

What is This Thing Called Cursillo?



On Sept 19th, 1978, I found myself travelling on Hwy 3, towards Nelson, BC, heading for a “Cursillo Weekend”. At the time, I had very little idea what that was—but my Spiritual Director (Fr. Jack Tench) has said “It’s a good thing, and you should make a Cursillo.” So, I did.

I arrived at the Cursillo, and like everyone else, after supper and Stations of the Cross, bedded down on the Parish Hall floor in my sleeping bag in silence. And the next day, it began in earnest. The speakers (who were laymen called Rollistas) introduced the topics, talked about 15 minutes, and then gave us tasks we should do together at our Tables. Most of the men were lay people, but there were 3 priests sitting at the rear, at the Spiritual Leaders Table, who were there to help, advise, hear confessions, celebrate the Sacraments, but not to lead or run the Cursillo. That was done by a layman, called the Rector, assisted by a group of other men. It started off low key but built gradually through the 3 days. There were choruses to sing, cups of coffee to drink, talks (called Rollos) to hear, stuff to discuss—and slowly the whole of the Christian Faith was laid out in a form that make it all fit together, giving us a chance to question, learn, and ultimately to accept as our own. “Christ is counting on you, and I on Him.”

I suppose there was nothing new, theologically, for me—sort of like Theology 101—but to see both Evangelism and the Catholic Faith all interwoven together for Anglicans—that for me was exciting. And at the end, we were introduced to the Cursillo Method ---- a weekly Group Reunion, monthly Ultreyas, and the chance to discuss how we were growing in Christ each week according to our Piety, Study and Action. I was definitely sold. On my way home, I decided to make Cursillo the main plank in my own Christian Living.

So, what exactly is a Cursillo?

Cursillo (pronounced kur-see-yo) comes from the RC Church in Spain, about the 1950s. It was brought from there to the US Roman Catholic Church, translated into English (except for a few Spanish words) and passed on quickly to the Episcopal Church, and from there to the Anglican Communion. It is the largest renewal movement in the Roman and Anglican/Episcopal churches and is responsible for igniting the flame of renewal in person after person and parish after parish. It is for both men and women—some dioceses have separate Cursillos for men and women, and some do them together.

Cursillo is a three-day experience in the Christian Faith, complete with talks, discussions, singing, superb food, times of prayer, daily celebrations of the Eucharist (mass), discussions of all seven sacraments, and how to live as a Christian in your daily life. You only make a Cursillo once in your life, but after you have walked the walk, you can

volunteer to talk the talk and serve at a Cursillo. That means you can either teach (a Rollo), work in the kitchen, or spend time in the chapel praying for each and every candidate and leader.

Once you have made your Cursillo, you are encouraged to meet for one hour weekly with other Cursillistas to share how you are doing in your **Piety** (Prayer Life), **Study** (either scriptures or a book that teaches you the Faith), and **Action** (what are you doing to share Christ with others or to build the Kingdom of God here). This weekly sharing is called a Group Reunion, since it replicates the kind of Christian Sharing that you did at your Table during the Cursillo. It is a reunion of the group—probably not the same people, but the same objectives. My wife and I both have a Group Reunion every two weeks, and we look forward to it. At a Group Reunion, members do not criticize, but rather encourage each other. Just the act of sharing means you first have to examine how you are doing in your Walk with Christ.

Each month, Cursillistas gather for an Ultreya. That is a word that means “Encouragement,” or “Keep going.” It lasts for no more than 90 minutes, and usually includes a short (floating) Group Reunion, a Witness, a Response to that Witness, some Teaching, some singing, and prayer. Simple encouragement. Group Reunions can include non-Cursillistas, and Ultreyas are often shared between Anglicans and Roman Catholics.

This Cursillo Method gives you a tried and true way to live your Christian Life. Along with the Eucharist weekly in your own parish church, Cursillo keeps you seriously and happily walking the walk, and as you grow in Christ, talking the talk. I have seen men and women come alive to Christ in their daily life, as people of joy and commitment to Christ. I myself found the Cursillo Method of living my life with Christ to give me a boost in my spiritual life, and a delightful way to work with other Christians to bring the Faith alive for so many people. If it could help an old priest like me, it will do wonders for you. <grin>

My dream is that everyone everywhere will be given a chance to make a Cursillo, to learn how the Faith all fits together as a whole, to learn how to live the Christian Life successfully, with joy, and with one another.

“Christ is counting on you—and I on Him.” Ultreya! Alleluia.

In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen