

A HANDBOOK FOR LEADERS  
IN THE CURSILLO MOVEMENT  
FOR THE REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA

By  
Roderic D. Jackson

September, 1981

## INTRODUCTION

One does not always recognize a life-changing experience as such at the time it takes place. It is only later, in the light of subsequent events, that one sees how much has happened as a result of one event. New directions, new interests, and new friendships are taken up while old prejudices and outworn ideas are discarded.

Such was the experience of the writer since he accepted the invitation of a Roman Catholic layman, trying to sell soap to the church he served, to make a Cursillo weekend in Detroit, Michigan, October 15-18, 1970. That weekend, though not spiritually or emotionally shattering of itself, began the pilgrimage of discovery about and involvement in the Cursillo movement which has affected every aspect of life and ministry in some way. This handbook is, in one sense, a personal response to that discovery and an attempt to share it with others.

In another sense, it is a practical response to a need within the Reformed Church in America at this moment in its life in 1981. The first RCA-sponsored Cursillo weekends were held in October, 1980, in the state of Iowa. The second men's and women's weekends are being conducted in the fall of 1981 in the same locale. Plans are being formulated to spread the Reformed Church involvement in Cursillo in other areas of Iowa and in other states. This handbook is written in order to give practical help to those team members who will be responsible for the leadership of these weekends, and for those who will give leadership to the movement as a whole within the Reformed Church.

Three things should be noted by those who read and use this handbook. First, no matter how much you read about Cursillos in Christianity, it is impossible to truly understand, appreciate, and use this instrument of renewal unless you have personally gone through the three-day Cursillo weekend. This handbook is no substitute for experience; it can only supplement it. Secondly, every attempt has been made to present a picture of authentic Cursillos in Christianity, the movement as the founders envisioned and developed it. Though written for a non-Roman Catholic readership, specifically the Reformed Church in America, it does not present a hybrid event or program which we simply call "Cursillo." Though some terminology has been changed and some specifically Roman Catholic ideas omitted, the basic structure and details are intact. Thirdly, the greatest amount of attention in this handbook has been given to the role of the Spiritual Director. This is not only because it is the area in which the writer has the most expertise, but also because it is one in which there seems to be the greatest need. Directors will find complete outlines of their five talks on the weekend and other help in fulfilling their responsibilities as a team member.

It is to be hoped that all team members will find the material on the history, assumptions, purpose, method, structures, and theology of the movement to be helpful. The writer submits it with a prayer that the Holy Spirit will use it to the glory of God in the lives of those men and women who shall use it in the fall of 1981.

## CHAPTER I

### AN OVERVIEW OF THE CURSILLO MOVEMENT

The Cursillos in Christianity is an instrument of renewal. It is directed to a situation in which many Christians are only nominally Christian and in which the environment is indifferent to Christ and his message. This is an apt description of the world in which we live. Much of secular culture thinks of Christianity as irrelevant to the real world. Many Christians, at the same time, are lethargic and lukewarm, viewing Christianity primarily as a set of rules to be followed to avoid hell. The contrast with the lively, confident, and enthusiastic band of Christians about whom we read in Acts 17:6 that they were "men who are turning the world upside down" is obvious. The need for renewal, for new life in the church, has been well documented in recent years. The need for the evangelization of the world is as old as the Great Commission and just as urgent.

Cursillo is one instrument of renewal which God has raised up. It has been defined the following way: "The Cursillos in Christianity is a movement which, through its own method, makes possible the living of what is fundamental for being a Christian, by creating small groups or nuclei of Christians who ferment the environment with Gospel, helping them to discover and realize their personal vocation within this living."<sup>1</sup> Each phrase in this definition is pregnant with meaning which will be explained in succeeding chapters of this handbook. Let us now, however, begin at the beginning.

A. History. The beginnings of the Cursillo movement are to be found in Roman Catholic Spain some 40 years ago. Following a brutal civil war, confronted with a Fascist government and subjected to religious persecution, the church in Spain faced a situation in which life in general had stopped being Christian. In spite of some external manifestations of Christendom, the influence of Christ was very weak or practically null. Very few men attended worship and the influence of Christian ideals on secular life was absent.

In this situation, a few men began meeting together to pray, to plan, and to work for the renewal of the church and the Christianization of the world. Their immediate goal was a pilgrimage for young men to Compostela; their ultimate objective was to produce Christian leaders who would effectively change the world as agents of Jesus Christ. They began meeting as a team of leaders to study the Scriptures and their own environment. Seven years later, the pilgrimage took place, after which the leaders met again in what has been called the first group reunion. (1948) Seeing how effective both the preparation had been for penetrating

---

<sup>1</sup> First Latin American Encounter, Bogota, 1968.

the environment and the group reunion was for linking together and strengthening these leaders, they saw the need for an effective initiation by which men could be given a living experience of the grace of God. If they could be brought to a personal encounter with the living Christ, lives would be transformed, leaders formed and structures of society penetrated with the Christian ideal. The group reunion would serve as the core of perseverance for these leaders.

Thus in 1949 the first Cursillo weekend was held on the island of Mallorca, the result of eight years of preparation. Far from being a lucky accident which was repeated and became popular, the very first Cursillo was a well-coordinated event which grew out of a specific situation as the result of careful planning and experimentation. The names of Bishop Juan Hervas and of laymen Eduardo Bonnin and Jaime Capo deserve recognition as leaders of the team which originated this complex piece of machinery.

The success of the first Cursillo was overwhelming. Joy and enthusiasm were infectious, lives were changed and environments were transformed. Soon Cursillo spread from youth to men and then to women. It jumped to the mainland of Spain and then all through Latin America. The first Cursillo given in the United States was held in Waco, Texas, in May, 1957. The first Cursillo given in English occurred in November, 1961. By 1974 Cursillos had been given in more than fifty nations on five continents--more than two million men and women had participated as of that date, with probably double that number today.

Up to this point we have spoken only of Cursillos in the context of the Roman Catholic Church. Although a number of non-Roman Catholics, both pastors and laypersons, had attended a Cursillo weekend as individuals there was no official participation or opportunity for them until 1969 in Detroit, Michigan. A new Presbyterian minister Cursillista, the Rev. Keith Hueftle who had made his Cursillo in 1968, asked why a weekend could not be put on for Protestants or, better yet, why not an ecumenical Cursillo where both Protestants and Roman Catholics might attend. This vision was caught by a number of other persons including Fr. Vic Clore who was instrumental in securing permission from the Archdiocese of Detroit to hold an Ecumenical Cursillo December 4-7, 1969. Tom Moran, a veteran rector with a bent for innovation and forceful leadership, was selected as the Rector and Fr. Clore and Rev. Hueftle served as co-spiritual directors. The Presbytery of Detroit also gave its approval to the new venture which proved to be extremely well-received by men from both religious backgrounds. Demand for continued ecumenical emphasis led to the second men's ecumenical Cursillo, on which the writer was a candidate, and the growth of the ecumenical aspect over the years so that currently in Detroit all Cursillos have both a priest and a protestant minister as part of the team sharing the role of spiritual director.

Other areas of the United States have also seen the development of non-Roman Catholic Cursillos, however in another way. Where the bishop of a diocese did not give permission for ecumenical Cursillos to be held, other churches were helped to form their own Cursillo structures and hold their own weekends. This is the predominant method in the Episcopal Church which has Cursillo movements in several states, and it is the way the Cursillo movement began in the Lutheran Church in Iowa. In the early 1970's, a group of Lutheran ministers and laypersons made Cursillos and then, with the help of some Roman Catholic Cursillistas, formed the Lutheran Cursillo Movement.

To carry the story one step further, this was the link by which the Reformed Church in Iowa was introduced to Cursillo. The Rev. Donald Jansma, Secretary for Evangelism and Renewal at the Western Regional Center, made a Cursillo in Story City, Iowa, and, seeing the possibilities for its usage in the Reformed Church in America, began to sponsor candidates from the RCA from the Pella area of which he was a resident. The First Men's and Women's Reformed Church-sponsored Cursillos in October, 1980, were the outgrowth of this effort and conclude the story up to the present. By different "tracks" we have come to this point in history, seeking to use together a tool which has been most meaningful in the lives of Christians of different traditions from around the world.

B. Mentality. There is another aspect of Cursillos in Christianity which must be underscored in this brief overview of the movement. It is the assumptions on which the movement is based: assumptions about the nature of reality, the condition of the present world and the way the church addresses the world. Some have called it the "why" of Cursillos. In most of the literature it is referred to as the "mentality," the way of thinking and viewing the world which was shared by the small group of founders.

To that mentality we have already alluded briefly in a previous paragraph on the history of the movement. It is the perception of reality that sees a world turned against God, away from Jesus Christ and from his Church. It is a world in which the influence of Christianity on the structures and decisions of the world is extremely weak. Faced with this situation, the solution sought must be more than new organizations, new church structures or new programs. True spiritual renewal cannot consist merely in external reforms; it must come by way of a radical affirmation of Jesus Christ. It is nothing less than a return to early Christianity, dynamic and triumphant.

If the world is essentially non-Christian, as we believe it is in this last quarter of the 20th century, then there are some implications of this for the church as it addresses the world. These emphases are foundational to the Cursillo method and strategy.

1. The church must evangelize, not merely conserve its membership.

- 2. The church must awaken a hunger for God, rather than presume there is a hunger which doesn't exist.
- 3. The church's message must call for conversion through a dynamic and joyful proclamation by personal witness of what is at the center of the Christian life: a graceful encounter with Jesus Christ.
- 4. The church must see every Christian as an apostle, one called and sent by God. This apostolate is not a luxury but a necessity.
- 5. The church must see itself as a service institution to save others, not simply to preserve itself or a privileged few.

Looked at from another perspective, the Cursillo mentality calls upon the church to:

- 1. See Christianity as life, not merely dogma; a life to be lived, not just truths to be acknowledged.
- 2. Live the grace-filled life in relationship to Christ.
- 3. Permeate and influence the structures of society with a Christian ideal and spirit.
- 4. Action not only within the church but in the world where God has planted us.
- 5. Make no new commitments but carry a Christian attitude in carrying out our current commitments.

The emphasis throughout is more on BEING than DOING things. Faced with a Christianity which does not influence life, which for many is a rather meaningless ritual unrelated to daily life, the Cursillo mentality presents a victorious and confident concept of Christianity as the solution to all human problems. It takes the feeling of restlessness with things as they are and gives a dynamic vision of the Christian, working in community, as an apostle of Jesus Christ on the cutting edge of God's kingdom. It believes that lives can be changed by a vital encounter with the living Christ and sets forth a strategy and method by which that transformation may be accomplished. It is to that purpose which we must now turn our attention.

## CHAPTER II

### STRATEGY AND METHOD OF THE MOVEMENT

The question which the founders of the Cursillo movement faced at the beginning was simply this: Given the state of the world and the church described above, what method would be most effective in renewing the Church and Christianizing the world? Several strategic options were considered: create more Christian structures or organizations; transform men as individuals; directly transform the structures. Finally, a fourth alternative was chosen; namely, to transform into Christians those persons who created or influence those structures already in existence. Or, to put it another way, the strategy of the Cursillo movement is to find key persons who have a natural network of relationships and the capacity to Christianize their environments, bring them to an encounter with the grace of God in Jesus Christ, and release them to be agents of change for the transformation of those structures.

The strategy which was chosen determined the method by which it was to be accomplished. Remember in the definition given earlier that Cursillo is both a movement and a method. It is a movement of the Church, not an association or another organization; the Cursillos is a movement of persons who share common ideal, are motivated by common principles, and employ a common methodology in order to achieve a specific purpose. Not a quasi Christian or underground church, Cursillo is intended to be an instrument of the Church to accomplish what is called "structuring Christianity." It exists to create nuclei of Christians who will engage in leavening their environments with the Gospel.

The method of Cursillo is what makes it a unique instrument. It first seeks out key men and women who are "vertebrae" persons in their environments. We should notice that the word "environment" as used by the Cursillo has little to do with ecology and everything to do with people. Environments should be understood as the natural groupings of people to which persons belong before they make a Cursillo and to which they will return. The Pre-Cursillo Team is responsible to choose people in each environment who could be the backbone for Christian life in that environment. They are responsible for the selection and approval of candidates, the study of different environments which need to be leavened, and the process of planning for a certain area of the Church's ministry and mission.

The second step in the method is the Cursillo weekend. It is a closed, intensive, brief time of proclamation of the message of God's salvation. Its aim is a personal experience of the Gospel, a personal encounter with the living God in which faith is the loving response to a personal summons which binds and prayer is personal dialogue with a friend. It is Christ-centered, intending to transform lives and bring people to a level where they can share their Christian life with others by helping them to meet Christ and make a commitment to him. Men and women who make a Cursillo weekend



are invited to make Christianity the center of their life, put all their resources at Christ's disposal, and commit themselves to actively work to Christianize their environments. They are called to the ideal of serving Christ as as apostle.

The third and final step in the method is called Post-Cursillo or what happens after the weekend. It is the step of linking together those men and women who have made a Cursillo in order to share their Christian life. The Ultreya and Group Reunion, both of which will be explained in greater detail in a succeeding chapter, are the means by which Cursillistas are enabled to perservere in their life in grace. They are the ways by which the nuclei or small groups of Christians encourage, stimulate, and strengthen one another in living out their commitments in whatever vocation or environment in which they find themselves. Continuing renewal in the essentials of the Christian life is thus provided by this mutual support, which in turn provides the backbone for influencing environments for Christ.

The Cursillo weekend, it will be observed, is but one point in the method. It needs Pre-Cursillo and Post-Cursillo to give it direction. The following diagram shows the method schematically:

Find	Pre-Cursillo	Planning. Candidate selection.
Mold	Cursillo Weekend	Commitment to Christ-- Apostolic ideal
Link	Post-Cursillo	Ultreya--Group Reunion

This point needs emphasis lest the Cursillo weekend be seen and practiced simply as a spiritual retreat for an individual and not, as it is intended to be, one point in an intricate strategy to both renew persons and evangelize environments. Cursillo seeks to find, form and link apostolic leaders for the Kingdom so that they may serve God in a variety of ways and places.

## CHAPTER III

### BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

Having surveyed the beginnings of the Cursillos in Christianity and the assumptions, strategy and methodology of the movement, it now becomes necessary to look at the theological and Biblical foundations on which it is built. The question which is raised by the member of the Reformed Church in America is likely to be framed in some such manner as this: Can this instrument of renewal which comes out of a Roman Catholic background be used with integrity and without fear of compromise by the RCA? Are there theological differences at the very foundation which make such usage unwise or even dangerous? To these questions and the issues they raise we will now turn.

A. Theology of Grace. The writer believes, after eleven years of working in the Cursillo movement, studying the literature it has produced, and studying the Scriptures and theological documents of the Reformed Church, that there is nothing basically incompatible between the RCA and the Cursillo method. The heart of the Cursillos in Christianity is a theology of the grace of God in Jesus Christ.

The grace of God is his love, spontaneous, beautiful and unearned, at work in Jesus Christ for the salvation of sinful men and women. It is that which binds the two Testaments together into a complete whole, for the Bible is the story of the saving work of God, that is, of the grace of God. The Greek word charis which is translated "grace" is used 88 times in Paul's letters alone. It becomes almost a single word expression for the gospel he preached. The favor of God which is entirely free and completely undeserved, which leads him to draw near to his sinful people and offer them forgiveness, justification, reconciliation, life and a new covenant: This is the reality which the Old Testament calls his "loving-kindness" and the New Testament knows as "grace." Grace describes both the attitude of God toward humankind and his saving actions in Jesus Christ through the cross and the resurrection. At the same time it is God's power to transform lives and the motivation for Christian living. Christian ethics are a right response to this extravagant goodness of God and are what someone has called the "imperatives of grace."

All of this is classic Biblical and Reformed Theology. It is also the message of the Cursillos. The theology of grace which underlies the talks and the experience of the Cursillo weekend presents God as the initiator of the offer of friendship, the gift of his own life. The approach is one of using the analogy of human friendship to describe the relationship of friendship with himself. He did this through a person, Jesus Christ, the God-man. Through what Christ has shown us and what he has done, those who were at enmity with God are reconciled to him and are enabled to live with him as friends. This relational approach to the theology of grace is the basic message of the Cursillos.

Grace is God's favor, his self-giving. It produces a relationship of love and trust between himself and men and women. The life in grace is nothing less than the Christian life, the life that is lived as a personal surrender to God's invitation to friendship. Thus, the Cursillo literature and the Cursillo weekend speak of grace in at least three ways: (a) God's nature and attitude towards humankind; (b) The relationship between God and men; and (c) The changes in men and women as a result of it.

The old arguments about whether grace is imputed or infused are avoided. Grace is not spoken of quantitatively as a "thing" or a substance or even a "state" which was the older Roman Catholic terminology; rather, it is a dynamic relationship between persons. The language of commerce or of the courtroom are not used of grace in the Cursillos. Instead we use the language of love, restoration, joy and peace. The definition of the Cursillos spoke of "what is fundamental for being a Christian." That "fundamental" is a personal relationship to Jesus Christ which can be called the life in grace. This is what is basic for being a Christian: God's offer to share his life in friendship is accepted by a person and God dwells within that person's life. This living experience of the grace of God is nothing less than what the Bible calls conversion.

The Cursillo weekend attempts to clothe the theology of grace with flesh. Just as Jesus incarnates the Word of God with flesh and blood so that we not only hear God but experience his living presence, so the Cursillo method calls for the enfleshment of the theology of grace in the lives of the community of faith which share the ideals of the movement. The Cursillo weekend has always been life-related. Though it has a theology it has never attempted to be a full course of catechism but rather a proclamation of the basic message of salvation. Its aim is to make Christianity come alive, to give the candidates a living experience of the grace-full life, life in relationship with God. They are not only told that God loves them, they are shown that love in the experience of the weekend.

All that is done is to communicate this message of grace. Everything humanly possible, from the best insights of psychology, pedagogy and group dynamics to the clearest understanding of Scripture is put together in an orderly sequence to achieve the aims of the Cursillo. Yet, underlying all that is done is the conviction that "Without God we can do nothing." Grace teaches us that God not only initiates but he sustains and he completes the Christian life. All that is done is attempted in complete dependence on him. We may plan and pray, but it is the Holy Spirit of God who touches the human heart and makes possible the encounter with Christ on the deepest level.

B. People of God. A second key Biblical foundation for the Cursillos in Christianity is that of the church as the people of God. Those in the Protestant tradition have usually given lip service at least to this concept. We don't have to be reminded that the church is more than the hierarchy. The danger usually comes from the opposite direction, namely seeing the Christian faith and life only in

individualistic terms. The church as the people of God together in mission, laity and clergy alike, is a theme which the Cursillo movement seeks to recapture. It is as a community of faith that the church is presented by words and actions.

The ministry of laymen and laywomen is forcefully brought out in both the Scriptures and the Cursillo literature. Each person is called to apostolic action in his or her particular environment. But each Christian does not act alone. Only in the community which is called "church" can we live fully the grace-full life. The church is both the body of Christ and the household or family of God. These New Testament images of the church play an important role in defining the Christian life. To accept the offer to share God's life not only makes one a child of God but also a brother or sister to others in the church. To this church has been entrusted a militant mission: to share the love and grace of God with all people.

Personal witness is a significant action in fulfilling this mission. Reformed church leaders who were part of the Good News People training program a few years ago will remember the distinction made between telling the Story and telling one's own story. The Cursillo method makes valuable use of telling one's own story through the talks on the weekend. Nine of the ten lay talks give opportunity for varying degrees of personal witness, helping men and women to share what God has been doing in their own lives and through them in the lives of those around them. There is no substitute for this if the Cursillo is to be a living experience of what it means to be a Christian. How powerful is the simple witness of one who is loving enough and open enough to tell of both successes and failures. There can be no Cursillo organized and put on by pastors alone; the lay leadership and witness are crucial. To all his people God says: "You shall be my witnesses."

Another area in which the church as the people of God are to be involved is in influencing the environment. In our modern day this has been called social action, and it has often been contrasted with personal salvation, the result of which has been that the church sometimes felt it had to choose between the competing alternatives of emphasizing personal salvation in Christ or trying to right the ills of the world around us. The New Testament does not envision these as alternatives but as complimentary vocations for the people of God; we are to both preach the Good News and feed the hungry. The Cursillo mentality builds on this Biblical imperative by first bringing people into a personal encounter with Christ and then deploying them into the world to serve him in all areas of life. It does not create new organizations, but motivates men and women to serve God in already existing ones. And it provides the method of keeping these fires of enthusiasm and motivation alive.

Today we are being told by those who know, that our self-image is a key factor in motivation. This is equally true for individuals and institutions. The New Testament image of the church as a pilgrim people is one which has motivated the Cursillo movement since its earliest beginnings. Remember that it was founded after a pilgrimage in Spain. The pilgrim spirit, as seen most clearly in the Book of Hebrews, portrays the church as a people on the move, dissatisfied with

the status quo, restless to forge ahead in the service of God and humankind. The dual conviction that this world is not our final destination but it is the place where God has called us to live and serve him provides the incentive for a dynamic Christian community in action. The Cursillo movement "moves" with a militant and triumphant vision of the community of faith.

The movement is sustained by a practical method of perseverance. Reformed Theology has emphasized the "perseverance of the saints" as an article of our faith; it has not usually given specifics as to how Christians are to persevere beyond the affirmation that it is the work of the Holy Spirit. Here is a happy convergence of doctrine and practice. The mutual support offered by the Cursillo method to keep on in the Christian life through regular group reunion and Ultraya provides a means of structuring the Christian life. The picture here is of the people of God formed into small groups which become their place of praying together, sharing their Christian life, planning for the Christianization of a particular environment, reporting their successes and failures and building Christian community. The similarity between this picture and that which is portrayed by the Book of Acts is not coincidental.

C. Means of Grace. The means used for supporting and strengthening the life in grace, both on the weekend and throughout the movement, are also important for our understanding of Biblical and theological foundations. The Scriptures are, for us in the Reformed Church in America, our rule for faith and practice. What place do the Scriptures have in Cursillos?

Each of the outlines for talks given on a Cursillo weekend, those given by both laypersons and clergy, is filled with Scriptural references. It is intended that these be read by the one giving that talk. The writer was pleasantly surprised at this emphasis at the time he was first introduced to Cursillo, a surprise which was confirmed by subsequent investigation. Prejudices about Roman Catholics not using or not encouraging use of the Bible were dispelled as one observed its usage in team meetings, at services of worship, and in the prominent place it is given on the Cursillo weekend. At some weekends in which the writer was involved each of the candidates received as a gift a copy of the New Testament in a modern translation. An open Bible is placed in a central position at the front of the room in which the talks are given on the weekend.

A second means of support and strength which is greatly emphasized is prayer. The Christian community prays before, during and after the Cursillo weekend. The team relies on prayer from the outset in its preparation. It teaches how to pray by praying. It becomes a community of prayer so that, when the weekend arrives, there has been forged a friendship with God which is evident to the candidates. Behind the team which actually carries out the weekend there is a larger body of praying men and women who are undergirding them in prayer. This is evidenced in a number of different ways.

When one team member is giving a talk, someone is in the chapel praying for him or her. This prayer partner prays with the person before, during and after the rollo. The days on a Cursillo weekend begin and end with prayer together. The talks on grace emphasize the importance of the practice of prayer. Some time during the weekend each table goes to the chapel as a group and prays together. The writer has known some persons for whom this was their first experience of praying aloud in their own words. Cursillo stresses this praying from the heart so that prayer is more than a formal ritual. Services of worship which are held each of the three days usually involve both liturgical and free prayer.

A special name for the prayer support of the total Christian community in the Cursillo movement is palanca. This Spanish word literally means "a lever," a means of lifting one up. Prayers of intercession which lift a person up before God are called palanca, and are often accompanied by a personal sacrifice such as fasting. Letters and messages which come from the larger community to the candidates and team on a weekend conveying the solidarity of their prayer support are called palanca letters. These are first presented at the conclusion of the talk on Actual Grace. They are a continuous reminder of the confidence Christians have in the power of prayer and the need of prayer for the conversion process. Palanca demonstrates the love and the support of the community of faith even though they do not personally know one another. There cannot be a Cursillo without prayer!

As one might expect, the sacraments form an important part of the Cursillo experience. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are, we believe, signs and seals of God's covenant of grace with us. They are intended to support and nourish our faith and direct us to Christ who is the sole source of our salvation. The Cursillo message is addressed to those who are baptized. It calls on them to live out the call which is implicit in their baptism, to respond with faith to the name by which they were baptized: Jesus Christ. The Cursillos takes seriously the meaning of baptism without requiring that we accept the Roman Catholic doctrine of baptismal regeneration. The Reformed understanding of baptism can be made explicit during the talk on the Sacraments.

The Lord's Supper or Holy Communion stands, side by side with the proclamation of the Word of God, at the center of New Testament worship as we read about it in the Book of Acts. As Christians who confess a Reformed view of the Sacraments, we believe it is a remembrance of what Christ has done on the cross, a present sharing with and nourishment from the living Christ, and a foretaste of the eternal banquet of God. It is appropriate, therefore, that it be celebrated as a Thanksgiving to God (Eucharist), a sign of unity, a means of strengthening our faith, and a joyful celebration of our living hope. Just as it is celebrated on special occasions such as the conclusion of a General Synod meeting or a Festival of Evangelism, so it is appropriate to share together in the context of a Cursillo weekend.

Each of the three days of the weekend has its own special time of worship. In these services, the Word, prayer, and the Lord's Supper are blended together in a harmony which bears witness to the grace of God in our lives. In ecumenical settings, no one is forced to partake or violate his or her conscience. The writer has found, during his years of experience in Cursillo, that his appreciation for the Holy Communion has deepened and been greatly enriched by the ecumenical dimension of that experience. At the same time, there is nothing in the celebration on the weekend which is inimical to Reformation beliefs. We do believe it is a means by which God's grace is truly communicated. God is really present. By the strength received at God's table we are bound into a community of love as brothers and sisters in Christ and sent forth into the world to do His will.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE CURSILLO WEEKEND

This chapter contains the so-called "nitty gritty" of the Cursillo weekend. It will describe the preparation and implementation of the weekend from start to finish. From what has been said thus far it ought to be seen that the weekend is but one point in a whole strategy and method to achieve a specific purpose. It is, however, a key point.

It begins with thorough preparation. The Pre Cursillo team has the responsibility of seeking out those environments which need to be Christianized and those persons who are key individuals in those environments for selection as candidates. Every candidate must be sponsored by another Cursillista. The candidate should be a mature and responsible person, with an openness to the message of Christianity and a desire to grow. Those who have psychological or emotional problems should not be encouraged to attend. The key criteria for selection should be the effectiveness of the candidate to leaven his or her circumstances, to be a vertebrae person.

The sponsor should, himself or herself, be living the message. It is important that the sponsor know the candidate as well as possible; pray for the candidate, and take responsibility for the perseverance of the candidate. This means the sponsor should provide the means for a candidate to participate in reunions of the weekend and become involved in regular group reunion and/or Ultreya.

When a sufficient number of applications have been received, a Cursillo weekend is planned. The Secretariat, an administrative group which serves the movement, sets the date and place of the weekend. The Secretariat also appoints a person to serve as the weekend rector and, in concert with the rector, appoints a minister or ministers to serve as spiritual director. After much prayer, the rector and spiritual director choose leaders from the Cursillistas in the area to form a team which will carry on the Cursillo weekend. This team will usually number from 18 to 22 persons. The team should be chosen carefully from those persons who are living the Cursillo method through regular participation in group reunion and Ultreya and who are willing to make the time commitment to attend all team meetings, the entire weekend, and the follow-up. Team formation begins about three months prior to the scheduled Cursillo weekend.

The process of preparation, which is called team formation, usually involves a weekly schedule of meetings each of which lasts from two to three hours. Undergirding the whole is prayer. At some time in each team meeting there is opportunity for sharing concerns and for prayer. At some team meetings there may also be a service of Holy Communion. One of the reasons for team meetings is to build community, to knit together those who form the team in a bond of love and trust which will carry them through the weekend.



Another purpose of the team meetings is to rehearse the talks which are to be given on the weekend. The rector will assign to team members their role on the weekend, one of which may be to give one of the ten talks given by lay persons. The team member who has a particular talk assigned takes the outline of that talk and, adding his or her own style and personal witness, builds a talk which is presented to the other team members. They critique the talk, make suggestions for its improvement, and give their encouragement to the speaker. Each talk is critiqued before the weekend so that each speaker knows beforehand what the others are saying. In this way talks can build on one another and reference can be made to a particular illustration or idea repeatedly as the weekend progresses.

The team meetings are also times of joy in preparation. Singing and learning new songs is often done. If the movement has a Leader's School in the area, team members are expected to participate in the learning opportunities which are available. Some team members do not give a talk: they are called auxiliaries or angels or silent partners, and their function is to sit at the tables on the weekend and facilitate discussion. Other team members are called "cha chas" or palanca teams. Their function is to be servants (which is the meaning of the Spanish term "cha cha") to the others on the weekend by their work and their prayer support. Team meetings are important so that the team comes to know one another well, know the schedule well, know their role well, and know their total dependence on God. Though there are surprises on the weekend for the candidates, the team members should be well enough prepared so they have no surprises. Cursillo has been compared to a well-oiled machine; each part of that machine must work properly in order for the machine to do its work. "Well begun is half done."

After preparation comes implementation. That which has been carefully planned must be carried out. The Cursillo has a schedule or order of events which is pedagogically, psychologically and theologically designed for the greatest effectiveness. Each talk and each action contributes to the whole. The Cursillo weekend begins on a Thursday evening and concludes on Sunday evening.

There are four stages of the weekend itself: preparation, proclamation, conversion and insertion. Though these are not rigid or ironclad, they are helpful in understanding the schedule of a Cursillo weekend.

Let us begin with preparation. As the candidates arrive, they are checked in and usually have some coffee available for informal mixing. There is usually some anxiety present in the candidates at this point. There are many new and unfamiliar faces and, though the sponsor should have given some preparation, many candidates do not know what to expect. The opening talk, by the rector, gives words of welcome, introduces some of the team leadership, tells a little about the history and purpose of Cursillos and asks the candidates to suspend judgment till all the pieces of the weekend have been put into place. It is a friendly invitation to be open to what has been planned.

There are two meditations given on Thursday evening also. The first, "Know Yourself," invites the candidate to take a look within. Each person is unique. There is no "expected response" to the weekend. It is an opportunity for us to ask some fundamental questions about our life, do some personal reflection, and talk some things over with God. Again, the invitation to trust God and be open is given. The second meditation is called "The Prodigal Son" but the emphasis is on the goodness and mercy of God. Using the Biblical parable, the meditation invites the candidates to identify with one of the brothers: in some way it is everyone's story. If the first meditation asks us to know ourselves, this one invites us to know God. This is the picture the Bible gives of Him.

The next stage is proclamation. After breakfast the entire community gathers together for introductions and table assignments. Each person is assigned to a table which becomes their permanent grouping for the weekend. In a special ceremony an open Bible is placed on the front of the room. Now begins the first of fifteen talks (rollos), five of which are presented each day. Unlike the meditations, which last only 10 to 15 minutes, the rollos may take from 30 to 90 minutes each. Ten of the fifteen rollos are given by lay persons and five by the spiritual director(s). The two which occur before the noon meal on Friday are "Ideal" and "Habitual Grace." Candidates are asked to take notes in the notebooks which are provided on the table. After each rollo on the weekend, the rector may summarize briefly the main points of the talk, perhaps adding something which the speaker overlooked. The table groups are then asked to discuss the rollo for a few minutes and then, using crayons and poster board, make a poster depicting what they understood to be the heart of the message. The results are often humorous as well as instructive.

We are now up to the noon lunch on Friday in the schedule and several items ought to be mentioned here. We will not be discussing the content of each rollo at this point in our Handbook. That will be done instead in later sections, the lay rollos briefly under the dynamics of the weekend and the spiritual director's rollos in more detail in Chapter VII. Each rollo is usually introduced by singing a song, chosen by the speaker, which is appropriate to the mood and setting of that rollo. Singing is an important part of the weekend, joyful and uplifting. Candidates may be taught some new songs, particularly "De Colores" which is the theme song of the movement and which is often sung while walking together to the dining room. Affirmation is another motivator at work. After each rollo or each presentation or each selfintroduction, the group responds by hand clapping. At the dining tables the group is mixed up so each person may find himself or herself sitting beside a different person each time. Heterogeneity of backgrounds and social classes is one of the reasons for the Cursillos' success. After the meals there is opportunity for joke time with the attendant laughter, clapping and affirmation. In all these ways, the Cursillo seeks to involve each candidate in a joyful community of love while respecting the individual liberty and personal freedom of each one--(We must not invent tricks in order to coerce.)

Three more rollos are given on Friday afternoon: "Laymen (Laywomen) in the Church," "Actual Grace" and "Piety." Each is followed by discussions and posters. Often, following the Piety rollo, the entire body will move into the chapel for some spontaneous prayer and a time of planned worship. This may be some Scripture or other readings, it may involve some confession of sin, it may be an Agape meal, or it may be a communion service. Worship together is an integral part of the Cursillo by which we come to rely on the grace of God more and more. The evening session is concluded with a sharing by each of the table groups of their discussion and their posters on each talk. This joyous recapitulation is often an enthusiastic time in which camaraderie is built up in the entire community. After evening prayers, the candidates are sent to bed. This is the end of the first day for them. The team members then gather for prayer, mutual encouragement, problem solving and sharing before they retire for the night. The first day has been the day of proclamation: the joyful good news of salvation has been heard and seen in the rollos and in the witness of the team.

The next stage of the Cursillo is that of conversion. At this point the candidate, having taken a hard look at himself or herself, may realize that the only solution for their lives is God. How are they to relate to Him? The fourth meditation, "The Figure of Christ," introduces the candidate to the person of Jesus Christ. He is both true God and true man: yet the latter truth may need greater emphasis at this time. Christ is one who is among us now, God with us, and we can relate to Him with confidence as a leader worthy to be followed.

The five rollos on the second day, Saturday, all have to do with how the candidate can make the life in grace his or her ideal. How is Christian life supported? Along with Piety, "Study" and "Action" form the three legs of the tripod which is the foundation of Christian life. These rollos are given by laypersons. Between them is the rollo by a spiritual director on "Sacraments." Often, following this talk, a worship experience provides the opportunity to not only talk about sacraments but to also experience Eucharist. Later in the afternoon a second rollo by a spiritual director called "Obstacles to Grace" is given which is followed by the most inspirational rollo of the day, "Leaders." Remember that, as on Friday, each rollo is followed by discussion and posters. The day is concluded once more by summaries of the discussions and posters for that day and evening prayer.

The final stage of the Cursillo weekend is insertion. The rollo on Leaders the night before really is the beginning of this phase as it challenges the candidates to exercise Christian leadership in the world from which they came. The meditation on Sunday morning, "Christ's Message to the Cursillista," tells the candidates that Christ is personally calling them to a vocation in that world. Using Jesus' final words to His disciples found in John 14-17, this fifth meditation is a challenge to do great things for Christ and an assurance that they are possible.

The five Sunday rollos all relate to helping the new Cursillista find his or her vocation in the world as a Christian leader. "Study of the Environment" is a lay rollo exploring the various groupings of persons among which the candidate lives and works. "Life in Grace" is given by the spiritual director and says that the secret of success

is contact with Christ. "Christian Community in Action" is the key rollo of the third day and gives a picture of Christian men and women, working together as leaders, and actually changing an environment for Christ. Worship on Sunday may take a number of forms, including a communion liturgy, and there is some flexibility in scheduling it in either the morning or the afternoon. The final two Sunday rollos are given by Laypersons: "Total Security" (given by the rector) and "Fourth Day" which describes the reality of a world out there which has not changed, into which the new Cursillista will be going in just a few hours.

Discussions and posters are usually done after the first three rollos on Sunday but less emphasis is placed on them than in previous days. Time is a factor because the candidates should get ready for the evening meal and be eating at the scheduled time for the walk-in. The larger Cursillo community, or veterans, will make their entrance while the team and candidates are eating. Following some singing, the candidates are given a few final words apart from the veterans, and then there is a "closing" service of worship and praise. At this time the new Cursillistas are given the opportunity to share with the whole community their "impressions" of the weekend. Often this is a time of joyous testimony and powerful personal witness, although it is important that no one feel pressured to make a response. Following a closing prayer, the new Cursillistas are welcomed warmly into the Fourth Day Community of veterans and the Cursillo weekend officially comes to a close. The third day has been completed: the Fourth Day is the entire remainder of one's life.

## CHAPTER V

### THE MESSAGE OF THE CURSILLO

In one sense the message of the Cursillo weekend is a single one: "God loves you and is seeking to initiate a personal saving relationship with you. Moreover, He is calling you to love and serve Him by being a leader and, in cooperation with other Christians, evangelize and Christianize your world." This message of God's grace and human response is a basic New Testament teaching. The Cursillo weekend takes this fundamental teaching and tries to give the candidates a living experience of it. Through rollos, meditations, worship, discussions, singing and praying, the message is the same.

For that reason, and because the Cursillo was developed very carefully and purposefully, it is necessary that all the points in the outline of each rollo be given. This is not to say they must be given by rote or woodenly. In fact, the personal witness of the speaker is vitally important for the freshness and winsomeness of each rollo. The joyful enthusiastic sharing of one's own Christian life makes them come alive on the weekend. And, as one of the writer's friends always emphasized, "You have to walk the walk before you can talk the talk." But the rollos are far from spontaneous, off-the-cuff testimonies. They need to be planned, practiced and presented with all the necessary material.

Perhaps this can be understood better by looking at the dynamics of the weekend as shown by the progression of the rollos. Each is built on what has gone before and is preparatory for what is to follow. We have already noted how the daily emphasis changes from the point of view of the leaders:

Friday - Proclamation  
Saturday - Conversion  
Sunday - Insertion

From the candidate's point of view the emphasis changes to:

Friday - a look at self  
Saturday - a look at Christ  
Sunday - a look at the world

The progression of talks from morning to evening also shows the careful planning of the founders. The lay talks each day move from an appeal to the head first, to the will, and finally to the heart. This means that the first talks of each day will contain the least personal witness and enthusiasm, the second talks more of these, and the final talks should be the most inspirational and challenging. Also, the Friday rollos will have less personal witness than those given on Saturday and Sunday. The importance of remembering this is simply so the candidates do not get too much, too soon. They ought not to be at a point already Friday afternoon where they should be arriving on Sunday night. This is not to say we can program or manipulate people to all react the same way at the same time. The Spirit is free to move people as He wills. But it is to say that each rollo has a specific part to play in the whole and it ought not tell too much or too little.

A way of diagramming the lay rollos with this understanding is this:

	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
INTELLECT What it is to be a Christian	<u>Ideal</u>	<u>Study</u>	<u>Environment</u>
WILL Action as a Christian	<u>Laymen in the Church</u>	<u>Action</u>	<u>Christian Community in Action</u>
HEART Dedication to Christ and His work	<u>Piety</u>	<u>Leaders</u>	<u>Total Security</u>

In line with this division, the other rollos may be understood as:

	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
Living Grace explained:	Habitual Grace	Sacraments	Life in Grace
How to overcome difficulties:	Actual Grace	Obstacles to Grace	Fourth Day

Let us look now at some of the characteristics of the individual talks given by the laypersons and how they are related to the unfolding of the whole weekend.

#### IDEAL

An ideal in the sense in which Cursillo uses the term is a unified image that a person has of himself, the way he wants to see himself, what he wants to become. The message is that life will be better if one has an ideal and being a Christian is the best possible ideal. The talk Ideal, which is the opening rollo of the weekend, tells us that to be human is to have an ideal toward which we direct all our efforts. It goes on to consider how an ideal functions in human life. This rollo is somewhat philosophical, not at all enthusiastic and contains no personal witness. Its function is to get the candidates to see the necessity for an ideal and to ask themselves the question: What is my ideal? They are challenged to answer this question by looking at where they spend their time, their money and their thoughts. The low-key approach prepares the minds of the candidates to listen attentively and sets the mood for the remainder of the weekend. It ought not give a Christian answer; that will be given in the next talk by a spiritual director, Habitual Grace.

#### LAYMEN/LAYWOMEN IN THE CHURCH

After the spiritual director has presented the life in grace as the Christian ideal, the next lay rollo introduces the church as the community of those who are called to live the Christian life and as such to communicate that life to the world. The church is presented as the People of God and the Body of Christ. It is through the church that God is acting to bring salvation to the world. The layman or laywoman as a member is the church; through His lips and by His hands Christ speaks and works today. The emphasis is on the mission of the

layperson as a living and active member of the church. It lays the foundation for apostolic action without giving specific areas of service which will be treated later on. This rollo is also quite low-key using stories, comparisons and incidents to clarify its points rather than personal experiences. It does challenge the candidate with his calling to be an apostle of Christ.

#### PIETY

The intervening rollo by a spiritual director has reminded the candidates that they are not alone in their efforts to live the Christian life. The Holy Spirit works in and through us. The last talk of the day is Piety which is a key rollo that sums up the first day. True piety is presented as a conscious and growing life in grace. It is the response of one who has accepted the Christian life in union with God as his or her ideal and is directing the whole of life toward God. Here is the place for personal testimony. The speaker should embody a joyful, prayerful dedication to God, sharing what true piety involves and what a difference it has made in his life. Normally a change in the atmosphere of the Cursillo will be evident after the piety rollo. The challenge has been made and every rollo hereafter will build on this one and be, in fact, an explanation of it.

#### STUDY

The first rollo on Saturday morning is Study. If Friday stressed the ideal and beauty of the Christian calling--what we ought to be-- Saturday tells us what we should do and how to do it in order to live the life in grace. The first need is for some study to grow and deepen in our knowledge of Christ. This rollo should cause the hearer to feel the need to study, to use his head in his life as a Christian. It says that study is important for every Christian, the average as well as the very intelligent, and that it is a life-long task. The style of this rollo is explanatory and somewhat restrained. Resources for study are given, and study is shown to be the second leg of the tripod (along with the practices of piety) which supports the Christian life.

#### ACTION

Following the Sacraments rollo, the third talk on Saturday continues the explanation of what it means to direct our whole life toward God. The third leg of the tripod is Action, apostolic action which is the logical demand of the life of grace. Love of God and love of neighbor form the foundation of the mission of laypersons. The primary apostolate which is asked of us in this rollo is the personal testimony of our Christian life. Its method: make a friend, become a friend, and introduce my friend to Christ is of the very essence of the Cursillo mentality. Like Study, Action is a practical rollo explaining what action is and how it can be accomplished in the life of one who seeks to live completely for Christ.

#### LEADERS

The second day is summed up, after the Obstacles to Grace talk by a spiritual director, in the most inspiring rollo of Saturday, Leaders. Like Piety the night before, Leaders portrays a picture of a person who is putting all he/she has into being a Christian and "it works." Some candidates may object that they are not leaders, just ordinary laypersons. The definition of a leader makes clear that everyone is called to be a leader in the sense that he/she bears

witness in a particular sphere of influence. By using the means and methods which have been presented during the day a person can form a Christian life himself and can also lead others into a personal relationship with Christ. The examples and illustrations in this rollo can come from personal experience, how through diligent work and offering all the God-given abilities and talents one has in the service of Christ a man or woman can truly be successful as an apostle no matter what may be their personal occupation.

#### STUDY OF THE ENVIRONMENT

The first Sunday rollo on the third day turns the candidate's focus of attention to the world in which they live. If there has been kindled in our soul a desire to do something for Christ the rollo on Environment tells us where we should work for Him. The third day presents what is unique to the Cursillo movement, a strategy of fermenting environments with the Gospel through a particular plan of apostolic action. This rollo begins to describe that method by helping the candidate look at his environments with new eyes, from the point of view of the relationship of the persons in them to God and the Christian life. So he is asked to study to understand those webs of relationships, with a view of transforming them by his Christian witness. The Christian is not to hate the world or escape from it but rather to win it over to God. This rollo explains how this may be done by asking the candidate to examine carefully those areas of influence in which God has placed him/her to bear witness. This talk ought to be low-key and clear in its presentation, leading the candidate to see the need for help to do what he has to do.

#### CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IN ACTION

The spiritual director will respond to that need for God's help in the rollo on Life in Grace, after which the key talk of the third day is given on Christian Community in Action. It is the talk which should make clear how all the others fit together. God calls us to life with Him, not in isolation but as members of a people, a community of faith. So also, when we act as leaders in seeking to Christianize an environment, we do so not alone through individual personal witness but through groups or organizations. The work of evangelization of the world can only come about through the building of apostolic Christian communities, living together the life in grace, committed to working together to spread the message of Christ. Teamwork is the method employed by leaders who want to conquer their environment effectively.

This rollo should motivate the candidate to be active in those associations, groups or organizations where he/she already finds himself. It should relate stories and practical examples of Christians working together. The rollos of the third day provide a vision of a triumphal church, a Christian community in action that is on the move really accomplishing something. It is a vision of a team of men and women within that church who are really making a difference. At the end of the day, each person will have seen a picture of what it means to have a Christian community in action, and he/she will know that there is a successful one of which he can become a part.



## TOTAL SECURITY

The rector of the weekend gives this rollo which tells the candidates how they can preserve the experience of the Cursillo the rest of their lives. In fact, the Cursillo is not the climax of something but the beginning of a new way of living, sharing, and spreading the Christian life together. This rollo gives the method of linking leaders together through the Group Reunion and Ultreya. The experience of the weekend should help the candidates to become aware of their dependence on others. If we are to continue the Cursillo spirit, the life in grace, we will need one another after the weekend. The secret of perseverance is contact with Christ and contact with our brothers and sisters. The Group Reunion and piety card should be explained thoroughly, but the rector's own testimony to the effectiveness of the method will be the most effective part of this rollo. It is given with enthusiasm and urgency.

## FOURTH DAY

The final rollo of the Cursillo deals with the Cursillista beyond the Cursillo. Like the talks on Piety and Leaders which concluded the previous two days this rollo presents a picture of a person who has learned the lesson of the day, in fact of the whole Cursillo. Now there is nothing more to be explained. The whole method has been given. This rollo tells the new Cursillista what lies ahead of him/her, the problems to be faced and the method of overcoming those problems. The problem of perseverance in the world to which the new Cursillista must make "re-entry" is addressed once again by urging contact with Christ and with one another. The effectiveness of this rollo depends greatly on the personal conviction of the speaker and the power of persuasion he puts into words. Through personal testimony he/she shows that it is possible to live and grow in the life of grace throughout the rest of life, the fourth day.

The last three rollos are the most inspiring, confident, and triumphant talks of the weekend. They should have the tone of having been written in the light of the Resurrection after having seen the victory of Christ. He is risen and He has overcome the world and He is present in His church still overcoming. The examples used this day should provide a glimpse into a real Christian community in action, "a handful of determined, enthusiastic, dedicated men and women who group themselves around Jesus Christ with the aim of spreading the Christian ideal and translating it into works." At the end of the day no one should doubt that what is said is possible and is being done.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE PROTESTANT SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR

When a minister of the Gospel is asked to serve as a Spiritual Director for a Cursillo weekend one of the natural questions that will be asked is: "What is expected of me?" What are the requirements and duties of a clergy person who is asked to fill this important role? It is to this question that we now turn our attention in this handbook.

The first requirement, of course, is that the minister has actually made a Cursillo himself. One cannot lead in an event he has not personally experienced. There are three other areas which are vitally important in preparation for the minister.

1. Prayer. The Spiritual Director must be a person of prayer. The whole Cursillo movement and method is based on prayer and commitment. Many persons will offer their palanca and give sacrificial time and service to insure the success of a weekend. The Spiritual Director, too, must make a commitment to offer daily prayer for the Cursillo and incarnate in his life the friendship with God which is the message of Cursillo.

2. Attitude. Like other team members, the Spiritual Director needs to give the same living witness to the life in grace. A joyous, enthusiastic life in Christ which is shared with the candidates in a variety of contacts will characterize the minister who serves in this capacity. Openness to others, love of people and a willingness to share oneself are important attitudes for this ministry. The minister who is willing to come down off a pedestal and, in a natural and sincere way, give himself to the others on the weekend will find it a rich experience for himself as well. He ought never forget that Cursillo is a lay movement and that he serves not as "The Leader," but as a member of a team which itself demonstrates Christian community in action.

3. Knowledge. The minister who serves as Spiritual Director also needs a knowledge of the Cursillo strategy and method as a whole. In order to give the rollos and carry out the other responsibilities which are his, the minister will want to see how the total weekend unfolds and fits together. Because it is he who gives the doctrinal foundation to the weekend, he will want to study what it is that is being proclaimed so that what is said by the laypersons and what is done on the weekend become the logical consequence of the truth he brings.

Having this preparation, what are the specific duties and expectations of the Spiritual Director? Let us look at this in two stages: during team formation and during the weekend itself. The team of leaders which has been selected to put on the Cursillo weekend will have several meetings scheduled to plan together, pray together and be formed by the Spirit into a dynamic community of love and service. The minister(s) should be faithful in attendance at these meetings so he becomes a true part of the community, not an "outside expert" who only comes in for the weekend. He should assist

the rector with his counsel and help in the planning process for the entire weekend. His encouragement to other team members, his sharing of himself, his participation in the group reunions will be a support to the whole team. His prayers and his leadership will convey the message that all that is done is dependent on the grace of God. Specifically, he will plan, with the rector, times of worship during the team meetings and some opportunity for sharing the Holy Communion which binds men and women together in the bonds of unity and community.

On the weekend itself the Spiritual Director functions in a way that uses his distinctive ministry and gifts in conjunction with the overall purpose of the Cursillo. He should be available to counsel with individuals. Sometimes opportunity for counseling may occur already Thursday evening before the candidates go to bed, but more often it will take place in informal conversations at meals, between rollos and during other free time. Sometimes the writer has joined with a table group for discussion and posters at their invitation. The minister should be so prepared ahead of time that he is able to give his full time and attention to the candidates on the weekend.

The five meditations are the responsibility of the Spiritual Director(s). They are:

- "Know Yourself" - Thursday evening
- "The Prodigal Son" - Thursday evening
- "The Three Glances of Christ" - Friday morning
- "The Figure of Christ" - Saturday morning
- "Christ's Message to the Cursillista" - Sunday morning

The minister(s) may choose to give these meditations or ask a member of the team who is not giving a rollo to give one or more. The basic content should be given though additional devotional material may be added if desired. It is often effective to use silence during the meditations in the morning as a preparation for the day.

The Spiritual Director(s) will plan a liturgy for each day which is appropriate to the mood and purpose of that day. There is room for some variety here. Sometimes a song will emerge from the group which becomes the theme of that particular weekend. Lay participation in the readings and prayers will be very meaningful to some persons. After a brief message from the Word of God by the minister there is often time for some reflection by the members of the community. Eucharist is provided, at least on Saturday and Sunday, as a part of the worship service. The writer has seen a simple Agape meal used effectively on Friday evening after the Piety rollo. Avoiding both stereotyped and radically experimental services, the Spiritual Director will seek to utilize worship to bring the candidates into joyful friendship with Christ and with their brothers and sisters in the faith.

Throughout the weekend the minister should be in close touch with the Rector and with any Co-Spiritual Directors about the progress of the weekend and any problems that may arise. He will be responsible for evening prayers just before the group retires for the night;

something quite brief in view of the heavy schedule of each day. The other major duty of the Spiritual Director(s) is to give five rollos on grace during the three days. To this responsibility we will give more careful attention in the next chapter. Suffice it to say here in summary what Juan Hervas said about the need a generation ago: The minister's strength is rooted in his being "fully a man of God, a man of the church and a man of his time."

## CHAPTER VII

### THE SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR'S ROLLOS

The five rollos given by the Spiritual Director(s) are all about grace, God's offer of friendship in Jesus Christ his Son. Each looks at this central reality from a slightly different angle and each has a specific function to accomplish in the total progression of the rollos. For that reason it is important that all the points in the outlines are covered in the presentation.

Before we consider each rollo individually, let us make a few observations about the talks as a whole. Central to the message of the Cursillo and to Christianity itself is the fact that God takes the initiative in establishing a relationship with human-kind. God is the subject of this relationship before he is the object of it. He makes the offer. The primary attitude of men and women in relationship to God is receptivity. We receive, we accept, we agree and we ask for what God is offering to us. We have our part to do in building a relationship with God, but it is always a response to God's prior action.

The rollos given by ministers proclaim God's invitation to us to live in this relationship of friendship. They should be warm, personal, confident proclamations of the reality of grace. The style should be kerygmatic, not apologetic. The candidate is told that God loves him, that God is leading him into a saving relationship with Christ, calling him to a deeper personal surrender and a life of apostolic action. He is also told in these rollos how this relationship with God will change his life and what he must do to build and sustain this grace-full friendship with God. When God gives us grace he shares his very life with us, coming to dwell within and transforming us "from the inside out." Because "He first loved us" we are to love him with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, and our neighbor as ourselves.

#### HABITUAL GRACE

The purpose of this rollo is very simple: to present Christianity as a personal relationship to God. It is the second talk on Friday and follows the Ideal rollo. If Ideal presents the call to be a human person, Habitual Grace calls us to be Christian human persons. This rollo gives both the Foundation for authentic Christianity and the basis of the remainder of the Cursillo weekend. What is needed is a clear, warm, positive presentation of the life of grace by the speaker which conveys what a wonderful thing it is that God invites us to live in his friendship. The Spiritual Director's personal testimony as to his own response to this invitation is essential in this proclamation.

It is instructive to note the changes in the names of some of the Spiritual Director's rollos as Cursillo has evolved. Habitual Grace uses the classical medieval terminology, stressing the idea of God's continuing, "habitual" attitude of love and favor to mankind. In later editions, the talk is variously titled Grace, God's Life, and God's Transforming Presence To Us. Each of these describes in some way the fundamental reality which is being offered. If New

Testaments are to be given to the candidates it should be done just before this rollo so that they will see the Bible is the source of all that is said. The rollo has four basic points.

1. An attractive invitation to a personal relationship with God. The story of God's relationship to mankind may be summarized as a love story in three acts: call, fall, recall. God draws near again in the person of Jesus Christ. Man's search for meaning, his quest for an ideal is met by God's offer: "I love you. Is that OK?" (Jesus Christ) His offer is the gift of Himself, the gift of LIFE. He desires to communicate with us, to establish a relationship of love with us.

2. Grace--the gift of God. This section of the rollo gives the Biblical foundations for the entire talk. Grace is not a liquid; it is God's favor, the gift of new life which He offers us. Grace is God's attitude of lovingkindness to His fallen people. Scripture references such as I John 4:8, John 4:7-14, John 10:10 and Matthew 13:44-46 will help in developing this point about God's unconditional love. He loves us as we are and seeks to draw us into friendship with Himself. That friendship is personal and transforming.

3. A description of the grace-full life.

a. It is a free gift. There is no merit on our part. Love is the only reason that prompts God.

(I John 4:19) (Ephesians 2:8-10)

b. Grace creates in us a new life by which we become friends of God. (John 15:15) He pays for and pardons our sin, reconciling us to Himself. We are called to be saints (I Corinthians 1:2)

(Cf. II Corinthians 5:17)

c. Grace brings us into union with Christ. (Galatians 2:20) We share in His life, death and resurrection. He is our Brother, God is our Father, we are the sons and daughters of God. (Romans 8:15-17) Because of this the Holy Spirit lives in us making us the temples of God.

d. We make up the people of God. We live in relationship with other Christians, our brothers and sisters. When we respond to God's love we enter into a community of love.

4. How we experience this grace-full life relationship. To enter into a saving relationship with God calls for the response of faith. Here the appropriate Scriptures are John 1:11-12, John 3:1-10, John 3:16 and Revelation 3:20. Faith involves us as total persons: our intellect, emotions and will are all employed. To trust ourselves to Christ's love completely is what we are being called to do now. Jesus is waiting for our response. Let God love you.

The conclusion of this rollo is that living in relationship with God--the Father, Son and Holy Spirit--is the basic solution to all our needs. It is an ideal worth living for and worth dying for.

## ACTUAL GRACE

The rollo called Actual Grace also has had a series of different names among which are God's Help, Faith, and Ministry of the Holy Spirit. It has a two-fold purpose: to stress the absolute need of God's help in making the Christian ideal of graceful living possible and our corresponding responsibility to respond to God's offer of help which is always available. It is the fourth talk on Friday immediately following Laymen/Laywomen in the Church. The candidate has heard a triple call to be human, to be Christian and to be a responsible member of the church. The question is: How can I measure up?

The Spiritual Director, therefore, needs to convey a real confidence in God in order to overcome the discouragement any candidates may be feeling. The tone of this rollo is strong, clear and optimistic. Again, the personal witness of the speaker, his own deep confidence in God and the availability of his help, will be an important part of this presentation. The central stress on the availability of God's transforming power to all believers through the ministry of the Holy Spirit continues the proclamation phase of the Cursillo. An outline of the rollo follows in the next paragraphs, containing an introduction, a conclusion and five basic points.

**Introduction:** We review the offer of God made in the Habitual Grace rollo and stress our need to respond to his invitation to live in intimacy with Him.

1. We absolutely need God's help to enter and to live the Christian life. Without Him we can do nothing. (John 5:15) He must open our hearts and lives.
2. This help is available through the ministry of the Holy Spirit who, by His transforming power, enables us to live fully the Christian life. This is Actual Grace, that is, those specific and particular points at which God's help connects with our needs, where he intervenes with a touch to give us light or strength. We can count on God to enable us to become all we are meant to be. He is absolutely reliable.
3. When and how God's help comes to us. Anytime and any place, through different stages of our lives, through an experience, a book, a friend, a spouse, God's Spirit may touch our lives with an experience of grace. We need a readiness to be open to the process of progressive conversion which is life-long. The Cursillo weekend itself may be an actual grace, i.e., a means by which God is helping us.
4. We have a responsibility to respond to God's touch of grace. We also have the ability to do so. What is that response? We must really desire to live the life of grace, which involves repentance and faith. Faith is the acceptance of Jesus Christ in our lives. Then we must act on our faith. Philipians 2:12-13 presents the mystery of God's work and ours, grace and faith, working together. "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." (Philipians 4:13) If we use the opportunities we are given God gives more grace.

5. Prayer is a powerful help God has given to help us live the life of grace. It is a personal dialogue between friends. Many persons are living in friendship with God: communities of faith exist around the world. Many of them are praying and sacrificing for you on this weekend. Their prayers are an experience of Actual Grace. Present palanca at this time, a lever to lift up the candidates to God. Give your own witness to the value and importance of intercessory prayer. Read some of the palanca letters to the entire group.

Conclusion: God offers you His help, His Holy Spirit. The rest is in your hands. He brought you to this Cursillo to speak to you: how will you respond?

#### SACRAMENTS

The second rollo on Saturday is given by a Spiritual Director on Sacraments. The whole emphasis of this day centers on the person of Christ. The purpose of this talk which follows the lay rollo on Study, is to describe the Sacraments as Christ's way of reaching out to humankind, becoming "present" to us in order to deepen our union with Him and transform our lives. It is the longest rollo of the weekend but ought not to be prolonged. The style should be warm, theologically sound and spring from personal conviction.

A word about theology is in order here. This is the place where our Reformed understanding of the meaning and number of Sacraments will differ markedly from that of the Roman Catholics who founded the Cursillo movement. The writer believes we need to do some careful thinking about our own theology of sacramentality before giving this rollo. Sacraments are viewed within the basic approach of the talk on Habitual Grace, namely God's offer of friendship and our response in faith and love. The emphasis is on personal encounter with Christ, a relational theology which has both vertical and horizontal dimensions. Sacraments are God's significant transforming presence to us, central encounters with Jesus in the church which make possible the fullness of the Christian life. Often the celebration of the Lord's Supper will take place immediately after the conclusion of this talk. An outline of the basic points follows:

##### 1. Sacraments in general.

We speak of sacraments as signs and seals of God's grace. Calvin defines a sacrament as "an external sign, by which the Lord seals on our consciences His promises of good-will towards us in order to sustain the weakness of our faith, and we in our turn testify our piety towards Him...." We may think of sacraments as God's sign language. He desires to communicate with us, but how can He do so? The classic answer: by Word and Sacrament. They belong together. Just as man communicates by words and signs (symbols), so God communicates through various symbols. But when God wanted to communicate at the deepest level He sent His Son, Jesus the living Word, who became the sign of God's presence. (John 1:14; John 14:8-9) When Jesus ascended He left behind the company of men and women which Paul calls the body of Christ, the church. They became the sign of God's presence, the place where

---

<sup>2</sup>Institutes, 4:14:1.



we encounter Jesus Christ. The church is the community of faith where we meet with Jesus in prayer, in the Word, and in the Sacraments.

The Sacraments are special encounters with the living Christ, to confirm the Word, make it visible to our senses, and seal our union with the body of Christ. They are true means of grace; not empty ceremonies or magical tricks. There are two elements in a sacrament: the external and visible element, and the internal reality that is signified. Through such symbolic actions God drew near His people in the Old Testament and through such signs He also encounters us in the present. Grace becomes actual in the Word and Sacraments. Our salvation is something which happens to us in the "here and now," as the Christ who is central in every sacrament draws near to offer us the gift of life, the gift of Himself, which can never be earned. At the same time, the response of faith is essential if the sacraments are to truly effect what they promise in our lives. And the Holy Spirit must give the grace which is promised, the salvation of which the sacrament is the sign. Therefore, in the "mystery of sacramental union," as Calvin calls it,<sup>3</sup> there is a closeness between the earthly ceremony and the heavenly art which defies human understanding. We only affirm that the sacraments are true channels of God's saving grace which He has given to the community of faith, His church.

## 2. Holy Baptism--the sacrament of new life.

Baptism is the sacrament of initiation, of new beginnings. It has a number of meanings which should be mentioned, most of which come directly from the Liturgy of the Reformed Church.

- a. Claimed as God's own possession and named with His name. Baptism is "the owner's mark." This mark will influence all of one's life, giving full assurance of salvation in the covenant promises of God.
- b. Ingrafted into Christ, sharing in His death and His victory. (Romans 6:3-5) By this we receive the forgiveness of sins through His blood, and by it we are called to die to self and walk in a new and holy life. The water of baptism is itself a powerful symbol of this cleansing action.
- c. Incorporated into the community of believers in Christ. (Galatians 3:26-29) Baptism is the sign of our adoption into the family of God. It, therefore, has horizontal as well as vertical dimensions.
- d. Commissioned to responsible mission in the world. Baptism calls us to a new obedience, to live out its meaning for the rest of our lives. Our baptism is not fulfilled unless we confirm it with our own profession of faith. And we will never completely exhaust its meaning, for the spiritual grace of which it is a sign, namely conversion, is a continuing process active throughout the length of the Christian life. We may, therefore, think of baptism as the call of God, a call to witness and serve, a call which will lead eventually to our resurrection to eternal life. We, if we accept and live our baptism, we will live in Jesus' victory and with the support and encouragement of the faith community we will fulfill His mission.

<sup>3</sup>C.R., 9:200.

### 3. Holy Communion--the Sacrament of new covenant.

This sacrament stands at the very center of our Christian faith and worship. It is the sign of our union with God and our unity with other Christians. By receiving it our faith is nourished as we share in the infinite goodness of our Savior and partake of all His blessings.

- a. Covenant in the Old Testament. The story of God's saving action in the Old Testament revolves around the themes of the bondage in Egypt, the deliverance by God through Moses who leads his people to the promised land of Canaan. The feast of the Passover became the re-presentation of the mighty acts of God. It had a past, present and future orientation. The people of Israel were unfaithful to the covenant, however, and God promised a new covenant. (Jeremiah 31:31-33)
- b. Covenant in the New Testament. The story of God's saving action in the New Testament is the story of man's slavery to sin, God's salvation accomplished in Jesus Christ and the promise of eternal life and heaven beyond for those who are part of the new covenant community. The Lord's Supper or Eucharist (which means "thanksgiving") is the sacrament which presents the saving acts of God. Jesus gave it to His disciples as an act of His love for them and for us. It, too, has a past, present, and future orientation.
- c. The meanings which we attach to this sacrament correspond to these foci, as presented in the Liturgy of the R.C.A. We look back in remembrance to our redemption through the death of Christ on the cross. We come to have communion with this same Christ whom we believe is drawing us into union with Himself and strengthening us by His body and blood in the present. And we approach the table in hope and anticipation of the future celebration when we shall be with Christ in glory forever. The moods with which we come to the sacrament correspond to these three aspects of its meaning: sorrow at Jesus' sacrifice for us, joy at Jesus' presence with us, and expectation of Jesus' return for us. (In traditional usage, we have placed almost all the emphasis on the first meaning; this may be an opportunity to emphasize the aspects of present joy and future celebration in the Eucharist.)

The Holy communion, like baptism, must be approached with faith. As we express our gratitude to God and offer to Him the sacrifice of Thanksgiving, ourselves as holy and living sacrifices, the Holy Spirit raises us up to Himself so that we truly commune with and receive the living Christ. It is a personal meeting with the Lord, yet it is done only in the community of faith, the people of the new covenant. By it we are assured of a continuing relationship with Jesus Christ (John 6:54), who becomes known to us too in the breaking of the bread. (Luke 24:30-31)

4. Other rites and ordinances of the church. The Reformed Church, along with other Protestant churches, recognizes only two sacraments which, by definition, contain a promise and a command of the Lord and relate to our union with Christ. Our Liturgy, however,

contains Orders for other rites of the church among which are: admission to the Lord's table; ordination of ministers, elders, and deacons; solemnization of marriage; and visitation of the sick. Though not properly sacraments, they are ordinances by which the church in her work as the body of Christ encounters men and women at significant times and events in their lives. When the Holy Spirit is at work, for instance, the laying on of hands at a service of ordination is truly a personal meeting with the living Christ.

The Spiritual Director must exercise great sensitivity here, lest there be misunderstanding. The Sacraments rollo may end after the section on Holy Communion; however, the writer has found it to be very meaningful to the candidates to make the above distinctions and go on to talk about marriage and ordination at least. This decision should be made in consultation with the rector and other team leaders so that everyone feels comfortable with it. There is no attempt here to disturb people unnecessarily, but to look at some of the events in which we believe Christ is active and present even though we do not label them as sacraments. Or, to put it another way, can there be more to our understanding of sacramentality than is contained in the two sacraments which point to the death and resurrection of Christ and our union with Him? If so, the following points may be inserted in the rollo.

1. This is the one place in the Cursillo weekend where the minister can talk about marriage as an expression of the grace-full life. In the reciprocal giving of love within the covenant of marriage there is an opportunity to encounter the presence of Christ. The pattern of Ephesians 5:21-33 may be held up as a way in which we can live out this relationship of mutual self-giving. In God's plan we become models, that is, interpreters to our spouse of the love of God. In the intimacy of marriage we draw near to another person and share life with him/her, just as we draw near to God in prayer and share life with Him. And out of this loving relationship new life is born. Personal witness is very appropriate here.

2. This is also a place where one may give help to the candidates in understanding the meaning of ordination. Our current understanding in the Reformed Church is that ordination is to a function of ministry more than to a special status. Ephesians 4: 11-12 describes this in terms of "equipping the saints for the work of ministry." All Christians are called to service; pastors are to be teachers, enablers, intercessors and servants of the people of God. Ministers of the Word are human, too. Don't place them on a pedestal. They need understanding, love and prayerful support. This section can dove-tail very nicely with the Laymen/Laywomen in the Church rollo of the previous day.

#### OBSTACLES TO GRACE

The fourth rollo on Saturday, following Action, is called properly Obstacles of the Life in Grace. Its purpose is to give the candidates a sense of realism about the difficulties they may encounter in living a personal relationship with Christ. All the difficulties can be reduced to one--sin; yet the talk is not so much a detailed analysis of sins as it is a look at grace from the viewpoint of sin. The style of the rollo is explanatory and positive.

It seeks to balance the idealism which has been building in the candidate with a sense of realism about the dangers he/she will face. The tone can still be enthusiastic and optimistic inasmuch as the major emphasis falls on the ways of overcoming sin. As in the entire Cursillo, sin and grace are seen in personal rather than impersonal terms. Man can spurn God's offer of friendship: this is the essence of sin. The outline contains an introduction and four points.

Introduction: A review of the talks on Habitual Grace and Sacraments. We were created to know, love and serve God--to live in grace as friends of God. Why then isn't grace-full living a reality in the world and in our lives? The answer is sin.

1. God's plan for our lives has been shown to us in Jesus Christ. We have the ability to know the will of God. Salvation in Christ with all that implies is the perfect will of God for humankind. We reach our true potential, our greatest happiness, when we accept the offer of friendship with God. (John 10:10) This is the fullness of life.

2. Sin is the rejection of the offer of God's life. By the gift of freedom with which we were created, we can close ourselves off to God and thus to His grace. This is the obstacle to living in grace: to say to God, "No way!" It is choosing to live in disrelationship with God. Sin affects all of life--our intelligence, our wills and our social conditions. It separates us from God and from each other and disfigures the image of God in us. We are truly free only when we accept God's plan for our lives.

3. The occasions of sin are many. Here we look at three enemies of the life in grace: the world, the flesh and the devil. The world, as organized against God and hostile to Him, is an enemy which can lead into sin. Here we are not speaking of "world" or indifferent to the Christian life. The attitudes and values of the world are competing for our highest allegiance with the Christian value of loving God above all else. (I John 2:15-17) The flesh is not to be viewed simply as sexual sin, but as those internal forces seeking to control us and vying for our highest priority. It is the "old man" as opposed to the new man in Christ. It is the tendency, found even in the best of Christians, to put self-gratification above love of God. The devil is a joke to many people but we have seen his works in our century. The demonic in our world may be seen in systemic evil as well as personal wrongs. We ought to be aware of him and resist him. (I Peter 5:8-9)

Besides these three enemies there is a fourth occasion which may be even more subtle. We ourselves are sometimes our own worst enemy. By the attitudes we take--of fear, of giving in to temptation and of lukewarmness--we may turn away from the personal relationship with God. The only way to sustain our friendship with Christ is to give it all we've got. Only you are in a position to block God's plan for your life.

4. The remedy by which we may overcome sin is given in this final point. Basically, it is to open the door to God and keep it open. (Revelation 3:20) The handle is on the inside. Several helps ought to be suggested in a practical way. Put on the armor of God. (Ephesians 6:10-18) Notice how Jesus overcame the devil

by the Word of God. (Matthew 4:1-11) Pray regularly. (Mark 14:38) You need contact with Christ in prayer and He will never leave you. Repentance plays an important part in the progressive conversion to which we are called. Confession of sin, being honest with God, leads to reconciliation and peace. (I John 1:9) Keep in contact with other Christians for mutual support. Sometimes we may need a personal counselor to give us help and direction.

God is with us! His will and plan are for us the best thing in life. Jesus is realistic about the dangers, but He also gives us this challenge: "Be of good cheer. I have overcome the world." (John 16:33) The life of grace can be lived and is being lived by millions of persons. It is possible because of Jesus' victory.

### LIFE IN GRACE

The rollo called variously Life in Grace, Living With God and Christian Life is the final talk by the Spiritual Director. It occurs on Sunday morning following Studying and Vivifying the Environment and is an important part of the "insertion" stage of the weekend. Its purpose is to help the candidate solve in practical ways the problems of perseverance and growth in the Christian life. It brings the rollo on Habitual Grace down to a practical level by giving a clear outline of the means for maintaining a life in grace. The speaker should also take advantage of this opportunity to clarify any points of the weekend which may remain unclear. There is opportunity for personal witness to the practices which have been meaningful in supporting your own Christian life. The idea of contact with Christ should stand out as one of the strongest means of perseverance. This should prepare the way for the Cursillista to participate in meaningful group reunion after the weekend which is the heart of the Cursillo method. At the same time it tells him or her how to be nourished within the apostolate of influencing their environment. The rollo has an introduction and two main points.

Introduction: This rollo begins with a resume of the whole Cursillo up to this point. Grace is God's offer of friendship. Living in union with Christ is the greatest possible ideal. We have experienced God's grace on this weekend; but can it last? We have been called to sonship with God and to bring others into relationship with Him. We just heard we should be penetrating our environments with the Gospel; but how will we have strength to do this? We know that grace is not a "thing" but a transforming friendship with the person of Jesus Christ. The life of grace is a life to be lived by directing our whole lives to God. It is genuine piety.

1. A description of the Christian life. The grace-full life is a life of faith, hope and love. (I Corinthians 13) Through faith we believe what God has revealed in Christ, and we trust Him as our Lord and Savior. Knowing Jesus as our Savior brings pardon from sin; knowing Him as Lord gives purpose, power and peace. Believe this even when you don't "feel" it. (II Timothy 1:12) Hope is not just wishful thinking or superficial optimism. It is the certainty of Christ's victory and Lordship that enables us to be faithful and "hang on" every moment. The love of Christ

enables us to love Him and love our neighbor. (Matthew 22:37-40)  
 To love is to become vulnerable, to risk. Christ lives in us and  
 in our brothers and sisters; therefore, we can begin to "see"  
 Christ in the face of another and to love them as we love Him.  
 To love others requires a healthy self-love too. The grace-full  
 life is also one which gives meaning to our earthly pilgrimage.  
 We are called to be light and salt to the world. (Matthew 5:13-14)  
 We respond to God's offer of friendship by an attitude of continuing  
 conversion as we journey on through life.

2. The means of maintaining the Christian life. Here we  
 become very specific about the practices of piety, the way to  
 sustain and strengthen the life in grace. While the practices  
 do not in themselves constitute the life in grace, it is almost  
 impossible to maintain a living relationship with God without them.  
 Here we witness to our own devotional life. Various means of keeping  
 in contact with God are shared: morning prayer--beginning the  
 day with God, personal devotions--including Scripture and prayer,  
 and regular worship--including the Lord's Supper. These practices  
 are means of keeping in touch with a friend. There is a discipline  
 involved, for loving God is not merely an occasional emotion. Share  
 your own witness here but allow room for each candidate to decide  
 on his or her own program of piety. There are family devotions,  
 Sunday School, small groups in the church and other means which  
 may be helpful, including personal counsel with another wise and  
 sensitive Christian. This is called "spiritual direction" and is  
 a helpful practice for some Christians as they check in periodically  
 with a trusted man or woman of God. If Christian Growth Cards are  
 used on the weekend they should be distributed during this talk so  
 the candidates can make concrete their plan for maintaining their  
 own Christian life.

Conclusion: We have only just begun. But you can hang on if  
 you want to. The means for an authentic piety are available. A  
 continuing relationship with Christ is found in contact with Him  
 through the means He has given. Life was not made for these practices;  
 practices are made for life--so that our lives may be transformed  
 and continue to grow by our relationship with God in Jesus Christ.

## CHAPTER VIII

### AFTER THE WEEKEND

Just as we needed to look at the mentality and strategy of the Cursillo movement in order to understand its methodology for the weekend, so we must look again at that strategy if we are to appreciate what happens after the weekend. We said earlier that the Cursillos propose nothing unique until the third day; it is then that the strategy called "Structuring Christianity" begins to unfold. The rollos on Life in Grace, Total Security and Fourth Day present the new Cursillista with a way of maintaining the fire of Christian living by: contact with Christ and contact with your brothers and sisters in Christ. The rollos Environment and Christian Community in Action tell him/her that they are being called by God to be leaders in a community of love to Christianize their environments. But how shall these things be accomplished? The weekend ends on Sunday night. What then?

Post-Cursillo. The secret of the Cursillo method is what takes place after the weekend, what some would call "follow up." The Cursillo method finds persons who are Leaders, gives them an introduction to a fuller Christian life on the weekend and then links them together so that the experience of living the life of grace in a Christian community will be a lifetime affair. The Fourth Day, which comprises the rest of one's life, is to be lived in an atmosphere of authentic, continuous and progressive conversion--in union with Christ and in community with one another. Only with this kind of support can the Cursillista persevere and be effective in penetrating every environment of his/her life with the Gospel. This is the reason for post-Cursillo. As Eduardo Bonnin says: "It is important indeed to have souls encounter God, but it is even more important to motivate them to follow Him."<sup>4</sup>

The structures of post-Cursillo to assist in living the fourth day are basically two: Group Reunion and Ultreya.

1. Group Reunion. The theology of grace presented on the weekend was based on the idea of friendship--with Christ and with one another. The post-Cursillo builds on this by providing what is called "group reunion," or "grouping" for short, for those persons who have friendship as Christians. All persons need friends if they are going to live fully human lives. So also all Christians need friends if they are going to live fully Christian lives. If Christianity is not to be simply a private and therefore partial element in a person's life, it must be shared with others which means: talking about Christ, forming values and attitudes centered in Him, sharing experiences and helping one another to be more fully Christian.

---

<sup>4</sup>Bonnin, Structure of Ideas, p. 67.

A group reunion is the Cursillo's attempt to structure a conversation between Christian friends. Using the format on the Christian Growth Card called "Order of Reunion," it provides a series of questions that helps Christians to talk together about the things they should talk about but rarely do. Each person is asked to share in a concrete way their piety, study and action with others in the group. What this method does is to take the things one has done, the events of the week, and understand them in relationship to Christ and the life in grace. This becomes:

- a. A channel of communication to help to share our friendship with Christ and one another.
- b. A stimulus to live the Christian life, provided by the encouragement of others and accountability to them.
- c. A support for decisions one makes and actions he/she plan to accomplish. The help and advice of others in living Christianity sharpens our own insight and awareness of Christ's presence in our lives.

The mechanics of forming groups is quite flexible. There will be grouping at an Ultreya which may be comprised of different Cursillistas each time. There will be grouping at team meetings and other working groups which come together for a specific task. There may be groups which are formed in a particular environment in which a number of Cursillistas live and work that share in group reunion. However, the writer has found that the so-called "permanent" group is the place where the commitment is deepest and the sharing can be the most personal. This group becomes the arena in which, through a natural linking of friendship in Christ, one can review his/her life, share in depth with others, plan for the future and thus grow in the Christian life. The group becomes a true Christian community, a visible sign of the church, born and nourished by Christian ideal and values. What is important is not that persons live a Cursillo way of life, but that they live a Christian life. The group reunion is a means toward the perseverance and growth of men and women in the life in grace. We ought never offer a Cursillo weekend without also offering the means of perseverance.

The definition of Cursillos which we have been using speaks of Cursillos...."creating small groups or nuclei of Christians who ferment the environment with the Gospel, helping them to discover and realize their personal vocation within this living." The groups which form themselves after a weekend seek to fulfill this two-fold purpose: personal discovery and growth and penetrating the environment. If members of the group (usually three to five persons) have regular reunions and use the technique with dedication, openness and brotherly love there will be formed a powerful and effective force for Christian renewal.

2. Ultreya. The second Cursillo structure for helping the Cursillista persevere is the Ultreya. An Ultreya is a larger Christian community which gathers regularly to continue the experience of a living, vital Christianity. It has been described as a reunion of the group reunions. It is meant to provide a Christian environment



in the midst of hostile environments which tend to lead one away from Christ. An isolated Christian is a paralyzed Christian. The Ultreya provides a place of encouragement and contagious enthusiasm where the Cursillista can be rekindled and learn what is going on in the Community. It is the place where new Cursillistas are brought to meet others with whom they may feel compatible and begin a permanent group reunion. Ultreya has been defined as: "The visible, vibrant Christian community that is the link among all Cursillistas and around and out of which all the Cursillo method evolves, and which assists in providing the growth that is necessary for living what is fundamental for being a Christian through support and sharing."

Ultreyas are meant to be held weekly; in some areas they are held monthly in the beginning stages of a movement. The format for an Ultreya involves a time for group reunions, a lay witness talk of 5 to 15 minutes, response by the Cursillistas, scriptural reflections by a pastor of 5 to 15 minutes, announcements about the movement and a closing time of shared prayer. The key ingredient is the witness talk which should be personal, centered in the present, centered in Christ, descriptive, informal and concentrates on one or two points only. It is not meant to teach but to share an experience of how one was able to be an instrument of Jesus, while the Spirit whispers the challenge to the hearers: "Go and do likewise." The pastor is not to give another devotional or a resume of last Sunday's sermon, but to give some reflection, using his knowledge of the Scriptures, on how God has been speaking to the community through the personal testimony and the responses. This may be difficult for those who like to come totally prepared to a meeting, but it is important that the Lay Witness and the Spiritual Director's reflection carry a common theme. Singing may also be done in the Ultreya but it should not last more than 1½ hours. A time of social refreshments may follow to allow more interaction among the Cursillistas.

These two means are the principle post-Cursillo activities for Cursillistas. Others which should be mentioned briefly are:

- a. Closings where veteran Cursillistas return to the weekend to give witness to their lives in Christ and to receive inspiration.
- b. Newsletters of the area movement.
- c. Financial support of the movement.
- d. Participation as workers in the movement. There will be some men and women who may see the Cursillos as their field of apostolic action. They may be asked to serve on weekend teams, share in palanca, work as members of pre-Cursillo, post-Cursillo, leader's school or the secretariat.

It is to these last two named bodies that we now turn to give some brief organizational information. The Secretariat is that group of leaders who are chosen to serve the movement as a coordinating agency. It is chosen by the Cursillistas from among the ministers and laypersons who are living the Cursillo method. There is a minimum of organization, and the structure and size of the Secretariat should be determined by the needs and circumstances of a given time and place. Its responsibilities are to coordinate the various aspects of the Cursillo movement in a particular area and to serve the movement with joy, teamwork, dialogue and Christian love.

The Cursillo movement was born from a school of leaders; the Leader's School came before the three-day weekend. The Leader's school is a service arm which seeks to discover, form and train individuals who have the interest and commitment to serve the movement in a number of ways. Those who wish to work in pre-Cursillo, post-Cursillo or on a team will normally be chosen from those who are part of the Leader's School. The format of the school is flexible in order to best serve the needs of the movement at a particular time and place. It should be open to all Cursillistas.

## CONCLUSION

The Cursillos in Christianity is a powerful tool for the renewal of the Church of Jesus Christ. Like any tool, it has a specific purpose. If used properly, it may serve well the Reformed Church and any church which embraces it. If misused, it will only bring misunderstanding and suspicion on the name "Cursillo" and on the church itself.

Let us, therefore, make very clear what Cursillos are not intended to accomplish. They do not give full course of catechetical instruction. They do not give specific answers to individual problems and ought not be used as a substitute for psychological counseling. They are not a social action group, a charismatic prayer group or any special interest elitest organization. They ought never to be used as a substitute for one's own church or an underground church. To see the Cursillo movement as any of these things is to misunderstand its essence and purpose.

The Cursillos are intended to accomplish some very well-defined and important goals. We have already described these in the body of this handbook. In summary, we may say that Cursillos should:

- a. Select those key persons who are leaders in their environments and sponsor them to make a Cursillo weekend.
- b. Provide a living existential atmosphere of God's love and grace on the weekend so that candidates may encounter Christ in a personal way and make a commitment to Him.
- c. Form nuclei of enthusiastic and committed pastors and laypersons who, working together as leaders, serve the church and the world in the name of Christ.
- d. Provide a method of persevering in the Christian life which is effective and simple.

The end products of the Cursillos are renewed men and women who are committed to the renewal of the church and the Christianization of the world. It would be tragic if these men and women were to find that "back home" in the local church there was nothing for them to do and no way to channel their apostolic zeal. That would lead only to frustration. Therefore, this handbook concludes with a plea that Cursillos be used as part of a definite plan in each church. The pastor should be sponsored first so that he knows what Cursillos are about and he can incorporate it into his total blueprint of goals and strategy for the church he is serving. Then, when Cursillistas are formed on the weekend they can be utilized in a wide variety of ways in their church and other environments. They will have been given an ideal and a method to live the Christian life wherever they are located. This, the writer believes, can be a tremendous asset to any pastor who is concerned about renewal.

It is this that the Cursillos are all about; nothing less than a renewal of persons, of the church and of the whole world. As has been written: "In an age when Christian leadership is crucial to the life of the church and primary support groups are becoming indispensable to the Christian apostle, the Cursillo method has something as old as the Christian faith and yet new to offer the church in the fulfillment of its mission to make disciples of all nations."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup>Ivan Rohloff, The Origins and Development of Cursillo, p. 135.

## DE COLORES

De colores  
 De colores the fields love to dress in all during the springtime.  
 De colores  
 De colores the birds have their clothing that comes every season.  
 De colores  
 De colores the rainbow is vested across the blue sky.  
 De colores, and so must all love be of every birght color to make  
 my heart cry. (Repeat)

De colores,  
 De colores we witness the sun-up on clear and bright mornings.  
 De colores  
 De colores the sun gives its treasures God's light to His children.  
 De colores  
 De colores the diamond will sparkle when brought to the light.  
 De colores, and so must all love be of every bright color to  
 make my heart cry. (Repeat)

Joyfully  
 Joyfully we will live in God's friendship because He has willed it.  
 Faithfully.  
 Faithfully we will slake the great thirsting of Christ the Immortal.  
 Joyfully  
 Joyfully we will bring to our Savior a harvest of souls.  
 Pouring outward the light from within the grace of our God His  
 infinite life. (Repeat)

Missionaries,  
 Missionaries of Christ with His courage determined to conquer.  
 Cursillistas,  
 Cursillistas who don't pay attention to human opinion.  
 Let the cowards  
 Let the cowards deride us and taunt us but it is the truth--  
 That they really desire the pleasure of being in grace in colors  
 with us. (Repeat)

Sings the rooster,  
 Sings the rooster with his quiri, quiri, quiri, quiri, quiri.  
 And the cluck-hen  
 And the cluck-hen with her cara, cara, cara, cara, cara.  
 And the babe-chicks,  
 And the babe-chicks with their pio, pio, pio, pio, pi.  
 De colores and so must all love be of every bright color, to make  
 my heart cry. (Repeat)