

Cursillo Movement of Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph Missouri – www.cursillo.net
Cursillo Movement of Archdiocese of Kansas City Kansas – www.kccursillo.org
National Cursillo Center – www.cursillo.org
Region VI Cursillo – www.cursillo.org/region6

Following is key excerpts with some additional local notations from:

THE CURSILLO MOVEMENT: WHAT IS IT?

To explain Cursillo to someone who has never experienced Cursillo is at best, difficult. ... This is not because the Cursillo Movement is a "secret" organization. The reason behind the mystery is God. No one can fully explain how God touches each person in His special/unique way throughout the various elements of the Cursillo Movement. ...

Throughout this booklet you will find references to concepts that at one time seemed foreign to Catholics. Evangelization is probably the one that comes to mind first. For many years Catholics looked upon evangelization as "something the Protestants did." Today, in Church, we hear a great deal about evangelization. Still for some of us, we automatically think of going out two-by-two (with Bible in hand) and knocking on people's doors. ***Nothing could be further from the truth.***

In the Cursillo Movement, we approach evangelization as a very natural act of being Christ-like within each of our daily activities. We realize that while most people would like to live their lives in a Christ-like manner, the pressures of the world often make this difficult. The Cursillo Movement provides a method and a technique to provide each of us with the tools, the mentality, the strength, and the support to make this natural type of evangelization possible.

...

The Cursillo Movement can assist each of us in developing a deeper understanding of what it means to be fully Catholic by being fully Christian.

THE HISTORY OF THE MOVEMENT

The Cursillo Movement is a movement of the Catholic Church. The name Cursillo is Spanish, meaning short course, and is often associated with a 3-Day weekend - which is only one aspect of the Cursillo Movement. The proper name is Cursillo de Cristiandad (short course of Christianity). There is much more to the Cursillo Movement than just a 3-Day weekend.

This Movement evolved from Spain, where it got its origin, in the 1940s. ...

... In the late 1940s, the first Cursillo was given and the Cursillo Movement began. Those who make Cursillos today would find much of the first Cursillo familiar. The Cursillo has been refined and changed somewhat, but today's Cursillo weekend remains basically the same as those first Cursillos.

...

The first stirrings of what later was to become the Cursillo Movement began on the Island of Mallorca during World War II. ... Before the war, a pilgrimage to the shrine of St. James at Compostela had been planned. This spiritual journey to the great Spanish pilgrimage center of the Middle Ages would provide a time for the young men and women of Spain to dedicate themselves in a renewed way to the work of the apostolate. After being postponed several times by the disruption of war, it was finally rescheduled for 1948.

The pilgrimage set a tone. The spirit of pilgrimage is a spirit of restlessness, of dissatisfaction with spiritual lukewarmness, of moving onward, of "ultreya." It is also a spirit of brotherhood among fellow pilgrims who are striving together to reach the goal of a life fully given to the love of God and man. The pilgrim style has marked much of the spirituality of the Cursillo Movement.

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The first Cursillo in the United States was held in Waco, Texas, in 1957. The key figures in the beginning were Father Gabriel Fernandez and two airmen from Spain, Bernardo Vadell and Agustin Palomino, who were training with the United States Air Force. Father Gabriel had arrived in Waco in 1955 from Spain where he had made his three days under two of the founders of the movement, Father Juan Capó and Eduardo Bonnin. ...

...

Until 1961, all weekends were held in Spanish. That year the first English-speaking weekend was held in San Angelo, Texas. [Inserted Note: The Spiritual Director and Franciscan priest responsible for the first English-speaking weekend was Fr. Fidelis Albright OFM (deceased - 1973), who brought the Cursillo to the greater Kansas City area in 1962, and several other dioceses throughout the United States.] ...

In 1962, the Cursillo Movement came to the Eastern United States. Weekends were held in Cincinnati, Brooklyn, Saginaw, Miami, Chicago, Detroit, Newark, Baltimore, Grand Rapids, Kansas City and Boston. In the West, the first weekends were held in Monterey, Sacramento, Los Angeles, Pueblo and Yakima.

The movement spread rapidly with the early centers carrying the Cursillo to nearby dioceses. As of 1981, almost all of the 160 dioceses in the United States had introduced the Cursillo Movement.

The Cursillo Movement in the United States was organized on a national basis in 1965 [at an encounter held in Kansas City, Missouri]. At this meeting a National Secretariat was organized, and a National Cursillo Office (currently in Jarrell, Texas) was established.

The Cursillo Movement has the support of the vast majority of the American hierarchy. It is joined to the National Conference of Catholic Bishops through an official liaison in the person of Most Rev. James S. Sullivan, ..., and through the Bishops' Secretariat for the Laity in Washington, D.C.

Today, it is a worldwide movement... The movement is a member of the International Catholic Organizations of the Pontifical Council for the Laity in Rome. ... The international leaders of the movement meet periodically to further its work.

At one of these meetings in Rome in 1966, Pope Paul VI had the opportunity to address the movement. Among his words of encouragement were the following:

"Cursillos de Cristiandad, that is the word, purified through experience, affirmed by its fruits, that today travels with citizenship papers throughout the world ..."

"Whether some methods become obsolete, whether new manifestations of the Spirit arise, the permanent task of the layman will continue to be the infusion of Christianity into life through the encounter and personal friendship with God and in communion with his brothers. The layman, upon forming himself in Christianity, reforms his mentality and conforms his life to Christ's image by means of faith, hope and charity; acting with complete responsibility he transforms the temporal structures in which he is immersed, guided in his action by the glance of Christ he continually tries to remake the world according to God's plan and design"

"We know that in your plan of spirituality and apostolate in the Cursillo Movement the 'Sensus Ecclesiae' (mind of the Church) is the guiding light that orients you"

"Beloved sons and daughters: Our soul is so oppressed by the vision of the evils which afflict the Church and mankind. But permit us to express our overwhelming joy that, at this moment, floods our soul before the immense chorus of your manly faith in Christ, your fidelity to the Church, your fervent loyalty to this Chair of Peter and to the ministry of the episcopal hierarchy."

"Cursillos de Cristiandad! Christ, the Church, the Pope, are counting on you!"
Pope Paul VI, First World Ultreya, Rome, May 28, 1966

In 1980, Pope John Paul II, addressing the first National Italian Ultreya in Rome said:

"Your movement, which recently celebrated its thirtieth anniversary, devotes itself to drawing forth from Christians a commitment to live lives consistent with their faith whether individually or as a community - and to bring this ferment to the environments where you live."

"You have discovered anew the explosive truth of the evangelical message: God, Father of all, comes to us as we encounter him in Jesus Christ to reunite us through the grace of the Spirit in one family which is the Church."

"In her, we are truly able to experience even now the love which will be the inexhaustible fountain of eternal joy in heaven. Here then is the synthesis of all of Christianity. This is the news that all human hearts hope for without realizing it. Therefore dedicate yourselves more and more to being tireless apostles in your environments."

"My apostolic blessing goes with you as a pledge of this divine grace which enables you to live forever."

WHAT IS THE CURSILLO MOVEMENT?

Cursillo literature cites several different definitions for the purpose of the Cursillo Movement. While the wording (definitions) may vary, the idea is the same. This is due, in part, to the fact that the purpose of Cursillo is multi faceted. No one definition can truly explain what Cursillo is. However, all the definitions can give a much richer meaning to the purpose of Cursillo.

One definition states: "The purpose (or goal) of the Movement is to make Christian community possible in [families,] neighborhoods, parishes, work situations and other places where people live the greater part of their lives. It makes possible for anyone in the world to live a Christian life in a natural way."

...

There is yet another definition that describes the purpose as such: "The Cursillo Movement is a movement of the Church which by means of its own method makes it possible for people to live what is fundamental for being a Christian, and to live it together; it helps people discover and fulfill their personal vocations, and it promotes the creation of core groups of Christians who leaven their environments with the Gospel." ...

As mentioned earlier, while the wording of these definitions may differ, their ideas are the same. The Cursillo Movement is focused to help each of us fulfill our baptismal responsibility: to go forth, as apostles, and proclaim the Gospel. ... The Cursillo Movement provides us with the necessary tools for fulfilling our baptismal responsibility along with the training for using those tools.

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DURING THE CURSILLO WEEKEND

OVERALL

Each day of the Cursillo Weekend begins with Morning Prayers and ends with Night Prayers. Mass is celebrated daily (except Thursday). Each participant should be aware that, since prayer is such an intricate part of the Cursillo Movement, there will be other Cursillistas that will be continually praying and offering up sacrifices - for the success of the Cursillo Weekend. There will be proper nourishment provided and also adequate rest periods. Those that have special needs, such as a particular diet or physical needs, will be attended to properly.

THURSDAY NIGHT

This is a time to get to know each other and to have an overview of the Cursillo Weekend. This is also the retreat phase of the Cursillo Weekend, which is designed "To awaken the moral consciences of the participants, beginning with an analysis of their own lives and causing them to desire to encounter God." The retreat phase (done in silence and ends Friday morning at Mass) includes three meditations and "The Way of the Cross." The meditations are: 1) Know Yourself, 2) The Prodigal Son, and 3) The Three Glances of Christ (this is given Friday morning).

FRIDAY

The focus of Friday should be to help each participant to have a better understanding of themselves. Friday should help them discover what motivates them in different situations.

During this day the participants will hear five presentations. Three presentations will be given by members of the laity and they are: 1) Ideal, 2) Layperson in the Church, and 3) Piety. The other two presentations will be given by the Spiritual Advisors and they are: 1) Habitual Grace, and 2) Actual Grace. While the presentations provide the participants with information and witnessed experiences, it is the table discussions (following each presentation) that prove to be one of the real dynamics of the Weekend. The sharing, which takes place during the table discussions, provides the participants with an opportunity to share their own insights about the presentation. Furthermore, the participants have the opportunity to hear how other participants perceived that same presentation.

After each presentation and table discussions, the participants will draft a written summary of the presentation and table discussion. Later the participants will have an opportunity to graphically illustrate their ideas of the presentations and table discussions. That evening, each table group will share their summaries and graphic illustrations with the other participants and team members.

SATURDAY

The focus for Saturday is to combine that fully realized self (that they learned about Friday) with a wonderful and loving God. Saturday helps the participants to understand the current relationship that they have with God and should spawn a desire for a still deeper and fuller relationship with God.

The schedule for Saturday follows the same format as Friday. Again, there are three laity presentations entitled: 1) Study, 2) Action, and 3) Leaders. As with Friday's schedule, there are also two Spiritual Advisors presentations entitled: 1) Sacraments, and 2) Obstacles to a Life in Grace. Table discussions again play a very dynamic role in generating various insights concerning the presentations. The summaries (of each presentation) and the graphic illustrations are shared with all, just like on Friday.

SUNDAY

The focus for Sunday is the understanding of ourselves, our relationship with God, and how we can help Him in fulfilling His Will. We learn what environments we belong to and how we can affect those environments.

The same format is used on Sunday, except there is only one Spiritual Advisor presentation – Life in Grace. The laity presentations are: 1) Study of Environment, 2) Christianity in Action, 3) Cursillista Beyond the Cursillo, and 4) Total Security.

Sunday night at the Clausura (Closing), the participants come face to face with the larger Cursillo Community that has been so supportive during the entire weekend. It is during this meeting that the participants enter this Cursillo Community.

AFTER THE CURSILLO WEEKEND

The Cursillo Movement realizes that it will not be an easy task for us to try to bring Christ to our environments. Therefore, the Cursillo Movement has two very important tools to assist each of us. These tools are the Group Reunion and the Ultreya.

GROUP REUNION

The Group Reunion is a small group of Cursillo friends that meet on a regular basis. The purpose of this meeting is to share with one another the growth that has taken place within each of us. We share our spiritual growth as well as our growth in becoming a person who strives to bring a Christ-like attitude to our environments. This meeting is referred to as a [Spiritual] Friendship Group.

As we make attempts to bring Christ into our various environments, we will sometimes become frustrated. The Group Reunion also provides the continual support we need in order to persevere as a part of God's plan.

ULTREYA

The Ultreya (ancient Spanish word meaning Onward) is the larger Cursillo community. It is the time for the members of the Group Reunions to meet with members of other Group Reunions. The Ultreya is also beneficial in providing the support and encouragement that each of us needs. [And, it helps us guard against becoming isolated.]

...

CONCLUSION

We, as laity in the Church, can no longer take our role lightly. The future of our society is in our hands. We must realize that we, as individuals, can have a great impact on our society. More importantly, we can have an even greater impact when we find other individuals that are ready and able to accept the challenge.

Throughout history, great things have happened because individuals decided to do more than was "expected." ...

...

In the introduction, we referred to the mystery of God. How else can we explain the events that shape our world?

In the past, the Cursillo Movement was primarily thought of as a source of individual spiritual growth. Today, we must realize that this individual spirituality is just not enough. Today, we must add to that spirituality. [Our family needs us to be apostolic.] Our society needs us to be apostolic. Our Church needs us to be apostolic. Our world needs us to be apostolic. But most of all, our Lord wants us to be apostolic.

Let us strive to be Christ-like. He chose individuals to become "fishers of men." Should we do any less?