

The Colors of Tres Días International



Spring 2009

How to Share Tres Días with Others

by Mike Pennington

After experiencing a Tres Días weekend, we feel so full and so free that we want to share everything about the weekend with others. But then comes the dilemma. What do we say?

Here's how it goes, on occasion: "I just went on a Tres Días weekend. It was great and you need to go, too." Actually, we realize that wasn't the best wording, but that's how we, in our enthusiasm, sometimes blurt it out. They respond, "Ok, what is it?" We then panic and say, "I can't tell you."

Why do we stumble that way? Perhaps it's because the question reminds us of all the special moments on a weekend that are . . . well . . . indescribable, and we don't want to spoil the surprises. In reality, "I can't tell you" is the worst response we could give; it implies that there are secrets. Remember, there are no secrets in Tres Días. Consider this, too: Since the other person doesn't know about the surprises, they won't be asking about them! Trust me: You can tell them about virtually everything that went on during a weekend and you won't spoil anything! It is God that shows up on a weekend. He is the one that blesses and transforms, not the surprises.

So how should we tell people about Tres Días? First of all, don't say they "need" to go. The word "need" indicates some kind of lack on their part. You might say, "I was amazingly blessed. In fact, I have

never felt more blessed, and I want God to bless you in the same way He blessed me." Another thought you could add is, "I want to share God's love with you by sponsoring you to attend a Tres Días weekend."

If they ask, "What's it all about," here are some ideas to help you know what to say:

"Well, it's three days where we take time for fellowship with other Christians and learn more about Jesus, God's grace, and the Christian life. We sing, eat, pray, and worship. Have I mentioned the food is great? We listen to "talks" on various topics and testimonies by other people just like us. We discuss the talks in small groups."

Sometime in this conversation, the other person will likely say, "Sounds like an ordinary retreat to me. What's the big deal?" You can respond with, "Well, I believe what makes it so special is all the prayer that covers the weekend. It's amazing how many people are praying. Also the whole atmosphere of the weekend is one of love and servanthood, like nothing I've ever seen. People I didn't know loved and served me just because of the love of Jesus."

"I still don't get it," your listener might say. "What's the big deal?" This is when you can respond with, "Well, it's kinda like trying to describe the taste of watermelon (or chocolate, etc.); you just can't do it. A Tres Días weekend is something that has to be experienced. You just have to be there. Words alone are not adequate."

Then let it alone. Let God work. It's not your job to push, convince or pester. Let God do His work. He knows the right time for them to attend a Tres Días weekend. Sometime you could also say, "Now, you know me, right? Do you trust me? Do you believe I'd want to invite you to attend something that would be harmful to you?" They should answer

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no to that, but again don't push or pester. I didn't go the first time I was invited and you probably didn't either.

One final thought, not about inviting someone to attend, but about how you adapt to fourth day living. Don't get frustrated when what happened on your weekend doesn't happen at church on Sunday. It's not going to happen. Remember, it took three days away from distractions for God to get your attention and work in your life the way He did. It took two or three CHAs (northerners call them "auxiliaries") serving and loving each candidate to create the dynamic of a weekend. Your job is to live a transformed life and transform your environments one person at a time. Also, get in a reunion group and attend *secuelas*. That's where the Tres Dias dynamic is refreshed. Then you are prepared and strengthened for continued service in your world.

Remember "Be Palanca"; be the lever moving people from where they are to where God wants them to be.

How to Tell Your Pastor about Tres Dias

With a heart of love, you desire for your pastor to experience the blessing of a Tres Dias weekend. So how do you approach him? Inviting a pastor to attend Tres Dias or explaining it to him is a special process. Since I'm a minister, let me tell you how we respond and what we respond to.

To impress your pastor, be the best church member that he has. Do you want to encourage him to attend a weekend? Then live a transformed life in front of him. Show him that attending Tres Dias makes you more faithful in worship and service than ever before. When he asks for people to show up for or to support something, be the first to volunteer or to arrive. Faithfully give the tithe to your church. Nothing impresses church leaders like faithful giving. Your pastor may be very open to attending when he sees the difference it made in you.

Remember the position he's in. Pastors have to be very careful what they endorse. Some of them have heard rumors about Tres Dias – that it is a secret society or that people who get involved in Tres Dias are less active in church.

The reality is that your pastor may never attend. He is incredibly busy. Some pastors get only two weeks' vacation a year, and he may have good reasons for not using one of those vacation Sundays for Tres Dias. Even if he doesn't attend, he will support your involvement *if* you are faithful to him, to the church, and to the Lord Jesus Christ. Please, never, ever criticize your pastor for not attending or not getting involved in Tres Dias.

Concerning faithfulness to the church, never let Tres Dias become a substitute for your church. Even though your church may not have the atmosphere or be as exciting as a weekend, the church is where the hurting people

are, and it's where God has called you to serve. Yes, I know something special happens on a weekend that we wish could happen at church, but that's not reality. It's also true that Tres Dias can become addictive—some have let it become so – and have greatly damaged the reputation of Tres Dias in the process. Is that what Tres Dias teaches? No. We teach that Tres Dias prepares you for greater service in your church. Remember the talks: The Church, Sacred Moments, Christian Community in Action, etc. Remember as well, that Jesus died for the church, not for Tres Dias. If you let Tres Dias become your church, then you have just confirmed that the rumor some hear is true. Please don't do it.

I encourage you to serve on Tres Dias weekends, but be balanced. Serving on one or two a year seems about right to me. That way you have plenty of time to both serve in your church and minister to people through Tres Dias. This is my personal opinion and encouragement, spoken by someone that loves both the church and Tres Dias.

Another vital word: I encourage you to never use your tithe money to pay team fees or to make palanca. In my opinion, you are in disobedience to the Lord and His word if you do that. You see, everything I've said in this article is based on what I've heard pastors say. Yes, I've had pastors say, "I dread Tres Dias weekends coming up because I know the church giving will go down and so many of my members are going to disappear for those weekends." I personally know pastors that will have nothing to do with Tres Dias because Tres Dias participants from their church have hurt them with words, actions, and negative attitudes. That should never happen, even if you disagree with him.

Pescadores and pescadoras ("fishers of men," regardless of our gender), let's make the opposite true! Let's love, worship, serve, and give like never before. Let's honor and encourage our pastors. Remember, they're human, too. It may be your encouragement that carries them through and enables them to win the battles that they face. Make it your goal to always be an encouragement to your pastor.

Finally, if your pastor has questions, I'd love to talk to him. I also have written two articles that describe my involvement in Tres Dias. One is "Why I Serve in Tres Dias" and the other is an "Open Letter" to anyone, but especially pastors and church leaders, who may have questions about Tres Dias. In it I explain in some detail what Tres Dias is all about. Just email me and request the articles at bba.dom@comcast.net

Mike Pennington currently serves as director of missions for the Bledsoe Baptist Association in Gallatin, TN. Previously, he served as a missionary in Venezuela for twelve years with the International Mission Board, SBC. He is head spiritual director for the Middle Tennessee Tres Dias community.

Letter from the President

We can easily think that Tres Dias is strictly a local phenomenon. We see the visible evidence—the weekends, reunion groups, the changing of lives and perspectives—in our local churches and communities, and we forget that we are part of something much larger. Tres Dias started as a handful of local communities that banded together and has grown to become a national and now an international organization. Like the other fourth-day communities, Tres Dias had its beginnings with Cursillo, and all of these communities are tools the Lord is using to build up the church—the Body of Christ.

As membership vice president and now as president, I have communicated with each Tres Dias community, communed with people from most of them, and visited many of them. In every case, I instantly bonded. It did not matter what language we spoke, what accent we had, what denomination we belonged to, or even what the nonessential portions of our weekends looked like. We all knew each other through the commonality of Tres Dias.

The Tres Dias International Secretariat was created by the local communities and exists to help those communities. Something that was laid on my heart during our last secretariat meeting was for us, the Tres Dias International Secretariat, to communicate better with the communities.

We are approaching this in two ways. Each member of the membership committee has been assigned a community to contact, to open the channels of communication, and to keep the secretariat informed about that community. In addition, I asked each secretariat and committee member to prayerfully consider choosing an individual community to adopt as a prayer partner. They are called upon to build a relationship—to get to know the community, to pray for specific needs, and to follow up with prayer and continued contact.

We all know that our weekends run on prayer. Prayer warriors, prayer chapels, prayer scrolls or prayer wheels—these are the engine rooms of a weekend. Prayer is the community's spiritual palanca that holds up the weekend, and candidates and team feel the power as a tangible force.

Take a moment to remember the feeling of being blanketed in prayer during your weekend. Now imagine the power of not just *your* local community, but people from other communities praying—not just for the candidates on a weekend, but prayer extending beyond the weekend to cover needs within the community. Just as your community has needs, so does every other community.

This is exactly what will happen as members of the secretariat select their prayer partners. Please join us. Read Pam Belknap's article on page 4. Get the list of all the Tres Dias communities (on the Tres Dias website www.tresdias.org) and pray for each by name—not just for the weekend, but for the community. Pass this newsletter on to as many members of your community as possible. Post it on your website. Pray not just for the weekend, but for the community.

There is often a tendency to think of the International Secretariat as some far-off group of bureaucrats who make rules and occasionally collect money. In reality, we are a group of volunteers who feel strongly enough about the mission of Tres Dias that we volunteer time, treasure, and talents to help further this ministry. We also need your prayers, and the prayers of everyone in your community as well.

One of my major goals is that each of you recognizes that greater community feeling that I have experienced—the feeling that comes from standing in the midst of people whose language I could not understand, and who could not understand mine, yet we communicated because we share the Lord through Tres Dias. Within the next month Peru will be holding its weekend No.2; Mid Hudson will be holding weekend No.147; Central Texas No.1; others will mark various numbers in between. Each of you is part of Tres Dias, and thus part of each of those communities. We all need each other's prayers.

In Christ,
Paul Weis,
President, Tres Dias International Secretariat

Prayer Comes First

Communities worldwide—not just local pescadores—need the blessing of our prayers

by Pamela Belknap

I often recall the wonderful experience of my first Tres Dias weekend. It was filled with the love of Christ and the joy of the Holy Spirit. It was spiritually life-changing and many of us on the weekend redoubled our Bible study and service at church.

Since then, I have served on many teams and have been blessed to hear many moving testimonies at numerous closings. Right after my weekend, I committed to write a handwritten note to each candidate and team member for each weekend. That adds up to 100-150 notes per year for our Tres Dias Cleveland (OH) community. It is a joy to pray over each name as I write the notes, sometimes working late into the night!

Just as we pray for each weekend, I strongly feel that we need to be in prayer for our currently chartered Tres Dias Communities, as well as for those in the formative stages. We need to ask for God's blessing, wisdom, and sustaining strength through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Subsequently, I included the list of the chartered and "budding" Tres Dias communities in our local newsletter along with a note urging readers to pray for each community on the list.

I encourage each community to do the same. Even though the list is printed on the Tres Dias website, having the community names immediately in front of the reader is much more effective.

Before we can expand further domestically and abroad, we need to be in prayer. If each community would be faithful to do this, certainly God would bless Tres Dias worldwide in a mighty way! Doors, hearts and minds would be opened! The number of communities would be expanded beyond belief! And the funding needed for support would pour forth in abundance! God would provide the necessary leadership and guidance to equip Christian leaders in cities of His choosing.

Let us seek the wisdom of our omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient God! May we pray the prayer that never fails: "Thy will be done!"

Pamela Belknap is a past executive vice president for the Tres Dias International Secretariat and past president of the Cleveland Tres Dias Community.

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Upcoming Meetings

Mar 13-15, 2009 International Secretariat Music City Tres Dias Nashville, TN
July 10-12, 2009 International Assy & Secretariat Tres Dias of Cleveland Cleveland, OH
Oct 16-18, 2009 International Secretariat Tres Dias of New Hampshire

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To our readers...a request for help

Do you have a story to tell about how Tres Dias has helped to develop lay leaders for your congregation? If so, tell us about it. Our staff is planning to develop an article on this theme for a future issue of The Colors of Tres Dias International and we need your help. Send your anecdotes to newsletter@tresdias.org or simply give us your contact information and we will interview you to get the story.

The Colors of Tres Dias International is published three times a year by the Services Committee of the Tres Dias International Secretariat, Paul Markowitz, chairman. Don L. Bohl serves as editor, Wilson Burton as contributing editor, Rosann Miloscia as artistic director and production editor, and Ned Heffington, proof-reader. To submit comments, requests, or suggestions please e-mail newsletter@tresdias.org. Tres Dias communities are hereby given permission to reproduce material contained herein in their local newsletters, so long as the content and intention of the material is not changed.

Sponsoring a New Tres Dias Community

by Richard Thornhill

[The Action Rollo] is about receiving Christ and sharing Christ, in and with other people. It is about sharing a precious possession, our life in union with God. His "Love and Grace" is so overwhelming it cannot be confined within oneself. —The Tres Dias Guide for Team Members

This simple goal is amplified from the heart of God through each Tres Dias community when that community makes a decision to sponsor a new community. And I firmly believe that each Tres Dias community *should* make sponsoring a new community one of its goals.

Piety and study always produce action, the heart's response to God's love, grace, and forgiveness. The Action rollo commentary lists the characteristics of action: "Be authentic and God inspired. Be planned and balanced. Be loving, caring, and respectful of others, and persevering." These concepts become the foundation for successfully sponsoring a new community, one that will follow the Essentials of Tres Dias and, after becoming established, will also seek to sponsor another new community. God causes the growth and multiplies the harvest!

New community sponsorship should begin with support for local pescadores involved in their own reunion group. This group may include those who participated in other fourth-day movements (Walk to Emmaus, Cursillo, etc.). Their leadership is vital for the new community, especially if the community is geographically distant from the sponsor or in a foreign country. A pescador, or a group of pescadores from the sponsor must make the commitment to mentor the leaders, teach the Essentials, and devote the necessary time (usually three to four years) to nurturing the new pescadores into a loving and united Tres Dias community.

When the community begins working toward its first weekend, the sponsor will need a steering committee to oversee development, training, and fund raising. The greater the distance separating sponsor and new community, the greater the need for funds, especially if potential candidates must be flown in to attend local weekends, to build a core group of pescadores. Funds will also be needed to sponsor candidates, even team members, and to pay the basic weekend expenses (camp or retreat facilities, supplies, transportation). These key elements are increasingly important in foreign settings.

The sponsor's goal is to establish the new community as an active Tres Dias community that follows the Essentials and the Tres Dias method. We must always remember that our ministry is a three-phase program, not merely a weekend experience! Some new communities have faltered because they hosted a weekend without a proper foundation for pre-weekend and fourth-day activities. It is vital that the new community have a knowledgeable core of pescadores actively involved in a secretariat, and committed to keeping the program growing with reunion groups, secuelas, and the preparation for sequential weekends. Even after the first weekends, the sponsoring community should be prepared to support the new community by providing experienced team members and funding.

The foundation for our action is Jesus Christ. We are laborers together in His field. He causes growth by using a "community in action" to start a new community.

Where can your community multiply the blessings by sponsoring a new community?

Richard Thornhill currently serves as membership vice president on the Tres Dias International Secretariat. He is president of the Trinity Valley Tres Dias community.

To our readers

Please, consider distributing copies this article and other articles to the members of your community. Send us a message at newsletter@tresdias.org telling us how many copies you made. —The editors

A Southern Blessing

The story of how Christian brothers from the hills of Tennessee embraced a Yankee pescador

by Steven DeCillis

Although I attended Long Island Tres Dias No. 57 more than seven years ago, I consider myself a new pescador—in the Music City community.

The story starts in July 2007 when I attended the Tres Dias International Assembly in Poughkeepsie, NY. It was there that I experienced the joy of serving with Christian men and women from all over the country and all over the world. It was also in Poughkeepsie that I met Wilson Burton, the delegate from Music City Tres Dias. Somewhere between hello and goodbye, I committed to serving on the next Music City weekend in February. I am not sure how it happened, but I will be forever grateful to Wilson for his suggestion that I serve on that weekend to “share the blessing.”

As the weekend approached, I don't mind telling you that I became a little anxious, knowing that there would be about 150 men with backgrounds totally different from mine. Combine that with the fact that I am a Brooklyn boy from the streets of New York and the retreat was being held in the hills of Tennessee, and you begin to get a sense of my apprehension.

Moreover, I didn't understand how you can put on a weekend with 110 team members and 40 candidates (we have 30 team and usually 15 candidates at home). When I asked how this was possible, I was asked in return how Long Island puts on a weekend with only 30 team members!

Of course, many things are the same, but there are also many different traditions. On Long Island, we do a Saturday evening Agape room and a Sunday morning mananita. Music City does a Saturday evening serenade, which was very powerful—as was the foot washing ceremony. This also was something that we don't do at home. I would love for all of my community to experience the wonderful differences of MCTD, as I found many of them to be cathartic and freeing. The entire weekend was more passionate than I am used to seeing and I must tell you that I loved it. The fire for the Lord was inspiring and heartfelt. It opened my eyes to another way of worshipping God, and that is a wonderful blessing!

Charlie Weaver (a great patriot and servant of our Lord) was the rector, and he along with the rest of the team made me feel as if I were visiting

family. And what a blessed visit it was, too! I was so blessed by that weekend that I didn't have to think twice when I was asked to serve on MCTD No. 13 with Bill Hewitt as rector. Wayne Griffiths, who pastors a thriving Baptist church here on Long Island, joined me on the trip. Pastor Wayne was just as impressed by the Music City brothers as I was and plans to send other members of his congregation.

We say it all the time and it is so true: We are all brothers regardless of where we live or how we talk. As I sat in the rollo room, there were times, that if I closed my eyes I could have been back on Long Island. I was with Christian men sharing the same struggles and giving the same talks as we do back home. We have the commonality that comes from knowing Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, and with that in common we can overcome any differences in our cultures or traditions. Praise God!

I was blessed to serve with four members from my original MCTD No.12 table (Rob Reaves, Keith Malone, Rich Husband and Tom Hoek) and renew and grow our friendships. Keith and I in particular speak on the phone about once per month and exchange encouraging Christian cards in the mail.

When I went on my original weekend on Long Island, I realized very quickly that I was meeting Christian men whom I needed to keep in my life if I wanted to grow closer to God. I did so by becoming involved with LITD right away and helping to start a reunion group. I had the same, exact feelings when I attended my weekends in Tennessee. These are men of Christ and I need to stay in contact with them, not only because they enhance my walk with the Lord, but also because they have become my friends.

I would like to close by saying two things. First, if you are thinking about or have ever thought about serving on a weekend outside of your community...do it! You will be blessed in more ways than you can imagine! Second, I would like to thank the strong, loving, Christian brothers of Music City Tres Dias for the way they opened their arms to this Yankee and displayed a Christian love that must be experienced to be understood, because it cannot be adequately described.

Steven is currently the Long Island Tres Dias delegate to the International Assembly and a member of the International Secretariat. He served as rector on Long Island Tres Dias No. 67.