

WHAT IS CURSILLO ?

The full title of the Cursillo (pronounced kur-see'-yo) is "Cursillo de Cristiandad," which means, short or little course of Christianity. A Cursillo weekend is, among other things, the experience of living for three days in a community of persons who are consciously trying to live as Christians. It is quite a contrast to everyday life in the secular world.

Bishop McNairy of Minnesota described it this way: "[The joy of life] has been experienced and expressed through the companionship of a weekend committed in knowing Christ through Word and Sacrament, and through discussion and learning. We have met Christ anew in the loving concern of those who have fed us in body, mind, and spirit. We have found in Him friendship and faith of others."

The Cursillo begins on Thursday evening and ends on Sunday afternoon. Part of the purpose of the weekend is to help us recognize Christ's presence and action in our lives and in the lives of others. That is also part of the Church's purpose, but Cursillo is a concentrated opportunity to do so. A Cursillo weekend consists of, among other things, a number of talks by laity and clergy and worship services. During the weekend we have the opportunity to share through discussion our thoughts and ideas with others, which helps us to clarify our feelings about a lot of the Church's teaching and a great deal of learning takes place in a short time.

There is nothing new, different, or unusual about any aspect of the Cursillo weekend. What makes it a special time is that we experience Christianity in a concentrated time period (instead of in bits and pieces, spread over a life-time) and we actually live it (instead of just hearing about it in an abstract and theoretical way). So why is a Cursillista (a person who has been to a Cursillo) so enthusiastic about the weekend? Simply because that person has experienced the fullness of Christian living in a way not usually possible in our fragmentary everyday life.

Cursillo is not in any way an encounter group or sensitivity training. Nor is it a weekend of retreat and meditation. It is just living basic Christianity. The weekend consists of a series of talks, most of which are by lay persons, discussions about the subjects of those talks, and responding to the talks. Time is spent in worship each day. Each day there is some free time, but most of the time is spent in group activities.

All the Spanish words used in Cursillo often seem to make Cursillo out to be a secret society, but the Cursillo Movement is not a secret society. The Cursillo Movement originated in Spain and because the movement is international in scope, the Spanish terms have been retained as a common language to describe Cursillo. More than two million men and women of various languages and races and communions in more than 50 nations have participated in Cursillo.

Finally, Cursillo is not necessary for one's salvation. But Cursillo can be a significant and very real experience of what it is like to live in a community which is focused and centered on Jesus Christ. That is the joy that makes those who have attended Cursillo so enthusiastic for the weekend.