

## **SECRETARIAT**

*Source: National Cursillo Center Mailing – October 2007*

As committed leaders, dedicated to promoting and living the Foundational Charism ourselves, we have understood that Cursillo is not something that we do; it is something that we live simply because to live Cursillo is to live the Gospel.

The two structural elements of the Movement, the School of Leaders and the Secretariat are indivisible, each one is dependent on the other and neither can function properly without the other. It is from the School of Leaders that the members of the Secretariat are appointed and then it is the School that supports the work of the Secretariat. Only those leaders who have actively participated in the School can authentically understand the needs of the Movement they serve. No Movement can be said to be functioning as intended if there is no active Secretariat and School of Leaders.

To use an image of Eduardo Bonnín, he likens the Movement to an umbrella in which the Secretariat is the body of the umbrella and the School is the spokes that support it and keep it in place. Bonnín has been quite explicit in his definition of what the Secretariat and its members should be concerned with. He says; "Cursillo is not to feed people but to make them hungry for God". "The Secretariats exist in order to simplify, facilitate and make possible the living of everything that is fundamentally Christian and to be the guardians of the purity of the method." As such, the members of the Secretariat are the servants of the servants; their role is to be one of simple service to the Movement. Unfortunately, all too often, it becomes a place of prestige, power and control instead of the place where committed leaders act together to find ways to guide the Movement, themselves being leaven as the Cursillistas are leaven in the world.

“One of the greatest ironies of the history of Christianity is that its leaders constantly gave in to the temptation of power, political power, military power, economic power or moral and spiritual power, even though they continued to speak in the Name of Jesus who didn't cling to his divine power, but emptied himself and became as we are. The temptation to consider power a useful instrument in the proclamation of the Gospel is the greatest of all.” “Maybe it is that power offers an easy substitute for the hard task of love. It seems easier to be God than to love God, easier to control people than to love people, easier to own life than to love life.” “I am speaking of a leadership in which power is constantly abandoned in favor of love. It is a true spiritual leadership. Powerlessness and humility in the spiritual life do not refer to people who have no spine and let everyone else take decisions for them. They refer to people who are so deeply in love with Jesus that they are ready to follow Him wherever he guides them, always trusting that with Him they will find life and find it abundantly.” (In the Name of Jesus, Reflections on Christian Leadership by Henri Nouwen)

These quotes by Henri Nouwen in his book, “In the Name of Jesus, Reflections on Christian Leadership”, speak very clearly of the danger but also of the solution for those who serve the Movement in the Secretariat. It is their responsibility and function to constantly deepen their understanding of the Foundational Charism and to apply its

principles for the good of the Movement. If the Secretariat assumes an identity that resembles a board of directors then it can only be said that it is far removed from its Christian context. All decisions that are made must be for the good of the Movement bearing in mind at all times that in Cursillo; all that is done is done with the good of the person as the primary focus. The best criterion to use is: “What would Jesus do if He were here?” The School of Leaders and the Secretariat never come together simply to do something, but always first and foremost to be something together.

The Cursillistas who serve the Movement in the Secretariats and Schools of Leaders can best be described as keepers of the flame of the vision of the Founder, keeping it burning brightly as a beacon for all those whose paths are illuminated by its light.

There are three types of Secretariats in the Cursillo Movement of the United States:

1. The **Diocesan Secretariat** is composed of clergy and laity, men and women. The whole Secretariat is entrusted by the Bishop with the responsibility of promoting, developing and directing the Cursillo Movement in a diocese. The authority entrusted to the Secretariat is to embrace, study, and promote the Charism of the Movement. The Lay Director should always be a lay person responsible for the organization and methodology of the Movement. The Spiritual Advisor, always a priest, deacon or vowed religious, is responsible for matters concerning doctrine and conscience. Other Secretariat members include the Chairperson for the School of Leaders, Precursillo, Cursillo, and Postcursillo sections and a Treasurer and Secretary. All Secretariat members have voice and vote. The members of the Secretariat come from the School of Leaders. Their selection places them in a position to be of greater service to the Movement.
2. The **Regional Secretariat** is composed of all the Diocesan Lay Directors and the all the Diocesan Spiritual Advisors within a region. One of their responsibilities is to determine and meet the needs for the various diocesan Cursillo Movements within the region. This Secretariat has voice and vote and is responsible for selecting the Regional Service Team members who will serve all the dioceses of that region. Non-voting members of the Regional Secretariat include the Regional Coordinator, Regional Service Team Spiritual Advisor, and the three Regional Service Team Members.
3. The **National Secretariat** is composed of 28 Regional Coordinators from the 12 Regions in the United States. The Regional Service Team Members and the Regional Spiritual Advisor selects the Regional Coordinator. The newly selected Regional Coordinator automatically becomes a member of the National Secretariat for a period of 3 years. This Secretariat includes a National Episcopal Advisor, Bishop James A. Tamayo and a National Spiritual Advisor, Fr. Einer R. Ochoa. The Secretariat is responsible for providing a National Policy and Articles of Operation that promotes unity in the creative expression of the mentality of the founder of the Cursillo Movement and to provide criteria as to what constitutes an authentic Cursillo Movement in a Diocese with the right to use the Cursillo name and materials.

The National Secretariat serves the needs of the 12 Regions, the Regional Secretariat serves the needs of the Dioceses and the Diocesan Secretariat serves the needs of all the Cursillistas in their Diocese. All Secretariats have one thing in common; they are a community of service – Servants of the Servants.

Following are a couple of excerpts from Fundamental Ideas worth mentioning that refer to organization, authority and the spirit of friendship.

“The organization should accelerate, not provide obstacles to the Movement: The authority of the Movement must not go against the liberty of the individual, but should value and foster charisms; Norms should serve only to give greater effectiveness to initiatives; Structures cannot replace life; Criteria should guide (center) the spirit without smothering it; Common objectives are achieved by means of distinct vocations.” (1974 edition of “The Fundamental Ideas”, page 176)

It is quite clear that the spirit of the Secretariat should be the spirit of group reunion, which is based on friendship. “It will be difficult for the secretariat to become a dynamic reality within the greater community if it does not itself possess a true community spirit,” (which is also the spirit of friendship). The literature goes on to say, “In an atmosphere of team work (or friendship): where speaking the truth and freely expressing one’s own opinion are not only possible, but appreciated; where, upon finding differences, friendship will not suffer, nor willingness to come to an agreement; where, once a decision has been reached, all will be unconditionally loyal to carrying out that decision.” Now that’s real friendship! (1974 edition of “The Fundamental Ideas”, page 178)