

2023 Annual Report of the NLS Executive Director

“Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and **let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith**, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God”

Hebrews 12 1:2

This year has been a year of rebirth and rejuvenation in the Via de Cristo movement. As I sat to write this report, Hebrews 12 1:2 was on my heart. I thought about the past few years and the struggles we have had, and where we are now holding weekends again. We just had our first on-site Annual Gathering in Texas this year which was a magnificent celebration of our love of Christ. As I contemplated all this, **it dawned on me that the past few years were part of the race that Jesus laid before us**. Sometimes the race is harder to run than at other times, sometimes we grow weary or afraid...but I also thought about 2nd Corinthians 12:9, **“But he said’ My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is perfected in weakness”**. As a National Lutheran Secretariat and Via de Cristo body, we kept our eyes on Jesus as we ran the toughest part of our race so far where we were weakest, but HIS grace was sufficient then, and is sufficient now. As we continue forward, we are coming into another part of our race, stronger in our faith walk by having had time to focus on non-weekend activities like Ultreya, reunion and new technologies to reach people. **His power was made perfect in our weakness**.

While we are excited about the ability to hold weekends and be in fellowship with each other, that is not the case in all secretariats. Some of our secretariats are having trouble starting back up. Some secretariats are tackling divisive issues that tear at those communities. I have been praying for them and ask you to join me.

Most of my efforts this year has been in prayer for our movement and preparing to host the **2023 Annual Gathering in Indianapolis**. It is customary for secretariats sign up 2-3 years ahead of the year they plan to host. INKY signed up with about 1 year, so a lot of catching up in preparation and funding. I want to thank the INKY secretariat and the volunteers who embraced this special event and have worked joyfully, tirelessly, to be ready to host everyone this weekend. It has been a blessing to us thus far, and I look forward to seeing what God has in store.

I will continue to pray for you and for our ministry in Via de Cristo, working to support our local secretariats, **with a focus on Jesus to run the race He has laid out before us**.

In His service,

Brian Schwarz

NLS Executive Director