

CURSILLO IN CHRISTIANITY

The Cursillo in Christianity is primarily a lay movement. It is an instrument of renewal by which Christianity can permeate, live and grow in today's world. It proposes no new type of spirituality but a method through which one's spirituality can be strengthened, lived and shared in all areas of one's environment.

HOW IT HAPPENS

A Cursillo weekend begins on Thursday evening and ends on Sunday evening. During the three days the participants listen to the Gospel message, broken into fifteen short talks. Five are given by clergy and center on Grace, the gift of God to all persons. The other ten are given by lay persons who already have made a Cursillo. The talks deal with Christian study, action, leadership, living a life in relationship with God, the role of the layperson in the church and similar reflections on situations encountered in daily living. The talks build on each other.

Each talk is followed by a period of small group discussion. The teachings of Christ are presented in an atmosphere of warmth, joy and fellowship. Music and skits provide entertainment.

SPANISH ORIGIN

Cursillo (pronounced "kur-see-yo") is a Spanish word meaning "short course" – short course in Christianity. The Cursillo started in Spain in the late 1940s and spread throughout the Spanish speaking countries of the world. It came to the United States in 1957 when Spanish Air Cadets, training in Texas held a Cursillo weekend for a group of Spanish speaking men. The first English language Cursillo was held in 1961 in San Angelo, Texas, and that year, the movement spread to a dozen other states, including Illinois.

The movement was introduced in the Peoria diocese in 1964 where it is ecumenical, open to all Christian faiths. Local leaders have helped establish similar national programs in the Episcopal, Methodist and Lutheran churches, and a prison ministry program is an additional outgrowth of the Peoria Cursillo movement.

ONCE IN A LIFETIME

A Cursillo is made only once in a lifetime, therefore it is not considered a substitute for a retreat. Actually a Cursillo experience makes subsequent retreats more profitable, and Cursillistas are urged to make regular retreats. Men and women make separate Cursillos, and in the case of married couples, a husband's weekend is usually scheduled before the wife's. A participant should be sponsored by someone who has made a Cursillo.

OPEN TO ALL CHRISTIANS

The local Cursillo, sponsored by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Peoria, reflects Roman Catholic theology, but is broad-based in its Christian message. A Protestant clergy is included in each Cursillo "Team" which presents the weekend, and lay persons of all religious affiliations participate. There is no pressure on participants to take part in any religious service in which they would not feel comfortable. Out of the blending of personalities, religious denominations and occupations, a respect develops for each other's differences, and an appreciation of the common search for a fully Christian life.

FOURTH DAY

The program recognizes the continuing need for support in a Cursillista's "fourth day" – the rest of one's life. A Cursillista is urged to join a "group reunion." This is a brief weekly meeting of four or five fellow Cursillistas. These individuals review their past week: how Christ has touched them, their Christian achievements or disappointments, and their progress in the Cursillo method of piety, study and action.

Ultreyas (Spanish for "onward") are held monthly. They are reunions of the Cursillo community at-large and are open to invited guests. They afford Cursillistas an opportunity to meet, pray and socialize with others who are dedicated to living a Christian life. They also provide support for a Cursillista's efforts to bring Christ's message to others in his environment.

BENEFITS

It is difficult to explain what the Cursillo does for a person, or what happens over a weekend. Since each person comes to the Cursillo from a different place in time and a different relationship with God, it is understandable that each will respond differently to the material presented and the experience of community living in a Christian atmosphere. For some, it is a total turnabout in their lives; for others, it is a grand awakening; for yet others, it is an enrichment of what they have already known and have been living. We do not promise anything or judge anyone – we simply offer the program and rely on the grace of God and the openness of the individual to produce its benefits.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Cursillos are held at Centers in Peoria, Bloomington/Normal, Rock Island/Moline, Illinois Valley area, the Champaign area, and Prisons within the Catholic Diocese of Peoria.

- For further information: contact the Diocesan Cursillo in Christianity, Spalding Renewal Center, 401 N.E. Madison Ave., Peoria, IL 61603-3719 or Phone (309) 676-5587.
- In Bloomington /Normal area: write to P.O. Box 845, Bloomington, IL 61702-0845 or email cursillobnl@gmail.com
- In Champaign area: write to Eastern Area Peoria Cursillo Community, P.O. 7043, Champaign, IL 61826-7043
- In Illinois Valley area: write to Peoria Cursillo in Christianity, Box 462, Tiskilwa, IL 61368.
- In Rock Island/Moline area: write to Peoria Cursillo P.O. Box 933, Moline, IL 61266.
- For Prison Cursillos information: contact Spalding Renewal Center, 401 N.E. Madison Ave., Peoria, IL 61603-3719 or Phone (309) 676-5587.