



# WHAT IS CURSILLO?

(Pronounced: Cur-see-yo)



The full name is “Cursillo de Christiandad,” meaning “short course in Christianity.” The Cursillo movement started in Spain in 1949, under its founders, Eduardo Bonnin Aguilo and Bishop Juan Hervas. The Cursillo gives those who make it a new understanding of basic Christian truths and a desire to serve the Church.

Cursillo is an encounter with Christ. You won’t see Him with your eyes. But you will come to know Him with your mind and your heart and to really be aware of His presence and His love for you.

If you are looking for these gifts in your life, the Cursillo Movement will help you find them.

## IS CURSILLO A RETREAT?

The “retreat” portion lasts only from opening night until after morning prayer, during which time silence is maintained. **The Cursillo is not a retreat.** There is no fasting, there are no long periods of silence, and there is very little solitude. The Cursillo deals primarily with fundamentals of Christianity, a growth in knowledge, awareness, and love of God, neighbor and the world. These ideas are talked about, discussed, and experienced – The Fatherhood of God, Brotherhood of Christ, and Christian Community.

## WHAT IS CURSILLO’S FORMAT?

Talk to anyone who has made a Cursillo, they cannot really explain why they are so enthusiastic about it. They will tell you it is wonderful, it is the greatest experience of their lives – something they will never forget. They will tell you that you have to go through it to understand it, but they cannot tell you what it is. Why? Because it is a living experience and we all fall short in adequately explaining a living experience.

Cursillo begins on Thursday evening at 7:30 PM and ends the following Sunday evening. During the three days of Cursillo, Cursillistas (the name given to those who have lived Cursillo) listen to fifteen talks, five each day, given by priests, nuns and lay persons.

The priests who are the Spiritual Advisors and the lay persons comprise the team. They spend weeks working together preparing their talks. It takes careful planning because time is short and the subjects extensive.

You may be wondering what the talks are about. Their titles will give you an idea. They are: IDEAL, HABITUAL GRACE, LAYPERSON IN THE CHURCH, ACTUAL GRACE, PIETY, STUDY, SACRAMENTS, ACTION, OBSTACLES TO GRACE, LEADERS, STUDY OF THE ENVIRONMENT, LIFE IN GRACE, CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION, THE CURSILLISTA BEYOND THE CURSILLO, TOTAL SECURITY.

During the talks Cursillistas take notes just as they would in a regular classroom situation. Each talk is followed by a discussion period. Then the Cursillistas depict their impressions of the talk. This is done to graphically illustrate the message and make it more memorable. The atmosphere is joyful, with singing and humor.

There is no power other than the Power of the Holy Spirit. There is no mystery other than the Divine Mystery of Christ’s endless love.

## NOT AN ORGANIZATION

Cursillo is not an organization. It is a method. Further, the fact that Cursillo is not the instrument, but an instrument of sanctity, is emphasized during the weekend. The Cursillistas are cautioned not to form a clique or special organization, but to enter into the stream of parish or community life to act as “leaven” in the world for Christ.

## WORK OF THE CURSILLO

The work of the Cursillo is not confined to a three day exercise, but is a method through which it is possible to achieve among Christians a sense of Christianity In Action and apostolic action directed at making Christ known, loved, and served everywhere. The Cursillo method is fundamental Christianity lived and shared and spread. It is divided into three stages, the Pre-Cursillo, the three day Cursillo, and the Post-Cursillo. In the first stage, leaders are selected from different areas of life, parish, community, organizations, etc. The term “leader” is used in the broad sense to denote a person who is a natural leader, who has the respect of the other people in a particular environment. This is a person of influence, one who molds and leads others. A leader may be anyone, from the local barber to a political office holder, from the president of an organization to the person in a parish or neighborhood who is always helping out those in need. The Cursillo proposes that such a person as a natural leader can be transformed from a nominal Christian into a Christian leader once one accepts a fuller Christian life. Following this “conversion” that person will still exert leadership, but now it will be a Christian leadership.

The Cursillo is not an organization; it is a movement because it does not ask people to join together within an association, but rather asks them just to live as Christians and be apostolic in whatever they were doing before by using the Method.

The three day Cursillo is the second stage of the work of the conversion process where people are given a living experience of what Christian community is, what the fundamental truths of Christianity are, how one grows in the Christian life, and how one must be part and parcel of being a Christian.

The last stage is the most important stage. It is the Post-Cursillo, whereby the method provides for small groups of Christians to come together,



share their life in Christ with each other, and grow together as they strive to bring Christ to the people in their particular environment.

Christians share their Christian life in the same manner that they share their natural friendship together. When people come together they discuss their common problems and goals, their work, their daily life. When Christians who are using the Cursillo method come together, they discuss in three broad areas how they are progressing in Christianity In Action. Using the basic formula of Piety, Study and Action, they ask themselves the questions:

*How did I direct my life fully to God this week?*

*How did I remake my life through study to be more Christian this week?*

*How did I, in my family, profession, neighborhood or parish bring someone to a deeper awareness of Christ this week?*

With small groups of Christians in homes, offices, organizations, communities, whether religious or secular in nature, meeting in this fashion and attempting to bring Christ to each other and the people with whom they come in contact, surely the world will feel the impact.

The Cursillo does provide a method for Christians to be more faithful to their calling, but it does more than that; it also provides a plan to penetrate the world with the Gospel as it is lived by those who have heard the Word of God and kept it. The world can be renewed and transformed by Christians who are conscious that they are children of God, brothers and sisters of Christ, and temples of the Holy Spirit in whatever they do and with whomever they associate. Looking at the Cursillo Movement from the point of view of what it is trying to do through its method, we can say that it is an instrument of renewal at the disposal of the Church – one which can and should be used.

#### **PERSEVERANCE**

To maintain contact with our brothers and sisters, the movement provides a monthly meeting, called an Ultreya, at which Cursillistas gather in small

groups to share their Piety and Study as well as their Apostolic Action. Within this “Group Reunion” the participants find spiritual support and apostolic encouragement. After the group reunion, a Cursillista who has been previously selected briefly shares part of his Christianity In Action with the entire group. Time is allowed for individual comments by laypersons and for a summation by a priest. “Let us be concerned with one another, to help one another show love and to do good. Let us not give up the habit of meeting together, as some are doing.” (Heb. 10: 24 - 25)

#### **WHO MAKES A CURSILLO**

If you are twenty years old or over, you may attend a Cursillo. If you wish to make a Cursillo, apply through this office or through anyone who has lived the Cursillo experience who can be your sponsor. Husbands generally make the Cursillo first and then wives. Single, widowed and divorced may also live the Cursillo experience.

#### **PRIMARY OBJECTIVES**

The primary objectives of the Cursillo Movement are to develop in adult Christians a consciousness of their power and mission to become leaders in the work of Christian renewal and to sustain them as they provide a Christian leaven in civic, social and economic life.

**The United States National Cursillo Secretariat**

**as revised by**

**The Diocese of Manchester Secretariat**



# *The Cursillo*

*an action*

*movement*

*for lay men and women*



**New Hampshire Cursillo Committee**



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