

# The Cursillo

## An Introduction

## What is Cursillo?

The Cursillo [cur SEE yo] is a Lay Catholic movement. Our Purpose: to teach our friends how to live in God's friendship. We do this in several ways:

- Friendship
- Group Reunion
- The Cursillo, or in English, The Short Course

### Friendship

First, we grow in friendship with God and with each other. Jesus said, "I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you." (John 15:15). Friends *love* each other, and *listen* to each other.

### Group Reunion

Second, every week, as a small group of friends, we hold ourselves accountable in the areas of piety, study, and action. The idea is to compare what we *said* we were going to do in each area with what we actually *did*, and note what is, and what isn't, working for us. Then we share what we plan as our next step in each area. We call this process of taking steps and sharing the results *Group Reunion*. By doing this in



**Cursillo Team in formation for the weekend.**

prayer, we rely on Jesus's promise, "Where two or three gather together in my name, there am I in their midst." Our weekly conversations have meat in them, about issues that are important to us. We're sharing the reality of our lives, and we listen to each other! In Group Reunion, we are *heard*.

### What do we mean by Piety?

*Piety* are those practices, those actions, we do to grow in holiness. God wants us to be holy, and said so. "Be holy, as I am holy." – 1 Peter 1:6.

### What do we mean by Study?

By *Study*, we mean learning of God, his church, and Man.

Study is the bridge between holiness and helping our neighbor. We "study" God, and we "study" or "observe" our neighbor. From the catechism: Our duty is to know, love, and serve God in this world, and be happy with him in the next.

### What do we mean by Action?

What we do as Christians in our environments we call *Action*. This doesn't mean we turn our workplace into a monastery, but rather that we bring our Christian values to bear, where we are. We do this because loving our neighbors as ourselves means we help them to grow in piety, study, and action.

*Continued on page 2*

April 2006

### Contents

Cursillos	2
The Three Days	2
Each Day of the Three Days	2
Anything else?	2
Tell me about the Post Cursillo	3
Should I attend?	3
How is the movement linked to the Catholic Church?	3
How did it start?	3
Should I attend?	3
How much time does Cursillo ask of me?	3
What's my next step?	3
Bishop Loverde's Comments	4
Who to contact	4

### The Cursillo

Third, we hold *Cursillos de Cristiandad*, Spanish for “short courses in Christianity”. A Cursillo is three days, typically held over a weekend, so the short-hand term for the course is “the weekend”. We consider this course so important that we label the phases of life in relation to it. We call the phase you’re in before you make the weekend *Precursillo*. We call the phase after the weekend, *PostCursillo*, which is, naturally enough, the rest of your life. You may also hear it referred to as *The 4<sup>th</sup> Day*, to indicate that the practices

for room, meals and materials. The cost depends on the facility, and at present is in the range of \$225 to \$250 for the three days and nights.

### The Three Days

On the weekend, the attendees are called *Cursillistas* [cur see YISS tas].

We begin with a Silent Retreat Thursday evening through Friday morning. After breakfast, the rest of Friday is spent on the encounter of Self, discovering for yourself “where you are.” Saturday, the encounter is focused on Christ, and Sunday, the en-

### Anything else?

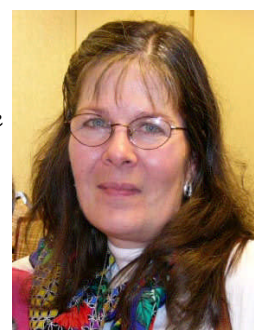
Yes! The weekend is programmed so that you have free time for private prayer and meditation. We celebrate Mass, Eucharistic adoration, and the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

The Priest is available for Spiritual Direction, so you can schedule a time to talk with him.

Because the Cursillo is an important time in your life, others in the Cursillo community are praying and sacrificing for you while you’re making the weekend.

*What does Cursillo mean to me? It’s tough living a Christian lifestyle. Cursillo offers me an entire company of Christian travelers. Friends meet regularly to recognize where in our day to day lives we find Christ or fail to see Him. We laugh, console and care for each other. We share how we live our devotions every day and what works for us. We relate what we’ve learned about Church, God or spirituality and suggest areas of study to each other. And I celebrate the power of prayer knowing that fellow travelers pray for me and I pray for them. We travel together.*

*Beth DeCristofara*



introduced in the three days are on-going.

Thus, Cursillo is more than a Retreat. A Retreat may give you a rosy glow for a day, or a week, or a month, but the glow may eventually fade. Because of the Post-Cursillo plan of Group Reunion, the Lord helps us *maintain* our life in the spirit, to continue the practices that began on the weekend, and to persevere as Christians.

The weekend is focused on Jesus.

Men’s Cursillos are separate from Women’s Cursillos because the way the sexes communicate is different.

A team of Laity and Spiritual Directors coordinate the weekend. One of the Spiritual Directors is a priest; the other may be a deacon, vowed religious, or lay person with appropriate training. The laity on team are active in Cursillo and the church. We’re realistic, we know what life in the real world is all about - we’re living it in our own environments.

The team also pays the tuition for the weekend. Yep, we’re doing this at our expense because we think it’s worth it. Speaking of Tuition: it covers all expenses

counter is with Christian Community.

### Each Day of the Three Days

During each day, the team members give short Talks in the community room.

As a Cursillista, you are seated at one of several round tables as a Group Reunion, for the purpose of discussing each talk. During these discussions, you’re en-

couraged to examine where you are in relation to the subject at hand. While you’re hearing what others think, you also

are being heard! (which may not always be common in your experience). In the evening, the team and Cursillistas gather for a session in which each group summarizes their table discussions. We do all the weekend activities *together*, so you live in, and experience, Christian community from the beginning.

Additionally, the Spiritual Directors present Meditations, usually in the chapel.

In addition to the profound issues we’ve mentioned, the weekend is also a time of great joy and fun! And there’s a lot of music and singing – if you play an instrument, bring it!



**A group on the weekend**

*“On my weekend I found that I can have a personal relationship with Jesus.” Harry Hardin*

### Tell me about the Post Cursillo

In addition to Group Reunion, we meet occasionally in parish-wide gatherings of the groups, so that we can renew contact with each other. We call these larger gatherings *Ultreya* [ull TRAY ya], a Spanish word of encouragement. We meet from time to time in Diocesan *Ultreya*s, and renew our contacts with Cursillistas from other parishes.

Leaders of the movement meet monthly for more intense study. We call this activity *Reunion of Leaders*. As friends, we meet occasionally for social events like dinner dances, concerts, retreats, etc. A steering committee serves the local movement.

### How is the movement linked to the Catholic Church?

We're focused on Jesus Christ, Savior and Lord. St Paul is our patron saint. Our mission is the church's mission. We're fully Catholic, and obedient to the Magisterium.

We are joined to the National Conference of Catholic Bishops through our official liaison, Most Rev. James A. Tarmayo, Bishop of Laredo, and through the Bishops' Secretariat for the Laity in Washington, D.C.

Popes Paul VI (1966) and John Paul II (1980) mentioned Cursillo as one of the hopes for the church.

The Most Reverend Paul Loverde,

Bishop of Arlington is a Cursillista, knows who we are, and supports what we're doing.

Many of us are active in our parishes. However, the Cursillo aim is to teach you how to live the Christian life, rather than to make you a 'parish employee'. Your Apostolate may be in the parish, maybe not.

### How did it start?

Young men from the Catholic Action Movement on Mallorca, a Spanish island in the Mediterranean, were moved by the Holy Spirit to develop the Group Reunion. They were then led to develop the weekend, to teach how to do the Group Reunion. They did this under the guidance of their bishop, beginning around 1939.

### This sounds interesting. Should I attend?

Thomas Aquinas divided growth in charity into three states of increased holiness: The Beginner, The Progressing, and The Perfect. (his terms). The Beginner is primarily involved in avoiding sin. The primary interest for The Progressing lies in growing in charity. The Perfect emphasizes the experience and enjoyment of God. We've learned that, at whatever level we are, we can improve.

You should be emotionally mature, so we recommend a minimum age of about 23 years. And, the weekend is not a place for group therapy, nor is it a place to solve psychological problems.

### It looks like there's a lot going on. If I attend, how much time does Cursillo ask of me?

If you attend the weekend, we ask you to stay for the entire 72 hours. Clearly, we invite you to make Group Reunion a high priority, and hope that you will accept that invitation. But it is that: an invitation. You may get involved as much or as little as you decide. To quote Jesus, "Come and see."

*"the love expressed by the Cursillo community has sustained me since the weekend."*

### Ok, what's my next step?

You need a *Sponsor*, a friend who invites you to the Cursillo – perhaps they've already invited you to join them at their Group Reunion. The Sponsor's job is to arrange transportation to the weekend site, to pray for you before, during, and after the weekend, and to get you into a Group Reunion.

If there is no one in your parish, contact us and we'll arrange sponsorship

A list of folks who can help is listed on page 4. Feel free to call any one of us!

*Cursillo totally changed my life. In reality, I do mostly the same things I always used to do ... but it's as if a veil has been lifted, and all things appear new. I had been praying to God for some pragmatic, tactical direction. The Lord answered with a spiritual, strategic answer – and delivered it through Cursillo. It was like a knock on the head with the message "It's not what you DO ... it's who you ARE. And you are My child and I love you ... now come and see ..."*

*Mark Clemente*



## A word from our Bishop Loverde



“The Cursillo is a unique opportunity in which to deepen your awareness of Christ’s love and of our sharing in His saving mission through prayer, study and witness – all rooted in a true spirit of community. The Cursillo will change your life immensely! I know from personal experience”!

Most Reverend Paul S. Loverde  
Bishop of Arlington Diocese

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# The Cursillo



## *An Introduction*

By  
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Tom Silva

# Do you want to live in God's Friendship?

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Or any member of our leadership at  
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