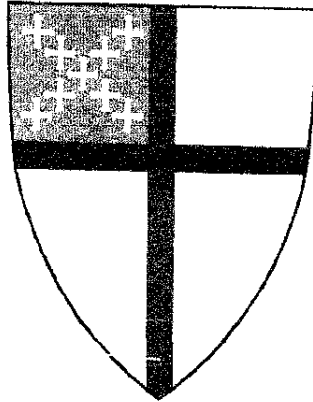


NATIONAL EPISCOPAL CURSILLO



GROWING
CHRIST-CENTERED
LEADERS

Health and Well Being of the Movement

Booklet #18

2008

Order #209

of the Movement

The Cursillo Movement is an exceptionally valuable tool in the lives of many individuals, parishes, and dioceses of the Episcopal Church. Cursillo offers a resource for renewal focusing on faith and action and is an instrument whereby Christ can be better known and served in a more effective manner.

Unfortunately, the Movement can falter, sicken, and even die. This pamphlet is offered in the hope of identifying some of the causes of the sicknesses and providing some suggestions as to how to restore health once again.

Disease I

Perhaps the primary disease lies in **the loss of vision**. Cursillo has a single purpose, and when individual movements lose sight of that purpose, they can be seduced into other paths or focuses. That purpose is generally understood as "to convert Christians to a deeper relationship with God in order to better help them understand their individual calling to be Christian leaders" (**Clergy Talk Workbook**, p. 1). This is done through a method of piety, study, and action. By using this method, Cursillistas can change their world for Christ. Thus, Cursillo is a Movement ("to change the world") that uses three distinct phases: The Pre-Cursillo, the Three-Day Weekend, and the Fourth Day to focus on teaching and using the Method. Loss of this overarching vision causes a sickness which dilutes or deflects the Movement and the Method, causing it to become something less or something other than that for which it was designed.

Some of the inherent dangers are:

- Emphasizing only a part of the Method: for example "putting on weekends" only without also developing an active Fourth Day program;
- Treating Cursillo as if it were applicable to all the tasks of the Church instead of a specific tool for a specific task;

- Allowing Cursillo to take the place of the Church instead of recognizing it as an integral part of the Church;
- Using Cursillo as a panacea for problems or limitations people have, such as a marriage breakup or a recent bereavement.

The Remedy

The simple remedy would seem to be

1. a renewed focusing on the basics of the Cursillo Movement—especially utilizing the abundance of official available publications (See NEC Library);
2. spending time studying the purpose of the Movement and the application of the Method; and
3. setting specific goals for the local Cursillo community consistent with the overarching goals of Cursillo and the individual Diocese.

The Prescription:

Two prescriptions are recommended.

1. Plan time for your Secretariat and Servant Community to study the “basics” of the Movement during periodic meetings or during a specific retreat or other “away” setting. Include your district National Episcopal Cursillo Committee Representative in the planning and implementation of this endeavor.
2. Schedule an Episcopal Cursillo Leaders’ Workshop (ECLW)—the purpose of which is to revitalize the Movement by recapturing the vision of what Cursillo is designed to do and how the design is to be implemented. Part of an ECLW is to have the Diocesan Movement develop a plan for what it will do in the future. ECLWs are offered only through the auspices of the National Episcopal Cursillo with the support of diocesan Secretariats.

Bishop and the priests in a diocese.

This lack of interest may be due to a number of reasons:

- They may not believe that Cursillo contributes to the goals/objectives of the diocese/parish;
- They may have had a less than fulfilling experience on the Three-Day Weekend or know of people who have had a "bad" experience on the Weekend;
- They may believe that Cursillo encourages a "cult" attitude separate and apart from the institutional Church;
- They do not see Cursillistas actively working in the diocese/parish except on Cursillo activities;
- They do not see Cursillistas radiating the love of Christ to others or being interested in growing in the faith. Cursillistas in the diocese/parish may be emanating a feeling that they are more spiritual than others in the parish.

The Remedy

More dialogue between the Secretariat and the Bishop's Office as well as individual parish priests is needed to determine how the Diocesan Cursillo Movement is perceived.

In this way, reasons why Cursillo is not supported by these individuals can be identified. Corrective action can then result from this dialogue.

The Prescription

Conduct an assessment of how the Diocesan Cursillo Movement is viewed by the Bishop and representative priests in the diocese. A combination of meetings and perhaps even a survey instrument could be used. Have the Secretariat do a realistic self assessment of the Diocesan Cursillo. Ask the National Episcopal Cursillo Committee to assist with this. Determine the strengths and weaknesses of the Diocesan Movement.

After doing the assessment, the Secretariat should plan how to overcome the weaknesses and emphasize the strengths to the various constituencies. For example, if the clergy do not understand much about the goals/purposes of Cursillo, have supportive clergy explain the nature of Cursillo to other clergy who know little about Cursillo or are skeptical of it. Many might become very interested if they understood that Cursillo can serve as an evangelical strategy for a parish and how Cursillo develops mature Christian leaders. Some Dioceses have had sessions at Diocesan meetings for clergy (some Dioceses have even had a Clergy Day) explaining the nature of Cursillo. If the Bishop believes that Cursillo is "doing their own thing" without relating their activities to the work of the diocese, the Secretariat should develop a Pastoral Plan for the Movement in cooperation with the Bishop (see booklet on Pastoral Plan in NEC Library).

Disease III

The lack of a viable Pre-Cursillo process strikes many Movements and takes several forms.

Candidate Selection

The Cursillo Weekend can be such an enjoyable and stimulating experience that the persons who have made a Weekend are anxious to share the experience with friends without regard to whether or not they are appropriate candidates. This is understandable; we want to share the enjoyable experience of our lives. However, it leaves out a very important consideration; it is not the EXPERIENCE that Cursillo is all about—the Weekend is a means of achieving the PURPOSE of Cursillo.

The goal of the Cursillo Movement is to make Christians who are, or can become, leaders into vital, inspired witnesses who can change their environments for Christ. Through Pre-Cursillo, we seek out those who are in positions of influence within different environments and then, through the Three-Day Weekend and the Fourth Day, provide them with the tools and the support system necessary to enable them to change their world for Christ.

Cursillistas sometimes look on the Weekend as a “retreat” to help people solve their problems and will sponsor those whom they believe will be helped deal life difficulties. This is a compassionate, but misplaced, attitude. Again, the Pre-Cursillo process focuses on seeking out and recruiting leaders who are able and who will be inspired to change their world for Christ.

Qualifications and Commitment of Sponsors

Another problem at the Pre-Cursillo stage is to make sure that the sponsors know and are willing to fulfill their responsibilities. In too many cases, sponsors believe their responsibilities include asking an individual to attend, helping with the necessary application process, and getting them to the Weekend. Many believe their responsibilities stop after the person is dropped off for the Weekend. They fail to understand that sponsorship involves explaining to the candidate during the Pre-Cursillo phase what happens on the Weekend as well as introducing them to Fourth Day Activities—what is expected that they will do after the Weekend. After the Weekend, the sponsors are responsible for making sure the new Cursillistas are provided opportunities for Fourth Day Activities, including grouping and becoming involved in Ultreyas. Sponsorship actually involves introducing the candidate to what Cursillo is all about, making sure that the candidate gets to the Weekend, and then initiating them into Fourth Day Activities. Those who sponsor candidates should understand their total responsibilities prior to sponsoring someone for the Weekend.

Selecting Team Members

Team selection can later present a problem if certain criteria are not used. The temptation here is to select friends or agreeable, likable people for service on the team. Another tendency is to select the same people over and over again to serve on team.

The Remedy

The Pre-Cursillo process must be taught and retaught by the Secretariat, Servant Community, and the individual Ultreyas, not only to Cursillistas in the Diocese but also to the Clergy.

The Prescription

Prayer should be an integral part of all phases of the Cursillo process. Prayer is very important for choosing sponsors, candidates, and team members.

When selecting possible candidates, an Ultreya group should discuss and pray about possible candidates for the Three-Day Weekend. The individual must be a leader in a particular environment and be recommended by both a sponsor and the local clergyperson. He/She must also be willing and able to participate in Fourth Day Activities. Sometimes, the clergyperson knows more about a candidate than the sponsor. If there is a major problem in a person's life, such as a divorce, death of family member, physical or mental ailment, generally it is better that the person not attend the Three-Day Weekend. Clergy people must be reminded of the important role that they play in this process.

The duties of a sponsor should be made clear to every Cursillista. This can be done in several ways:

- listing the responsibilities of the sponsor as a part of the candidate application form,
- discussing the responsibilities at local and diocesan Ultreyas,
- putting articles about sponsorship in the newsletter, and
- having a service for sponsors at the beginning of the Three-Day Weekend that reminds sponsors of their responsibilities.

Both clergy and sponsors should be encouraged to be ready to make hard decisions regarding whether an individual should attend a weekend. They should not be afraid to say "now is not the time." Of course, this message has to be delivered compassionately. However, the weekend is not for everyone, and we have to recognize this fact.

Team members should be selected from persons who have made their Cursillo and who are

1. actively involved in their home parish;
2. actively involved in the Fourth Day--Group Reunion and Ultreya;
3. growing in their study and understanding of the Movement and Method, and ideally trained in the Servant Community.

Consideration should also be given to selecting team members who have strengths for the various tasks. They also should have the temperament and skill to work with others. Lesser standards for team membership will likely lead to problems during the Weekend. Try to include some new Cursillistas on team. Remember that Cursillo is interested in training leaders. Serving on team is one avenue for developing leadership skills.

Disease IV

The **Cursillo Weekend** generally has problems in any of four areas that inhibit the health of the Weekends.

Extraneous Materials/Activities

The team is diseased when it allows extraneous material to become more important than the authentic message of Cursillo. The Weekend, as presented in the official literature, is a carefully crafted product. (See **The Authentic Three-Day Weekend** booklet in NEC Library) All the legitimate elements in it need to be there. However, over time many additions and alterations have crept into the essentially simple format of the Weekend (such as palanca in the form of material gifts, extra skits that have no relationship to the content of the Weekend, etc.). Some of these have tended to dominate the Weekend, diminishing the primary goals of the Weekend.

Lack of Service and Cooperative Mentality of Team

If the team is more concerned about its own enjoyment or is not working together as a team, the impact of the Cursillo message is lessened and cuts short the equipping of the

participants to carry out the purpose of Cursillo. The team is involved in the formation of Christian apostles--missionaries to various environments. They are there to serve, not to entertain or be entertained. They are there to minister, not to be ministered to. The spiritual needs of team members should be taken care of prior to the Weekend.

Lack of Prepared Candidates

The candidates can also be a problem. They need to know what to expect, and what will be expected from them after their experience. In past years, Cursillo has been "dubbed" by some as a secret society with a Spanish-oriented vocabulary. Many believed that the candidate should be told very little about the Weekend because of the surprises. The literature for National Episcopal Cursillo has been stating for years that we should be very forthright with the candidates as to what to expect on the Weekend and what we want them to do after the Weekend.

Little Free Time for Contemplation During the Weekend

If the proposed schedule for the Weekend is followed, it is a full Weekend. If extra activities are added to the Weekend or if the presenters do not stay within their time limits, there is very little "down time" for the candidates to contemplate what they have heard and discussed. Some time to digest the information that is given is very important. Free time must be a part of the schedule. Otherwise, the candidates become very tired and emotionally exhausted.

The Remedy

Many of the problems in this area can be controlled or averted by the coordinator of the Weekend. He/she must well understand what he/she is supposed to do during team meetings and during the Three-Day Weekend. The coordinator must also be aware that the candidates will be both extroverts and introverts, each type having different needs. The lack of knowledgeable candidates can be corrected through better informed sponsors who implement their responsibilities.

The Prescription

One approach to determining whether your weekend has too much extraneous materials/activities is to “strip” everything from the weekend schedule except the authentic weekend. (See Authentic Three-Day Weekend booklet in NEC Library). Then test whether each of the extra materials/activities should be placed back in to the weekend after careful and prayerful consideration as to whether it adds to or detracts from the true purpose of Cursillo. Depending on the structure of your Diocesan Cursillo Movement, this could be done by the Weekend Coordinator, the Secretariat, a group in the Servant Community, or by members of the team for an individual weekend.

Team formation, which is many times done by the Weekend Coordinator, should emphasize that each team member is an instrument of grace for the candidates and will be serving the candidates. Being a team member is hard work and demands selfless dedication FOR THE SAKE of the candidates.

There should be sufficient team meetings prior to the Weekend to develop a cooperative relationship among the team members. At those team meetings, the coordinator of the Weekend and the Spiritual Advisor should emphasize what is expected of the team. The schedule for the Weekend based on the authentic Three-Day Weekend with adequate free time should be shared with team members during the team meetings. Team members must be prepared to give up pre-conceptions and pet aspects of their Cursillo Weekend and be completely dedicated to the authentic Cursillo format. Most team meetings include team members giving rollos; the coordinator should make sure that each team member understands the time limit for those talks and why such time limits are necessary.

During the Weekend, the coordinator must make sure that the team adheres to the schedule for the Weekend. Also, he/she should have a debriefing each day with the team to identify any weaknesses in the progress of the Weekend and determine any corrective actions to be implemented.

As part of the sponsorship process, sponsors should understand that they should be very clear about what will transpire during the weekend—fifteen talks, time for discussion, worship, etc. They should also invite their candidates to attend a grouping and a local or Diocesan Ultreya prior to the Weekend so that they understand what is expected of them after the Weekend.

Disease V

The Cursillo Weekend prepares Christian leaders to return to their environments and to change them for Christ. Part of their work is summed up in the phrase: "Make a friend, be a friend, bring your friend to Christ." However, this must be understood in larger terms than simply bringing a friend to Christ. A Cursillista is called to minister on the Fourth Day in his/her whole environment that includes many different people, thereby touching the lives of many. Unfortunately, many times new Cursillistas do not grasp a full understanding of what is meant by Christianizing their environment and the effectiveness of the Cursillo method in meeting that goal.

The Remedy

As people come away from their Cursillo Weekend, they must well understand their role and, most importantly, the support system they have with other Cursillistas when they participate in Fourth Day Activities. The Cursillistas must not only cognitively understand how this support system works but be linked with others in Group Reunions and participate in Ultreya on both a parochial, area, and diocesan level so they, in turn, realize the benefits of this support system. An isolated Christian is a paralyzed Christian. Cursillo provides the means to break down the isolation so that in tandem with others, the purpose—not just of Cursillo, but of the whole Church—can be realized.

The Prescription

We must find ways to vividly emphasize the message of the final talks on the Weekend. The team must be sure the weight of the Weekend message tends toward the Fourth Day--Cursillo's unique contribution. That is why adequate

free time and time for resting is required on the first two days so that the candidates can hear the messages on the last day of the Weekend. At every level of Cursillo, beginning with the leadership of the Secretariat and the Servant Community, the Fourth Day program must be promoted, modeled, supervised, and implemented.

The area Ultreyas as well as the Secretariat must go out of their way to provide Fourth Day Programs which the Cursillistas are encouraged to attend. Sponsors should make sure that their candidates who have become Cursillistas are involved in these activities. Only in that way will the Cursillistas understand how the Method can be so effective in helping them Christianize their environments.

Disease VI

In many local movements, literally hundreds of people make their Cursillo Weekend, but only a fraction of those remain active in the Fourth Day. The total number of Cursillistas might be divided as follows:

- Those who are deeply involved;
- Those who are somewhat involved;
- Those who are not involved, but who are putting into practice what they learned through Cursillo
- Those who are not involved and are not practicing any aspect of the Cursillo Method.

Leadership in some Diocesan communities become disheartened when they see candidates who seemingly have not embraced the Cursillo Method.

The Remedy

The remedy in this case focuses primarily on acceptance of what God is doing with the candidates for the Weekend. In any organization, there is always a core group of those who are committed to "the program"; there are those only partially committed; there are those on the fringe and beyond. A Cursillo Weekend does not affect every person the same way. We need to recognize this fact--that there are many who will walk away from the Weekend and never again be seen at a Cursillo function. They may, however, be bearing

fruit quietly. They may well apply what they have learned in their lives.

The Prescription:

Appreciate and support those who take a leadership role within the Cursillo Community. Encourage participation by all, not just a few. Remember, the Servant Community and Secretariat are training grounds for leaders. No "in group" of Cursillistas should dominate the leadership in either group for years.

Communicate faithfully with all Cursillistas. Recruit those who seem to be bearing fruit but remain on the fringe. Look for opportunities to work with different persons, rather than the "same old bunch." Pray for those who seem distant to Cursillo Movement. The Secretariat and Servant Community should accept criticism or negative comments and grow from them.

Finally, leaders should not be discouraged when some become disinterested in the work of Cursillo. Remember it is the Spirit, not you, who moves the hearts of people to do various ministries. He may be moving some people to do other ministries or may not want some people to be involved in Cursillo at a particular time.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of Cursillo is to affect their environments and change them for Christ. It is a Method utilizing the Pre-Cursillo, the Three-day Weekend, and the Fourth Day--Group Reunion and Ultreya. It is a linking of leaders, providing them with a support system and holding them accountable. It is a very special tool in the Church that the Spirit of the risen Christ is using with exceptional results when it is applied authentically and intentionally.

information about this weekend can be gained from a district representative.

- C. Grand Ultreyas or Diocesan Ultreyas can also be helpful in this process.

Summary

The restarting or renewing of the Cursillo Movement in a diocese should be carefully and deliberately planned. All activities should begin and end in prayer. Engaging the Diocese and the Cursillo community in prayer support is also important. The process of restarting and renewing cannot be done quickly—it takes time and well considered action. Care should be taken to make sure that the changes that are implemented are true to the Cursillo Mission and Method.

APPENDIX A

SELF EVALUATION FOR A CURSILLO MOVEMENT

These questions are designed to assist Secretariats and Servant Communities in evaluating and assessing the status of their Movement. The answers to these questions can also provide the basis for future actions. For many of the items, the booklets in the NEC Library are referenced to help in the assessment process.

1. What are some ways Cursillo can help people live out their baptismal covenant?
2. Has Cursillo had a direct impact on helping people live out their baptismal covenant? How?
3. Has Cursillo had an impact on environments? Where?
4. Are there plans to seek out and study any environments? How will this happen?
5. Is there a pastoral plan and is it being implemented? How? Is it current? (NEC Library: "Pastoral Plan")
6. What actions have been taken to further the implementation of your pastoral plan?
7. How does your bishop support the Movement?
8. How can Cursillo be more supportive to other diocesan organizations?
9. What actions has the Secretariat taken to make Cursillo known in the diocese? (NEC Library: "Secretariat")

10. What actions have been made to inform non-participating clergy about Cursillo? (NEC Library: "Role of Clergy")
11. How active and effective is your Servant Community? If one is not active, why not? (NEC Library: "Servant Community")
12. What actions can the Secretariat take to strengthen the Servant Community?
13. What actions have been taken to educate sponsors on the responsibilities of sponsorship? (NEC Library: "Sponsorship")
14. What actions might be taken to aid the sponsorship process?
15. What role do clergy play in the candidate selection process? (NEC Library: "Role of Clergy")
16. What are the activities of the Weekend which contribute to the teaching of the Cursillo Method? (NEC Library: "Authentic Three-Day Weekend")
17. What activities on the Weekend are "fluff" and not part of the Authentic Three-Day Weekend? Can they be eliminated? If not, why not.
18. What can be done to make the Weekend more authentic?
19. What percentage of your Cursillista community is grouping? (NEC Library: "Group Reunion")
20. How many Ultreya meetings were held in the last year? (NEC Library: "Ultreya")
21. What has the Secretariat done to help form Ultreyas and Group Reunions?
22. What steps need to be taken to further Ultreyas and Group Reunion?
23. What has the Secretariat done to foster Spiritual Direction? (NEC Library: "Spiritual Direction")
24. What has the Secretariat done to recruit clergy to participate as Spiritual Advisors? (NEC Library: "Clergy Talk Book")
25. What has been or can be done to enlist more clergy to participate in or attend a Weekend?
26. Are new Cursillistas being included and encouraged to participate in Servant Community, Weekend Teams, and Secretariat?
27. What is the composition of the Weekend Team? Are the same people always on team? How are Weekend Team members selected? Is this method effective? (NEC Library: "Apostolic Message and Team Formation")