

## ***Cursillo: A Way of Life for Christian Leaders*** ***A perspective from the new Lay Director, Sister Edie DiTommaso***

Cursillo is many things to many different people. It is **not** a secret society or a secret method of living a Christian life. It is **not** a group of spiritually elite who prey upon others to get their own way.

The word Cursillo is a Spanish term that means a short course in Christianity. Its purpose is to provide Christian leaders with a specific method or way of life that enriches their understanding of what it means to be a Christian in today's society. Think of it this way - If you were going to build a house, especially in Northwest Texas, you would need a very strong foundation and deep footings, one that could withstand the winds, tornadoes and strong storms that often buffet the plains. Likewise, your spiritual house needs a strong foundation and deep footings to help you withstand the winds of change and chaos caused by life's many twists and turns.

The Cursillo method is taught during a three-day retreat using a series of talks on piety, study, and action. Each talk is meant to give the participants a deeper appreciation of things they probably know but might not have thought about in a long time. Using the building analogy again, if you want to build a house, you must first have a plan. Most of us are not architects or builders, so we need to seek advice from someone who is more experienced than we are in that area. The Cursillo Weekend Team is a group of brothers and sisters in Christ who have lived their lives using the Cursillo method. They have come to a deeper understanding of what it means to be a Christian leader. They are not experts, but fellow travelers along the Christian path of life.

The real focus of the Cursillo method, however, is not the weekend, but "living the 4<sup>th</sup> day". "Living the 4<sup>th</sup> day" is putting into practice what you learned on the weekend to enhance your spiritual growth. The essential part of that 4<sup>th</sup> day is something we call "grouping" or the reunion group. This is without a doubt the most misunderstood part of the Cursillo method. "Grouping", as it is known, is simply a weekly meeting of others who have made a Cursillo weekend and want to share their spiritual journey with other likeminded Christians. It does not have to be restricted to just people who have made the weekend, however. It can, and should, include any Christian who wishes to deepen his/her own spiritual experience. Actually, it should be the first step before someone is sponsored for the weekend. Grouping is important because it holds us accountable to others for our spiritual growth. It does not take the place of church attendance; as a matter of fact, it encourages church attendance and participation. It can, and often does, lead to deep friendships that last for many years.

Another part of the 4<sup>th</sup> Day is called Ultreya. An Ultreya is a meeting of reunion groups within a specific geographical area who want to share their life in Christ. It begins with a "floating group reunion", which is a reunion group with people who are not in your weekly reunion group. The advantage is to broaden your friendships with people from other churches. I can tell you that from personal experience, these friendships can be invaluable in times of crisis, both personal and within your parish. At the Ultreya, a person is asked to give a "witness talk" about how they have used the Cursillo method to change their environment either at home, at church, or at work. The talk should not be more than 10 minutes long. It is not a teaching or sermon and is followed by a time for responses from the community and the clergy. Oh yes, there is lots of singing and fellowship, too. Again, although most of the people are ones who have "made the weekend", it is not restricted to them. It is just another way for someone to deepen their own spiritual walk.

To sum it up...Cursillo is a proven method of enriching your own spiritual life. It empowers you to carry out the work of the Church in the world. Is it for everyone? No! Should everyone make a Cursillo weekend? No! But if what I have just told you interests you, and you feel the Holy Spirit leading you in that direction, then it might be something worth considering. Like any change, it needs to be accompanied with prayer and seeking guidance from a trusted source. If you feel like this is where God is leading you, talk to someone who is active in the Cursillo movement about sponsoring you for a weekend. Ask your sponsor if you can start grouping before you go and try to make it to at least one Ultreya before then also.

Cursillo is a way of life. It is a method to strengthen your spiritual journey. Ultreya! Onward and upward in Christ!