname, in that order (i.e. Pedro Morales and Not Morales, P.). When the candidates arrive greet them and show them to their table. Ask for their name, shake hands, help them to find their table, introduce them with other team members, etc. If a candidate wishes to change tables, you should ask for authorization from the Lay Director first.

As a table leader you will work with another outside team member and/or an inside team member. You should always keep in mind that the weekend is not for you but for the candidates. God will work in you also during and/or after the weekend but on the weekend you are to be of service to the candidates. The primary message is for them and you are the channel God has chosen to bring it to the candidates.

Outside team members also have specific duties as a table leader. As a table leader you will be responsible for the group at your table. You will not only be summarizing the talks, but you will also be helping to dialogue to encourage a progressively mature conversation on the weekend. Try to create an atmosphere where the residents can speak with openness. In the beginning you will be a working team and as the weekend progresses, you will become a community of faith and love.

### **Some Rules to Follow:**

- 1) One person speak at a time.
- 2) Everyone should have an opportunity to speak. Listen to what may be pettiness at first to encourage them to go on.
- 3) Encourage the art of listening. Be warm and friendly. Make eye contact. Try to amplify and clarify what is being said. Don't be afraid to ask for more detail.
- 4) Stick to the subject matter. When wandering occurs, gently draw it back without embarrassing anyone.
- 5) Don't argue. Try not to agree or disagree but allow other person to be who he is.
- 6) Try to understand other person's point of view. Be aware of where they "are at" at this point in their life.
- 7) Finish on time. When you see allotted time is drawing to an end, try to bring out a specific idea so they are not left hanging in the air.
- 8) Do not allow yourself or anyone else to be an expert teacher. When this happens, encourage someone else to speak.
- 9) Raise questions, keep on track, relate the remarks to each other, to the talk and to the previous discussion and talks.

### **Main Objectives:**

- 1) To get each individual's point of view.
- 2) To produce a summary of each talk and discussion at your table for presentation to the whole group.

By doing the above in an orderly fashion, we can follow the time schedule of the weekend and allow the residents to experience all the material that should be covered. All the responsibilities as a table leader are shared by the inside team member assigned to the table, if any. Besides working as co-table leaders inside team members also help recruiting candidates for the weekend. The recruiting must be done in coordination with the facility chaplain and the inside coordinator. They also help serving meals and snacks, setting up the place, cleaning up at the end of each day and any other assignment from the inside coordinator. The Assistant Director and the inside coordinator supervise the inside team in the discharge of their duties.

## VII. SPECIFIC DUTIES

There is a lot of work involved in organizing a REC weekend. The duties and responsibilities involved must be shared by all the team members. Working as a team is another way of building community. The Lay Director has complete discretion in making the necessary assignments. This can be accomplished in several ways. The Lay Director with or without the assistance of the Assistant Director can make the appointments before the first team formation meeting and at this meeting just inform the team member in his folder of his specific assignment. He can also discuss the assignment with the team member before arriving to any decision, or he can request volunteers for the different assignments at the first team formation meeting. In any event the assignment of specific duties must be finalized within the first two team formation meetings.

Those volunteers with special assignments report directly to the Lay Director during the team formation meetings. They must have everything ready and prepared for the last team formation meeting. No specific duty should be delegated to the Assistant Director. Those volunteers with special assignments must report and work in conjunction with the Assistant Director during the 3 days of the weekend. The Assistant Director will coordinate these functions.

The following are some of the specific duties to be assigned. The Lay Director has the authority to assign other duties that he deems appropriate.

**RECONCILIATION:** The Spiritual Director and two volunteers to recruit at least 3 priests to come into the facility for reconciliation on Friday. If possible, at least one of the priests should be Spanish speaking. Priests must be advised of exact time to enter the facility to coincide with REC schedule. Priests introduce themselves after brief presentation from Director. A list with name, address and phone number for each priest must be given to the Director as soon as possible for clearance. Volunteers are to confirm with the priests on Wednesday or Thursday before the REC weekend starts.

**LODGING:** One volunteer to find a motel and to make room reservations. Volunteer must distribute room keys and assign roommates. He should also make arrangements for breakfast and late dinner either with the hotel or a nearby restaurant. Volunteer must inform Director about room rates and amount to be paid by each team member for the whole weekend. Volunteer should collect payment before weekend starts, if possible. All monies received must be given to the Director. Director obtains a blank check from REC Council for payment and submit all monies received from team. Use Tax Exempt #141347456.

**PALANCA:** Three or four volunteers. They must be designated at the first meeting to allow enough time to collect the letters. Volunteers should be provided with names and phone number of contact persons at Ultreyas. They are to collect, sort and distribute letters. Distribution should be done during meals except for first distribution done on Friday at the end of the Palanca talk.

**BIBLE QUOTES:** Experience has shown that when the speaker quotes the Bible the candidates turn to their books immediately to try to locate the quote. This takes attention away from the message and the talk. It is suggested that at the team formation meetings the Director request those who will give talks not to directly quote the Bible but to paraphrase or just mention the book by name only. One volunteer must be chosen to write the Bible quotes on the blackboard or in a poster. The volunteer must check with each team member giving a talk and obtain exact Bible quotations including chapter, verse and page in English and in Spanish. At the orientation the Director will explain that before each talk the Bible quotations will be displayed on the board/poster. The volunteer will make sure to display the quotations before the talk starts.

**BANNERS:** One outside team volunteer in charge of putting up the banners and changing them over the 3 days. He may want to choose an inside team volunteer to help him. These volunteers will also be in charge of the posters. They should carry the masking tape with them all the time.

**PICTURES:** One outside team volunteer to take pictures. Pictures of the whole group is optional, pictures of each table is required. This volunteer should obtain the picture release forms from the Director and distribute the forms table-by-table when the Director announces that pictures will be taken. The volunteer must make sure that he collects all forms signed by those who want their picture taken. No signed for = no picture taken. The ushers will help to move table-by-table for the pictures under the direction of the Assistant Director. In facilities where meals are taken in the same room, pictures can be taken during lunch on Sunday to save time. See picture release form on page 110.

**TRANSPORTATION:** A large vehicle is needed to enter the facility with the supplies for the whole weekend. Usually the owner of the vehicle and one outside team member are needed as volunteers to load, enter, unload and exit the facility on Friday; and to enter, load, exit and unload on Sunday. These volunteers are the first ones to enter the facility. The volunteers should try to unload the vehicle inside the facility as soon as possible on Friday and go out to rejoin the outside team to enter the facility together. If this is not possible, the Director will mention at the entrance that 2 more volunteers will be entering the facility momentarily.

**SUPPLIES:** Two to three volunteers in charge of gathering all the necessary supplies for the weekend. They should work directly with the person in charge of transportation and make arrangements to load the vehicle with the supplies. Bibles, banners, crosses, pencils, markers, poster paper and other similar supplies come from the REC Council. Volunteers should contact the Treasurer for the Council. Snacks come from several different sources. The volunteers must ask for specific instructions from the Lay Director. Once all the supplies have been set aside they must inform the LD and the AD where everything is.

**HOOTENANNY:** The Music Minister is in charge of the Hootenanny and he works in coordination with the Assistant Director. At least 3 volunteers must be selected to assist them. One of the volunteers must be in charge of the list of attendees. This team is in charge of preparing and organizing the program for the Hootenanny. A list of all the people attending must be finalized and given to the Director at least 2 weeks before the retreat. The list will include name, addresses and telephone numbers of those attending. All these persons must attend a mandatory orientation meeting. They cannot enter the facility if they have not attended the orientation meeting. The

Director will notify those in charge of the Hootenanny of the time, date and location for the orientation meeting.

The Hootenanny team will contact everyone on the list to confirm attendance. An alternate list is advisable for last minute cancellations. A letter of confirmation must be mailed to each one on the list on the Monday or Tuesday preceding the Saturday for the Hootenanny. In the letter it must be requested that the attendees socialize with the residents during the Hootenanny and not with the outside team only. Directions to the facility and exact time to be at the gate for processing should also be included. Car pooling must be encouraged and names of other attendees can be shared. Team members family have preference on the list. They must be told if the facility allows them to bring snacks. It is very important that all the attendees know that their presence at the Hootenanny is to support the candidates. They should talk and socialize with the residents and not to each other or outside team members. The Director can explain this at the orientation meeting. It means a lot to the residents to be treated like a friend, to be called by his name and not by his number.

The Hootenanny team is also in charge of the program and layout of the room; both must be approved by the Director. The team will prepare the program and contact other musicians to participate. They must select the song and print a program if possible. It is advisable to have a contact on the outside during the weekend. Usually the LD or AD's wife has been this contact. This person can be contacted by phone in case of last minute changes or emergency need. This person should bring a bouquet to be given to the person who gives the Peace Talk at the Hootenanny.

The Lay Director can introduce all the changes he deems necessary to enhance this celebration for his particular weekend. See outline for Hootenanny on page 67.

**BIBLE ENTHRONEMENT:** One outside team member to carry the Bible and 3 candidates to carry 2 candles and a crucifix. The outside team member can be the same person the 3 days, not so the candidates, they must be different and from different tables. There should be no reading of the Bible after the enthronement. This is supposed to be a brief ceremony to get everybody's attention and to mark the beginning of each day of the retreat. The outside team member must bring his own matches. He must check upon arrival Friday morning for all the necessary items with the facility chaplain or the inside coordinator. He will put these items aside and keep them ready to start. He should also contact the Music Minister for the song to be used for the procession. He must be in eye contact with the AD for the signal to start. He and the volunteers must be in place before the Lay Director finishes the Orientation talk. From the team formation meetings he should know exactly when this talk will be over. See outline on page 39.

**USHERS:** There are several functions/ceremonies on the weekend that require people to move from their tables to the altar and vice versa. If this is done in an orderly fashion the event will be more meaningful and no time will be wasted. At least 2 volunteers are necessary to guide and direct the people to and from the altar. During the inside team formation meetings these volunteers should have worked with the inside coordinator on how to set the room and lay out the tables. At this time they should develop a plan for the flow of the people in a smooth and organized manner. This plan must be reviewed first thing upon arrival on Friday morning. Copy of the layout of the tables must be given to the Lay Director for the assignment of table leaders. Ushers will work in direct contact with the AD and be ready for his signal to start. Ushers must know in advance when

it will be necessary to move people and be ready. Some of the above functions are: the Bible ceremony immediately after the Word of God talk, the distribution and the cleaning of the ashes during the Paschal Vigil Service, the reception of the sacrament of reconciliation, the distribution of the stoles, the chapel visits, picture taking on Sunday and the closing ceremony when crosses and cards are handed out. In some facilities meals are served in the chapel/room and the ushers will direct the tables in this case.

Upon arrival on Friday morning the ushers will review the layout of the tables to see if they are according to the plan approved by the Lay Director. This arrangement is different in each facility. The rule of thumb is to follow the same arrangement done for the previous REC. Don't fix it if it's not broken. Any change must be a change for improvement not for the sake of change. As a general rule each table should have a good view of the altar and be able to see the speaker. Enough room must be left between tables to allow some privacy for the table discussions, for the procession of the Bible Enthronement and other functions. Use your best judgement

Upon arrival on Friday morning also the ushers will ask the team member in charge of supplies for all the table materials (pens, markers, notebooks, name tags, etc.) and make sure each table has the necessary supplies. Any outside team member can help the ushers in setting up the place.

### **3. THE WEEKEND**

#### **I. TEAM FORMATION MEETINGS**

##### **GENERAL INFORMATION**

Place, time, duration, format and agenda for these meetings are to be decided by the Lay Director. He should take into account what is more convenient for the majority of his team. The main purpose of these meetings is to make sure all talks are effective and that everyone knows what to do and understands his role as a REC team member. At the end of these meetings everything must be in place. All talks must be ready, all activities and/or services must have been prepared, all supplies must be on hand, motel reservations confirmed, etc. The outside team must have a fairly good idea of the layout of the location for the retreat and those with special assignments should have everything ready.

The main task of the Lay Director at these meetings is to develop a sense of community and to foster the spiritual growth of all his team. Administrative matters and deadlines with the facility and/or Correctional Services are to be handled through the liaison person. It is advisable to invite the liaison person to one or more of the meetings. At each meeting the Lay Director will explain step by step each day of the retreat and will encourage those making a team for the first time to ask questions and familiarize with the schedule for the weekend. Whenever possible, the talks scheduled to be critiqued at each meeting will follow the schedule for the actual weekend. This will allow the Lay Director to cover in detail each day of the weekend explaining what happened before and after each talk.

Every service, ceremony and function of the weekend must have been covered by the Lay Director by the last team formation meeting. A send off mass with the team members and their families is actually the last team formation meeting before going into the facility.

As indicated above, the Lay Director has full discretion on how to run his meetings, but generally the agenda for each meeting can include one or more of the following:

- Opening song/prayer - Light team candle
- Meditation
- Grouping
- Socializing/snacks
- Business (go over schedule, update from delegated functions, etc.)
- Talk critique (2 talks per meeting depending on length of talk is the ideal)

##### **First Meeting**

All the outside team members must have been recruited before the first meeting. A thank you letter should be sent to each member with directions and time for the first meeting. A good idea is to celebrate the Eucharist at this first meeting and get to know each other in an informal manner after mass. The Lay Director may give the Orientation talk at this meeting. All the talks will be assigned at this meeting. To give enough time to prepare for critique the second meeting should be scheduled at least 2 weeks apart. The second meeting is actually the first formal meeting

with the first talks scheduled to be critiqued. All of the above is at the discretion of the Lay Director. He is the one who decides when and how to hold these meetings.

At the first meeting the Lay Director will distribute folders with talk assignments, outlines, special assignments, schedules, name tags, etc. It is important to get to know each other on a first name basis. The sense of belonging, unity and community is very important.

At this meeting the group candle is blessed and lit for the first time. If mass was celebrated the Spiritual Director may incorporate the lighting of the candle and say a few words about the symbolism of the light of Christ. Otherwise the candle should be lit before any talk is given and the symbolism must be explained. This candle will be lit at every meeting inside and outside the facility and also will be lit during the whole weekend of the retreat.

If snacks and/or beverages are to be shared at the meetings the expenses also should be shared either by assigning members to bring snacks on a given day or by asking for a small donation to cover expenses. In the schedule for all the meetings the Lay Director will make the necessary assignments for each meeting: opening prayer, meditation, snacks, etc.

Attendance to all the formation meetings is mandatory. The Lay Director will make sure that each member makes a commitment to attend all the formation meetings. Exceptions should be made at the discretion of the Lay Director but no one should be exempt to attend less than 75% of the meetings. If there is a scheduling conflict maybe another person should be recruited. The input from all the team members is necessary to prepare and critique the talks. All the talks are connected and reference to previous (never to future) talks sometimes is necessary. It is also a sign of respect and support for the member whose talk is being critiqued to be present.

## **SCHEDULES**

The following schedules must be handed out to each outside team member as soon as possible: 1. A schedule of all the team formation meetings outside and inside the facility. All the assignments for these meetings (opening prayer, snacks, meditation, etc.) must be indicated. Special arrangements and changes must be made at the first meeting. See Sample team formation schedule on page 106. 2. A schedule of events for the weekend. This schedule provides an overview of the whole weekend at a glance. At each team formation meeting the Lay Director will explain the events and/or talks that lead to the talk being critiqued on that day. There is an obvious connection between the spirituality for each day, the events and the talks for the whole weekend. The Lay Director will make sure that everyone understands how each day builds on the other and that the whole weekend follows the theme of the Paschal Mystery: dying, rising and going forth. See this schedule on pages 30-33. 3. A schedule for the actual weekend showing each talk and event as it develops hour by hour (talk, meal, poster, count, break, etc.). All the events of the weekend must be indicated in chronological order. There is only one of this schedule per table. One outside team member at each table is in charge of this schedule. It can be shared and discussed with other outside or inside team members but not with the candidates. Any question from the candidates regarding the schedule must be answered by the outside team member. They must be told to relax, to go with the flow and don't anticipate anything. See Daily Schedule grid on pages 91-93.

The Lay Director has complete discretion on what kind of information should be included in the packets for team members, but at least the following information must be included: 1. The outline for the talk assigned and How to Give a REC Presentation (p. 35). 2. Schedule of meetings and Schedule of Events (p. 30). 3. Duties of the outside team member (p. 18-21). Additional duties for the Assistant Director (p. 13), the Spiritual Director (p. 15) or the Music Minister (p. 17). 4. Instructions for Specific Duties (p. 21-24), if any.

## **Business**

Facility requirements from ID's to TB tests varies. The Lay Director will work directly with the facility liaison and make sure all necessary requirements are met before the weekend. The Lay Director will also ask for updates on the special assignments: palanca, hootenanny, attendance, priests for reconciliation, etc., and make sure that everything will be ready for the weekend.

## **WEEKEND EXPENSES**

No one should be prevented from participating in a REC weekend for economic reasons. It should be no obstacle to participate the fact that a prospective team member cannot contribute to defray the expenses for the weekend.

Each weekend costs about \$1,500. The biggest part of this expense is the motel (about \$800). The rest is for the supplies and soda. We have to buy Bibles \$200.00, crosses \$200.00, pens, pads, markers, poster paper \$200.00, and soda \$100.00. Each outside team member is requested to pay for his own motel (\$40 to \$50 total cost of a double room to cover two nights of lodging). REC will pick up the cost for those who can't afford it.

At the first team formation meeting the Lay Director will explain about the expenses and ask for voluntary donations. Team members can donate more than the motel cost if they choose to do so. The Lay Director will choose one or two volunteers to be in charge of collecting the money and making the necessary arrangements with the motel. See Specific Duties-Lodging on page 21.

The Lay Director has complete discretion to handle the collection and payments for the weekend. In some weekends the outside team picks up the expenses for the Spiritual Director, or for those who cannot contribute. In these cases a weekly voluntary contribution has been requested. In other weekends a single outside team member picks up the tab for another anonymous outside team member. In other cases former residents request to contribute within their means. Etc. It is up to the Lay Director how he wants to handle this issue and clear instructions must be given to the volunteer in charge of collecting the money.

The cost for the stoles, the film, developing and other minor expenses can be reimbursed. Donations and bills should be submitted to the REC Council by the Lay Director. All contributions are tax deductible. Checks must be made out to REC. For direct purchase do not pay tax. Use Tax Exempt #141347456.

## Inside Meetings

At least 2 team formation meetings must be held inside the facility. If more than 2 inside meetings are allowed by the facility a maximum of 4 inside meetings should be held.

The time and duration for the inside meetings is set by the facility. The liaison will work out the best convenient day and hour for these meetings. The agenda for these meetings is to be decided by the Lay Director. The Lay Director should try to cover the whole weekend step by step during these meetings. As part of this the 3 talks given by the residents must be critiqued. Whenever possible the Hootenanny should not be discussed with the inside team members.

Attendance by the outside team to these meetings is very important. The whole outside team should try to attend these meetings. It is very important to develop an early relationship with the inside team. The liaison should have worked with the facility the selection and recruitment of the inside team. If an inside coordinator has not been selected the Lay Director will select one resident for this job. The liaison will assist the Lay Director in this selection.

The Lay Director with the assistance from other experienced outside team members will explain to the rest of the team what to expect from these inside meetings. Any fear or misconception must be dispelled. The outside team should set the example at these meetings in the way we behave, the way we talk, how we pray, how we treat each other, the way we greet one another, etc. It is very important to know the inside team on a first name basis. Greet them in a christian and friendly manner even if you have never seen them before. Don't be afraid to hug them by the end of the first meeting. Shake hands and introduce yourself from the very beginning. Feel at ease and make them feel at ease. Use your sense of humor and let the Spirit work. You are bound for a beautiful surprise.

The main purpose of these inside meetings is to make the inside team feel as much a part of the weekend as the outside team. A REC weekend is not possible without the help of the inside team. The inside team plays a very important role. They are co-table leaders, helpers, speakers, recruiters, etc. They know the facility rules better than we do. Assure them of the importance of the role they play. Let your light shine. The inside team may not be used to meditations but they always enjoy participatory prayers, bread sharing, priest-led prayers and any other activity where they can share their experience. The team candle must be brought to these meetings and the symbolic meaning of the light of Christ should be explained.

By the last inside meeting the ushers should know the lay out of the room and the location of the tables. They should provide the Lay Director with a blue print of the location of the tables for the table assignments and also should have developed a plan to guide and direct table by table to the altar. The same pattern should be used the 3 days. By the last inside meeting also, the person in charge of the Bible Enthronement should know the route he will take for the procession. Don't improvise at the last minute, time is limited and every minute counts.

All of the above are only suggested guidelines for the inside meetings. The Lord will actually be your guide and decision maker on these meetings. Trust!

## **Send Off Mass**

This is the last of the team formation meetings. The Lay Director, Assistant Director and Spiritual Director are in charge of preparing and organizing this last event before entering the facility for the actual weekend.

Mass is usually celebrated by the Spiritual Director on the Wednesday preceding the weekend whenever possible. Family attendance must be encouraged. All the team members must be in attendance. The homily must refer to the occasion and focus on the mission of REC.

A wine and cheese party or any other kind of socializing is usually held after mass. Everything must be in place and ready to go after this last meeting.

## **Prayer**

Prayer is essential to REC. Individual, family and group praying is encouraged before, during and after the weekend. Palanca in its many forms is the backbone of the weekend. Family and friends of the outside team members are to be encouraged to pray and do palanca for them and the success of the weekend. One of the many ways of doing palanca and showing support for a REC weekend is to share breakfast with the outside team before they enter the facility for the day. This can be done only on Saturday and Sunday of the weekend. REC Council members should promote this kind of palanca and take the lead to organize these trips. Breakfast is usually around 6:00 AM but exact time and location must be confirmed in advance with the Lay Director.

Praying is an essential component of all REC activities. All the team formation meetings inside and outside the facility should start and end with a prayer. All the talks to be given on the weekend must start with a prayer. At the beginning of each day of the retreat the outside and the inside team should get together and pray before starting each day with the Bible Enthronement. It is also a good idea to match team members as prayer partners during the preparation for the weekend. The Lay Director will assign a prayer partner to each team member and the prayer partner will pray and do palanca for the other partner all along during retreat preparation. It's up to the partner to let the other partner know about it. This assignment must be given at the first team formation meeting and can be included in a little card with the instructions for the weekend. The Lay Director will explain what a prayer partner is when explaining the contents of the folder with the instructions for the weekend.

## **II. SCHEDULE OF EVENTS**

### **DAY ONE - FRIDAY - DYING AND CHANGING**

"Unless the grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies it remains but a seed." Spirituality conveys the message of a loving, merciful God. This may be in sharp contrast to the judgmental exacting God, the pre-Vatican II image. The emphasis of spiritual life is one that the individual has control of - we have to take the first step. We can undergo a change of heart, a reconciliation, a dying to self. This spirituality involves our relationship with God the Father. He is always there for us. He has not predestined our life. We have to make the choice. This spirituality is expressed in a normal manner through the symbolism of the Ash Service (a turning away from our old self), baptism (a rebirth of our spiritual life and a re-commitment) and reconciliation ( a celebration of our Father's loving forgiveness).

**INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME:** Brief explanation of REC. Logistics and housekeeping. General orientation. See outline on page 37.

**BIBLE ENTHRONEMENT CEREMONY:** Procession from the back of the room or chapel to the front. See SPECIFIC DUTIES - Bible Enthronement on pages 23 and 39.

**THE WORD OF GOD:** Basic description of the Bible. Jesus as a human being. God speaks to us in the Bible. Bible Ceremony: After this talk each participant is presented with his own New Testament. See outline on pages 40 and 41.

**THEME FOR DAY ONE; DYING AND CHANGING.** Each day has a theme and all the talks of the day revolve around the theme of the day. On day one we learn that it is possible to change but in order to change we must die to ourselves. See outline on page 42.

**IDEALS AND MATURITY:** First formal talk of the weekend it should be also an icebreaker, alive and to the point. Sharing of personal growing, help and hindrances experienced during this process. The christian ideals and how to reach them. Personal witness. See outline on page 43.

**THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION TALK:** This is the most important talk on day one and is given by the Spiritual Director. The theme is the Paschal Mystery which is also the main theme for the whole weekend, that is: to die, to rise again and to go forth with the Lord. The talk parallels our lives with the death and resurrection of Christ (the Paschal Mystery) emphasizing the positive side, the promise of a resurrection. See outline on page 44.

**THE PRODIGAL SON:** This talk is given by a member of the inside team. It involves heavy personal witness following the main theme of the parable: God will forgive us no matter what we have done; all we have to do is go back to Him and ask for his pardon. See outline on page 47.

**METANOIA:** A greek word that means change of heart. This talk is given by an inside team member who has and still is experiencing a change in his way of life. Heavy personal witness. He shares what prompted his decision to change, why and how he has changed. See outline on page 49.

**FORGIVENESS:** This talk is about the human need to seek forgiveness. We need to forgive, to be forgiven and forgive ourselves. Brief explanation of the sacrament of reconciliation. Reference to the prodigal son talk. See outline on page 51.

**SERVICE OF ASHES:** First service of the weekend and probably the first service of this kind ever attended by the residents. The service focuses on the "dying" part of the theme of the day and is heavy on symbolism. The spiritual director and the lay director are in charge of this ceremony. See outline on page 53.

**SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION/COUNSELING:** Priests from the outside come for reconciliation. Silence and respectful attitude must be encouraged. The spiritual and lay directors are in charge. See outline on page 55.

**PASCHAL VIGIL SERVICE:** Second service focusing on the rebirth of the new man after the seed has died. Heavy on symbolism also: holy water, washing of ashes, white stoles, candles, etc. See outline on page 56.

**PALANCA:** A Spanish word that means "lever". The spiritual support from the outside community and team members is like a lever. We are lifted up closer to God because of this. Palanca letters are distributed at the end of this talk. See outline on page 58.

## **DAY TWO - SATURDAY - RISING AGAIN WITH THE LORD**

"If it dies, it produces much fruit..." Spirituality can be expressed by the word hopeful. It is the spirituality of the resurrection bringing about a new life. It embodies the spirituality of Jesus, that growth comes from giving and sacrificing, from being aware of the needs of others. The message is still one of individual spirituality. We see Jesus as our brother and close friend. His life is an example of service to others. Day 2 fosters a growth of our relationship with Jesus the Son.

**BIBLE ENTHRONEMENT:** Same ceremony as day one. See Specific Duties - Bible Enthronement on pages 23 and 39.

### **THEME FOR DAY TWO; RISING AGAIN WITH THE LORD:**

On day two we learn that we can overcome death if we follow Jesus. He is offering us a new life and we can be fruitful. We should look for Jesus' presence in our lives. See outline on page 59.

**THE RISEN CHRIST:** We need not to remain entombed in our sin, we can also rise like Jesus did. He is our light and guide and all we have to do is follow his example. (Optional short meditation). See outline on page 60.

**PEOPLE OF GOD AS A COMMUNITY OF LOVE:** The hope proclaimed in the Risen Christ talk is supported by the fact that we are God's chosen people and we belong to a community (Church) that share our same beliefs. See outline on page 61.

**CHRISTIAN LIFE:** How does a christian live in today's world. We must live out the Gospel at home, at work, on vacation, inside and outside a correctional facility. See outline on page 63. This talk must set the tone for the Chapel visit to follow.

**CHAPEL VISIT:** Private personal praying table by table. Silence and respectful attitude must be encouraged. See outline on page 65.

**HOOTENANNY:** The outside community come to share and show their support. The Peace Talk is given as part of the program. See outline on page 67.

**PEACE TALK:** This talk is given by the only female member of the outside team. It involves heavy witnessing about the peace and turmoils in her life with reference to the theme of the Gospel according to St. John Chapter XIV. See outline on page 69.

**SIGNS:** The concept of sacrament as a sign of God in our lives. Heavy emphasis on the sacrament of the Eucharist preparing the men for the liturgy that follows immediately. See outline on page 70.

**LITURGY:** First liturgy we celebrate together and for some people the first liturgy ever. The audience is spiritually high from the Hootenanny and the same mood must be kept. See outline on page 72.

**SKITS/WITNESSING:** Candidates are offered the opportunity to share where they are at after two days. At the discretion of the Lay Director they can do it individually or by doing a skit each table. See outline on page 73.

### **DAY THREE - SUNDAY GO FORTH WITH THE LORD**

"As my Father has sent me, so I send you...". Go out and baptize all nations. Spirituality is taken beyond the individual. It's the spirituality of the early disciples - one of responsibility. The message that comes across is that we all grow when one of us grows. Discipleship enriches the new life. The goal is one that challenges us to work in concert, each using our gifts to reach others for Christ. By extension, Day 3 fosters our relationship with the Holy Spirit.

**BIBLE ENTHRONEMENT:** Same ceremony as days one and two. See Specific Duties - Bible Enthronement on pages 23 and 39.

**THEME FOR DAY THREE; GO FORTH WITH THE LORD:** We must practice and share with others what we have learned on this weekend. As followers of Christ we must grow and help others grow with us. It is our responsibility to live out the Gospel. See outline on page 74.

**CONFIDENCE IN CHRIST:** Proclaiming the Gospel by our own words and deeds is not easy but we must have confidence in Christ. Christ is our source of strength and the confidence we share this weekend can sustain us for the rest of our lives only if we allow Him to become real within us. Optional Meditation. See outline on page 75.

**GOD IN OUR RELATIONSHIPS:** To be able to minister to others we must be able to minister to our own family first. It is our responsibility to keep God at the center of our family. We can find God in the joys and troubles of our family life. See outline on page 76.

**INMATE LIFE:** This talk is given by an inside team member personal witnessing of the change experienced after REC. Inmate life is also a call from God. How have you kept in touch with your God and your fellow inmates? See outline on page 77.

**CHRISTIAN ACTION:** Christianity calls for sharing and serving one another. Practicing what you believe inside and outside a correctional facility. Different kinds of christian action. See outline on page 79.

**PICTURES:** See Specific Duties - Pictures on page 80.

**BEYOND REC 1:** An outside team member explains from his own perspective the different kinds of spiritual help he uses to lead a Christ centered life. Grouping is explained and practiced at each table. See outline on page 81.

**BEYOND REC 2:** This talk is given by a former resident or an inside team member. He must have experienced REC before. Different kinds of spiritual help to lead a God centered life inside or outside a correctional facility. Personal witness. See outline on page 83.

**LITURGY:** Closing liturgy for the weekend, very emotional service. Men must be reassured that they are not alone and this is not the end but the beginning of their new relationship with Christ. See outline on page 85.

**PRESENTATION OF CROSSES AND CARDS:** See outline on page 86.

## **WITHIN TWO WEEKS AFTER WEEKEND**

**WEEKEND CRITIQUE:** The whole outside team will meet to review the weekend and recommend improvements.

## **THREE TO FOUR WEEKS AFTER THE WEEKEND**

**REUNION:** The whole outside team returned to the facility with the pictures from the weekend. Sharing the christian fellowship. Time and date must be scheduled through the facility liaison. Some facilities may allow snacks to be brought in, others may require a sign-up sheet. The program is the responsibility of the Assistant Lay Director and the Music Minister.

## **AFTER THE REUNION**

### **CLOSE UP MEETING WITH THE SUPERINTENDENT OF THE FACILITY:**

Time and date for this meeting must be scheduled through the facility liaison. The Lay Director and the Assistant Lay Director will meet with the facility Superintendent to discuss the weekend.

## **FOUR WEEKS AFTER THE WEEKEND AND EVERY MONTH THEREAFTER**

**FOLLOW-UP MEETINGS:** Once a month as many outside team members as allowed by the facility will return for up to 3 hours to share and group with the residents. Format and agenda for these meetings are decided by the Lay Director. It is strongly recommended that the Assistant Director attends all the follow-up meetings or as much as he can. The AD can start doing the groundwork for his weekend at these meetings.

## **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 along. 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.

## **FOLLOW UP MEETINGS AGENDA**

No specific format. The Lay Director has complete discretion on how to conduct these meetings. If the Lay Director cannot attend he should delegate on the Assistant Director.

Grouping and sharing are the most important parts of these meetings but you have to wait and see how the Spirit works. Sometimes you cannot go past an opening prayer and meditation because the candidates have so much to share that they take over immediately. Do not force an agenda, these meetings are for the candidates and not for the volunteers. Let the Spirit work.

Some facilities allow to bring snacks to these meetings. Other facilities provide some sort of snacks. Check with your Facility Liaison, with the Inside Coordinator or with the facility Chaplain. Pictures are distributed at the first follow-up meeting that is actually the Reunion. If you can schedule the Reunion and the first follow-up meeting on the same month you gain an extra meeting for the first month. This helps because the majority of the candidates will still be at the facility the first month after the retreat.

Suggested agenda:

- Songs
- Opening prayer - Bring team candle
- Meditation
- Grouping
- Socializing
- Closing prayer/song

Residents attendance to these meetings will go down after each meeting. Don't be discouraged. Residents are periodically transferred to other facilities. Nevertheless check for a timely call-out to the residents for these meetings.

## **FOLLOW UP MEETINGS REMAINDER**

Depending on facility regulations a letter or a post card must be sent to confirm attendance to follow-up meetings. Some facilities allow the whole outside team to return each month. Other facilities allows just a certain number (5 or 6) of outside team members to return each month. In any case attendance must be confirmed in writing. The Assistant Director is usually in charge of follow-up meetings. It is a god way to start preparation for his REC.

If only 5 or 6 volunteers are allowed to return, it is a good idea to have a monthly list of attendees. This way the whole outside team has the opportunity to return at least once a month. Follow-up meetings are very important and an effort must be made to attend as many as possible. Follow-up meetings show the candidates our commitment and that we are for real. The follow-up meetings help to reinforce the work done on the weekend. Sometimes it is until the follow-up meetings that some of the candidates experience metanoia. Our attendance to these meetings shows them that REC was not a one shot deal. The spiritual high from REC has worn out and they need these meetings.

The letter or post card remainder must be sent at least one week before the meeting. It should include all the necessary information: time, telephone, name, car pooling arrangements, etc. In facilities where attendance is limited 2 or 3 alternate names must be added to the list in case someone cannot attend.

## SAMPLE LETTER OF INVITATION TO THE HOOTENANNY

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

I wish to take this opportunity, on behalf of the residents of \_\_\_\_\_ Correctional Facility who will be participating on this weekend and the team, to thank you for your presence at the Hootenanny. We all appreciate the sacrifice you are making to be with us and your unselfish contribution in helping this weekend be a success in doing our Lord's work.

Please be at the gate at \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_. You will be required to show photo identification (NYS driver's license) at the gate. If you are so inclined, you may bring palanca, such as baked goods, soda, snacks (boxed), fruit, etc. Mostly what is needed is your warm, loving, Christian like companionship. I specially request that you socialize as much as you can with the residents. It means a lot to them to be called by name (see his name tag) and not by number.

Enclosed is a map with directions to the facility. On the reverse side of the map is a list of other Hootenanny attendees, which you may wish to contact to share a ride with. If you have any questions or if I can be of assistance, please feel free to call \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_.

Once again, thank you on behalf of all of us. May our Lord bless you.

Sincerely,

Lay Director  
Hale Creek #





REC #11  
Is dedicated in loving memory to our brother  
**MIKE PAYNE**

Dear brothers in Christ:

It was difficult to say "No" to Mike Payne. In fact, at this very moment he is probably trying to talk God into letting him start a support group in Heaven. My strongest memory of Mike was his tireless effort (I don't think he slept!) in reaching out in the community to his brothers who have been in prison and who needed his experience, strength and hope to make it on the outside. Mike was always blunt and direct when he shared his own story with his brothers at meetings and when he helped them to look inside themselves and confront their own "stinkin' thinkin'" as he always called it. He did this with a great deal of love and caring. The best tribute that you could give to Mike this weekend is to take off your masks and reach out to one another in complete honesty and love as he did.

Alabare,

John Brunelle

**PROGRAM**

Entrance Song: De Colores -- We All Sing

1. Song: Let Us Build the City of God -- Bill Simcoe/All
2. Opening Prayer -- Joaquin/Father Peter Young
3. Welcome -- Joaquin
4. Song: The Rose -- Mary Ann
5. Song: Pescador de Hombres -- St. Michael's
6. Song: My Jesus I Love Thee -- Laurie
7. Song: Wind Beneath My Wings -- Pat
8. Introduction of Speaker -- Joaquin
9. Peace Talk -- Suzanne Pelkey
10. Commissioning of Lay Director for REC #12 -- Joaquin and Paul
11. Poster Summary -- Paul
12. Song: Alabare -- Bill Simcoe/All

**SOCIAL**

St. Michael's Music Group will entertain during the social hour. Our own Nick Rizzo has volunteered to sing "I Wish You Jesus" also. time permitting we will try to accommodate everyone and any requests from the candidates.

**CLOSING**

We ask all the present to make a big circle around the room and hold hands to sing The Lord's Prayer.

## **SAMPLE LETTER/FLYER INVITING CANDIDATES TO REC**

Dear Friend:

We would like to invite you to participate in REC # \_\_\_ to be held at this facility on \_\_\_. REC is a 3 day religious retreat sponsored by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany, New York. REC stands for "Residents Encounter Christ" and it is open to all residents regardless of religious affiliation or beliefs. The program is presented by an outside team of about 20 men and a smaller inside team of residents. It is not possible to accurately describe what happens on those 3 days, the Lord works in mysterious ways and it is up to you and Him what to make of the weekend. But generally speaking, you will be listening and discussing short talks presented by the teams. We also sing, dance, make posters, pray, celebrate mass, eat and have fun all together as a big family.

The program starts on Friday \_\_\_\_\_ in the morning and ends on Sunday \_\_\_\_\_ in the afternoon. Because each day builds on the other and for you to fully take advantage of the program, we ask for your commitment to attend the 3 days if you decide to join us. All of the talks are given in English, occasionally one or two talks may be given in Spanish. But, if you understand some basic English this should be no problem. We always try to have a special table for those who have a limited understanding of English.

These are some of the comments we have heard from residents who have made REC:

"I never knew what love was before until I came to REC. I didn't know I could love and be loved".

"I came because I heard there were lots of good food, but the best food I found was the spiritual food".

"It's the first time in my life that I got high without using any drugs. By the end of the first day I was spiritually high".

"They made me feel like I was a real human being and not just one more number in the penal system".

If you would like more information about REC, please contact \_\_\_\_\_ or talk to other residents who have made REC before. We would love to have you with us and look forward to see you on Friday \_\_\_\_\_.

God Bless You,

CHECK WITH THE FACILITY LIAISON FOR DISTRIBUTION OF THIS FLYER. YOU CAN WRITE YOUR OWN FLYER BASED ON THE ABOVE IDEAS.

## **SAMPLE LETTER OF INVITATION TO ORIENTATION MEETING**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

Thank you very much for your interest in participating in the Hootenanny for REC # \_\_\_\_ at CF on \_\_\_\_\_ 199\_. You will be experiencing the presence of our Lord in a very special way. We look forward to seeing you at the Hootenanny.

Facility regulations require that you attend a mandatory Orientation Meeting before the Hootenanny. You cannot attend the Hootenanny if you don't attend the Orientation. This Orientation is required only once; you can attend all the Hootenannies you want without any other Orientation meeting. The Orientation will be on \_\_\_\_\_ 199\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ from \_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_. Please call \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ if you cannot attend. In some cases we can make arrangements for you to attend the Orientation for other REC weekends.

God Bless You.

Sincerely,

## SAMPLE TEAM FORMATION MEETING SCHEDULE

REC # \_\_\_\_\_ CORRECTIONAL FACILITY

Month/Date/Year

You are required to attend all the team formation meetings. Your input is necessary to prepare and critique the talks. It is important for you to have an idea of REC as a whole. It is also important to build community and to support your fellow team members with your presence. If you cannot attend at least 75% of the meetings, maybe you should decline the invitation at this time. In any case you should call \_\_\_\_\_ (phone #) as soon as possible if for any reason you cannot attend. Please have your talk ready for critique on the assigned date. Take notice also of your other assignments. Any change must be discussed with \_\_\_\_\_.

We will follow this format at each meeting:

Music  
Opening Prayer  
Meditation  
Grouping  
Socializing/snacks  
Program review  
Critique

<u>DATE</u>	<u>OPENING PRAYER</u>	<u>MEDITATION</u>	<u>TALK</u>	<u>SNACKS</u>
2/1/95	Pete Smith	Frank White	Ideals - Joe Burn George Lown	Juan Valdes &

ETC

Make sure to indicate which meetings will be held inside the facility. A maximum of 2 talks should be critiqued at each meeting, but the Lay Director has complete discretion on how to run these meetings. The above are only suggested guidelines.

On Month/Date/Year at (time) we will have a reunion at the facility.

On Month/Date/Year, time and location we will have a meeting to critique the weekend.

Our monthly follow-up will be held on the following dates:

## **SAMPLE CHURCH BULLETIN**

Residents Encounter Christ (REC) Weekend No. \_\_\_\_ will be held at \_\_\_\_\_ Correctional Facility in \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ County, on \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_. Jesus said to His disciples: Go forth and spread the Good News to all. REC retreats bring Christ and His Good News to the inmates experiencing this three-day encounter.

Our parish community is asked to pray for the team and inmates expected on REC No. \_\_\_\_ is a/are parishioner(s) on the REC team.

Parish members who wish to bake "goodies" for the weekend or send "prayer letters" to the inmates or team are asked to please contact \_\_\_\_\_ (list contact person with phone number).

Guidelines for prayer letters:

Address letter to Dear brother in Christ:  
Share your feelings and concerns for your brother  
Include your prayer intention and any sacrifices you will be doing for the inmate.  
Close letter by signing your first name only  
No return address, phone number or gift should be included in your letter.

## **SAMPLE LETTER REQUESTING PALANCA**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

REC weekend No. \_\_\_\_ will be held at \_\_\_\_\_ Correctional Facility on \_\_\_\_\_ . Our Lay Director is \_\_\_\_\_ and we have been preparing since \_\_\_\_ . I am writing you to request your prayers for us and all the participants and also to request palanca letters for the candidates. We are expecting \_\_\_\_\_ candidates. Please direct any palanca letter to me at the above address. The guidelines for REC palanca are:

Address to "Dear brother in Christ".  
Share your feelings and concern for your brother.  
Include your prayer intention and any sacrifices  
you will be doing for the candidates.  
Close the letter by signing your first name only.

YOU CAN ALSO USE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO INVITE FOR THE HOOTENANNY AND ADD THE FOLLOWING PARAGRAPH:

We would like also to invite you to he Hootenanny. A mandatory Orientation will be held on \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_. The Hootenanny will be on \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_. If you are interested, please contact me at \_\_\_\_\_ or call \_\_\_\_\_ (name of volunteer in charge) at \_\_\_\_\_. We will follow-up with details.

Thank you very much for your help. May God bless you abundantly.

Sincerely,

(Volunteer in charge of palanca)

## **SAMPLE PALANCA LETTER**

Dear Brother in Christ:

I am writing to give you spiritual support for your participation in REC # \_\_\_\_\_. The fact that you are participating shows your willingness to change. Our brother Jesus is extending his hand to you; take it, don't miss the opportunity. Only in Jesus and with Jesus you will find true freedom. The time you are serving now is temporary, the freedom Jesus is offering you is forever.

I am glad that you are participating in this weekend and I want to support and encourage you to make the best out of it. As a sign of my support for you I will

God Bless You. Your \_\_\_\_\_ in Christ,

First name only.

**PICTURE RELEASE FORM**

**INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM  
N.Y.S. DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONAL SERVICES**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, hereby grant permission to the New York State  
(Inmates Name and Din)

Department of Correctional Services to make use of my name, still or motion picture,  
voice recordings and/or video tapes of me for any legitimate purposes including  
publication in news media and for professional and instructional purposes.

SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

WITNESS \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

FACILITY \_\_\_\_\_

## **SUPPLIES**

Masking tape

Big bowl for water

Small bowls for ashes

Container to burn papers

Matches

Washcloths

Ashes (Priest must bring leftover ashes from Ash Wednesday to mix them up and make a paste with our own ashes).

REC cards already signed

Crosses and chains

Notebooks, markers, poster paper, pencils

Name tags

Stoles

Banners

Bibles

Candles

Flowers for the Peace Talk speaker. Make arrangements with outside contact to bring flowers on Saturday.

P.A. System. Test it before the weekend.

Snacks and beverages

Palanca