



# The Cursillo® Movement

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## Methodology of Cursillo

*Source: Workshop presentation by Michael Ciccocioppo at the National Cursillo Encounter, Hofstra University, Hempstead, New York - July 26, 2013.*

DeColores, my sister and brothers!!

Before I begin, I want to say how good it is to be back on Long Island.

This is a special place for me because I married my wife, then Peggy O’Grady, in her home parish of Blessed Sacrament Church in nearby Valley Stream. Anybody from Valley Stream here today?

Up until my mother-in-law, Mary O’Grady, passed away two years ago, my favorite thing to do on Saturday mornings when we visited in the summer was to get up early and get to Jones Beach before the parking toll booths opened.

Then I would read scripture, do some spiritual journaling on the beach and then pray the rosary and the Divine Mercy Chaplet as I ran barefoot right along the edge of the beach where the waves hit the shoreline.

After a swim in the ocean, I would shower and change at the bathhouse and get to St. Agnes Cathedral in time for the 9:00 a.m. Mass. It was great!!

Speaking of the shore, I definitely want to give a shout out to anyone who is here who was affected in anyway by Hurricane Sandy. Here you are -- spending your weekend with us and the Lord when you probably have pressing things to do at home that will just have to wait. If you are one of those people, and you know who you are, please stand so the rest of us can recognize you in solidarity with the hardships you have endured?

I was asked to share some thoughts with you today about the methodology of Cursillos in Christianity. So to begin, I guess the logical question is, what do we mean by methodology?

The word *method* actually comes from two Greek words – meta, meaning “beyond” and odos meaning “path.” So literally speaking, method means a “path to go to the beyond.”

Of course, the suffix, -ology, means “the study of something.”

So in this rollo, we are going to study the method, that is, the path to the beyond, or the means to the end, of the Cursillos in Christianity.

In short, the method of Cursillo, the path Cursillo follows to arrive at the goal, is the friendship between people. That's it. It consists in making friends, being friends and bringing those friends to Christ.

Let me repeat that: The method of Cursillo is to make friends, be friends, and bring your friends to Christ.

Okay, that's it. Thank you very much!

Ohhhhh! You're not getting away that easily! You paid big bucks to be here and there is still time on the clock, so we're not going anywhere!!

The specific PURPOSE of Cursillo is to save souls and structure Christianity in the world.

And the specific MENTALITY of Cursillo is to proclaim the best news of the best reality, that God in Christ, is alive and loves us, to the most people possible.

We achieve this purpose and mentality through the best METHOD, which is friendship.

In the Gospel of John, chapter 1, verse 46, Phillip invites Nathanael by saying , "Come and see." Cursillo proposes that we invite friends to make the journey with us.

As simple and straight forward as the Cursillo Method of friendship really is, the Cursillo Method actually has three phases or basic elements. They are defined as: Precursillo, Cursillo Weekend, and Postcursillo.

These three elements are closely united with each other, like in a circular motion.



This one ring of unison is caused because the Precursillo generates the Cursillo Weekend, the Cursillo Weekend generates the Postcursillo and, in turn, the Postcursillo generates the Precursillo.

It is very important that we understand this circular concept. And so, let's examine each phase and see how the Precursillo generates the Cursillo Weekend, which generates the Postcursillo which in turn generates the Precursillo.

We'll start with Precursillo.

## **Precursillo**

Precursillo is the first phase in the Cursillo Methodology. The apostolic mission of Precursillo is to witness to others what we have discovered, that is, *the Good News of God's love*.

Precursillo is all about the Person.

Precursillo is all about Christ.

Precursillo is all about Friendship.

Person, Christ and Friendship.

Precursillo happens before the Cursillo Weekend and so it is during this phase that the person is searching for Christ.

In the Precursillo, we encounter many people in our immediate moveable square meter that goes with us wherever we go. It is as if we have an invisible hula-hoop around our waist all the time. The hula-hoop represents our sphere of influence, the environment we are occupying at this exact moment. Think about all the people who get close to that hula-hoop each day.

We are called to bring Christ to each one of them. Notice I did not say to bring them to Cursillo. We don't just make friends to get them to live a Cursillo Weekend. That may happen in some cases. But we should be making friends to bring them Christ.

There are several things that are required of us during the Precursillo, but there are three essential aspects that we must proactively engage in:

1. We must have personal contact with others.
2. We must give an authentic witness of life in Christ to others.
3. We must do real Palanca for others.

I imagine that what is true for me is also true for most of you. The majority of people that I come into contact with each day have not lived a Cursillo Weekend. And so, they are in the Precursillo phase.

Most of those people will stay in the Precursillo phase for the rest of their lives. But, guess what. That doesn't mean that I get to ignore them as I search for possible candidates for the next Cursillo weekend.

No, I should see the face of Christ in each and every person and treat them as if they were Christ himself. And, through my personal contact with them, they should see Christ in me - even if they don't realize that it is Christ whom they see.

I should pray for and make personal sacrifices for all those whom God places on my journey to heaven.

During the Precursillo phase, we have all heard that we must study the environment. But many seem to be confused about what “the environment” really is. Well, get ready for this, because it is a key point in the Precursillo phase.

The environment is defined as, “the person and his or her circumstances.” That is, each person’s circumstances are his or her sphere of influence at that exact moment.

So here’s the way things should progress in the Precursillo. We meet lots of people. We see Christ in all of them, no matter what they look like, no matter how they act, no matter whether they are religious or even nonreligious - yes, even those people whom our founder, Eduardo Bonnín, referred to as, “the far away.”

We treat them the way Christ would treat them so that they can see Christ in us.

As we learn more about them, we study them and their circumstances. The more we get to know them and their circumstances, their reality, the Lord will help us to discern who are possible candidates for a Cursillo Weekend, and who are not candidates for a Cursillo Weekend. Remember, the Cursillo Weekend is not for everyone.

The criteria Cursillo uses to help us select potential candidates is based on what the sponsor – you the friend – truly knows about a potential candidate.

When we select certain friends to invite to live the Cursillo Weekend, we should believe from all we know about them, that they have sufficient personality to encounter their selves.

In *Fundamental Ideas*, the ideal candidate is one who has influence over their own environments.

As far as their circumstance of life is concerned, Cursillo is intended for people who can be in a state of Grace if they so will to be. In other words, there should be no permanent conditions that keep a candidate from being in a state of Grace if they so choose to be – in other words, they are able to receive the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist.

Why do we focus on potential candidates’ personalities and conditions or circumstances of life? To answer the why, we must keep in mind the purpose of the selection.

The purpose of selecting certain friends to live the Cursillo Weekend is always to give Christianity a strong backbone. Those people who are strong vertebrae to their environments can contribute to this purpose. People who are convinced of who they are as a person and what they are doing will have the confidence to convince others later, after they live the Weekend.

They will be willing, able, and capable of communicating the best news of the best reality, that God in Christ is alive and loves us, to the most people possible. These men and women should attend because they are most likely to be apostles for Christ.

With these thoughts in mind potential candidates for the Cursillo Weekend generally fall into three categories:

- (1) Those who should go.
- (2) Those who can go.

(3) Those who should not go.

First, those who should go.

Think in terms of effectiveness in Christianizing environments; these are the people that would be ideal candidates for the Cursillo.

- A person who is truly the backbone (vertebrae) of their environments.
- A person who has a deep personality, a capacity for humility, and an ability to make decisions.
- A person who is mature, free and responsible, and able to receive the Sacraments.
- A person who is capable of understanding the Gospel message and of committing themselves to live it and share it.
- A person who is concerned, even restless, about the social conditions of our times.
- A person who has the ability and desire to live in and for community.
- A person who is considered a natural leader in his or her environment.

The second category of potential candidates is simply those who can go. This refers to ordinary Catholics who are eligible to receive the Sacraments. Even if they don't meet all the criteria for those who should go, under the first category, regular people trying to live the Catholic life as best they know how may certainly be invited to live a Cursillo Weekend.

Finally, the third category of potential candidates are those who should not go.

Prudence and charity ask that we not bring to the Cursillo those who would not benefit from it, or those who have problems to which the Cursillo could NOT provide solutions.

For example, the following persons should NOT be invited to live a Cursillo Weekend:

- Those with psychological or emotional problems.
- Those with abnormal circumstances due to illness or vice.
- Those whose moral lives are so disordered that they are incapable of understanding the message or of living the Cursillo experience.
- A person who, due to circumstances, cannot receive the Sacraments, especially the sacrament of the Eucharist, because their lives are contrary to the life of grace and the Cursillo is centered in the Eucharist where one experiences the life of Grace.

If the purpose of the Cursillo Movement is to be realized in a diocese, then the majority of candidates for each Weekend should come from the first category and the remainder from the second category.

Remember, if we are truly living the Precursillo, we will not be looking to bring someone to Cursillo. Instead, we will be making friends and being friends, and helping our friends be friends with Christ.

These friendships will take us on a journey, a journey of knowing, placing, enlightening, and accompanying our friends.

When individuals fall in the category of “those who should not go”, then as a friend, you should assist them to the best of your ability. The focus should be on bringing your friends to Christ not necessarily to the Cursillo Weekend. By us living the Cursillo message, we are able to bring the Cursillo to our friends.

After you invite friends to live the Cursillo Weekend, and they accept the invitation and complete and sign the application form, then you become their sponsor.

As the sponsor, you have many responsibilities as outlined in the little purple Sponsor Booklet. But these can be summarized into four key requirements:

1. to know the person;
2. to enlighten the person;
3. to place the person; and
4. to accompany the person.

First, to know the person, your friend, means that you have personal contact with the candidate and that you as sponsor - *Walk the Talk*:

- Be an active member of a Friendship Group Reunion and even invite your candidate.
- Actively attend Ultreya and even invite your candidate .
- Don't tell your candidate what type of Christian to be. Show your candidate how to be Christian by the way you live your life, love your family, care for your neighbors, and speak out for Christ.

Second, to enlighten the person, your friend, means that you as sponsor:

- Make sure your candidate reads the booklet entitled: *Cursillo, What is it?*
- Tell your candidate about the key events of the Cursillo Weekend, starting with Thursday night, then Friday, Saturday, and Sunday.

Third, to place the person, your friend, means that you as sponsor:

- Insure that your candidate has transportation to the Weekend.
- Find out if anything is needed for a comfortable stay.
- See if your candidate needs assistance with things such as the home, family, and pets.

Fourth, to accompany the person, your friend, means that you as sponsor:

- Pray and sacrifice, that is, do REAL Palanca before and during the Cursillo Weekend.
- Be at the Clausura and make the necessary transportation arrangements so your candidate can get home.
- Meet with the new Cursillista (your friend) in a one-to-one setting after the Weekend to answer any questions your friend might have. If you do not know the answers, assure your friend that you will find someone who can provide the answers.
- Help your friend get into a Friendship Group Reunion right away and take them to the Ultreya!
- Stay in contact your friend during their Fourth day through personal contact.

To wrap up the Precursillo, the first phase or basic element of the Cursillo Methodology,

it is vitally important that you know your friend and what your friend wants. Through your personal contact, you should also know how your friend acts in correspondence with his or her intelligence, heart and will.

During the Precursillo, you spend time with those who are searching for Christ, whether they know that they are searching for HIM or not. In the next phase, the Cursillo Weekend, they will encounter Christ.

## **Cursillo Weekend**

The Cursillo Weekend is the second phase of the Cursillo Methodology.

The apostolic mission of the Cursillo Weekend is to proclaim the Gospel in the style that Christ exemplified so that the candidates actually encounter themselves, Christ and others in relation to *the Good News of God's love*.

The Cursillo Weekend is all about the Person.  
The Cursillo Weekend is all about Christ.  
The Cursillo Weekend is all about Friendship.

Person, Christ and Friendship.

Whereas during the Precursillo the person was searching for Christ, now during the Cursillo Weekend the person is encountering Christ.

Further, just like during the Precursillo, there are three things that are required during the Cursillo Weekend:

1. Personal contact between the candidates and the team.
2. Authentic witness of life in Christ by the team to the candidates.
3. Real Palanca by the team, sponsors and the 4<sup>th</sup> Day community.

The founder of the Cursillos in Christianity, Eduardo Bonnín, has said that the Cursillo Weekend is not meant to satisfy the hunger for God, it is meant to create a hunger for Him or to awaken the hunger that already exists in our hearts. It is not meant to answer questions; it is more designed to provoke questions, the kind of questions that will send each person on their own journey of discovery, to go deeper and deeper into all that is Cursillo, not in order to be better Cursillistas but to be better Christians.

The team for the Cursillo Weekend should be selected from School of Leaders. Team members must be prepared technically and spiritually to deliver the joyful proclamation of being Christian!

The team proclaims the Gospel realities through The Word and through the testimony of their lives. The Gospel and personal witness are a message of living and sharing what is fundamental to being Christian. It is a living witness that it is possible to live the life of grace.

Each candidate receives the Cursillo message according to his or her disposition at that moment in their lives which takes us back to how he or she thinks (mind), what he or she wants (heart),

and how he or she acts (action). Candidates are asked for their enthusiasm, self-surrender, and spirit of charity.

The Cursillo Weekend helps the freedom of each person to encounter the Spirit of God in a way that helps them discover that God in Christ loves them unconditionally!

Each candidate on the Weekend has the opportunity to become fully alive by means of three fundamental encounters: with Self, with Christ, and with Others. This is made possible through the planned methodology of the weekend.

One aspect that helps make the three encounters possible is the sequential timeline of the rollos.

The five Spiritual rollos present the theology of living the life of Grace. (*Structure of Ideas*)

They are:

- Habitual Grace - with divine life,
- Actual Grace - its promoter and its achievement,
- Sacraments - its sources,
- Obstacles to a Life of Grace - its enemies, and,
- Life in Grace - its nourishment.

The five Meditations are not rollos or acts of piety, but channels toward the Cursillistas' mental prayer. (*Structure of Ideas*)

They are:

- Know Yourself - how you are,
- The Prodigal Son - how Christ is,
- The Three Glances of Christ- how Christ sees you,
- The Person of Christ - how you should see Christ, and,
- Christ's Message to the Cursillista - how Christ loves you.

The ten lay rollos present the witness to the actual living a life of Grace. (*Structure of Ideas*)

They are:

- Ideal – you can be more and be better,
- Laity in the Church - you can do so from where you are,
- Piety – by discovering your heart through spontaneity,
- Study – by applying your intelligence with conviction,
- Action – by exercising your will with decision,
- Leaders – by a total surrender of your being,
- Study the Environment – by accepting your reality is integrated by other people,
- Christianity in Action – whom you can help,
- Cursillista Beyond the Cursillo – as long as it is done in a personal way, and
- Total Security – through friendship.

By following the Cursillo Weekend Manual and not adding to it or deviating from it, the team provides what is essentially Christian, and then steps back, and allows God's grace to do the rest!

If the team fulfills their role, the candidates will attribute their conversion to God's grace, not to the rollista, rector, best meal, song, or Palanca letter.

As we continue to study and understand the Foundational Charism of the Cursillo Movement, what is becoming apparent is that its whole essence is simply finding a way to live the Gospel in our everyday lives and how to make the Good News attractive to the ordinary person who comes across our path. We don't have to be theologians; we just have to be authentic. We have to live what we proclaim and proclaim what we live. As evangelizers, we are called "to become the Good News" and help the other person become the Good News.

So far we heard how people are searching for Christ during the Precursillo phase of the Methodology. And we just heard how, in the Cursillo Weekend phase of the Methodology, people get to encounter Christ. Now in the third phase, the Postcursillo, let's explore how they follow Christ. It is important indeed to have souls encounter God, but it is even more important to motivate them to follow Him. (Structure of Ideas)

## **Postcursillo**

The Postcursillo is the third phase of the Cursillo Methodology.

The apostolic mission of the Postcursillo is that each person is called to be a "living gospel" in the normality of his or her daily life by living the Gospel realities discovered on the Weekend through a life of piety, study and action. Simply stated, to live Cursillo is to live the Gospel!

The Postcursillo is all about the Person.  
The Postcursillo is all about Christ.  
The Postcursillo is all about Friendship.

Person, Christ and Friendship.

Whereas during the Cursillo Weekend the person is encountering Christ, in the Postcursillo the person is following Christ.

Further, just like the Precursillo, and the Cursillo Weekend, there are three things that are required during the Postcursillo:

1. Personal contact with the new and with the veteran Cursillistas.
2. Authentic witness of life in Christ by everyone in the 4<sup>th</sup>-Day community.
3. Real Palanca by all the Cursillistas for the Cursillo Movement.

In the Fourth Day, the person is called to continue discovering and deepening friendships in each of the three encounters discovered on the Weekend.

The person is now in a state of progressive conversion and is 'evangelizing' and 'being Christian' where God has placed them – in their everyday environments.

The world can become more human and therefore, more divine, by the linkage of fully alive Christian friends who help each other to maximize their potential by living together the life of grace.

This linkage is achieved through Group Reunion and Ultreya.

The Methodology of Cursillo proposes two types of Group Reunion: (*Structure of Ideas*)

1. There is Friendship Group Reunion with those whom you "want" to group with; this is where you share what you live, because you are friends.
2. Then there are Group Reunions with those whom you "should" group with; this is where you share what you have in common, because you are Christians, living in the same environment to share the experience.

The functioning of a Friendship Group Reunion requires a certain and precise technique, supported by experience that should NOT be left to the discretion of its members. It should be understood first of all, that the most important thing is not the reunion, but the Group, that is, the Group of Friends.

The number of members should not be less than 3 or more than 6, so that each retains their personality, sharing their opinion and being an active member of the Reunion.

The selection of the members of a Group Reunion should come from a criterion of absolute freedom so that each person freely chooses their Group Reunion. It may comprise of those having lived the same Cursillo as well as people from different Cursillos that choose each other for whatever reason.

What should govern in a Friendship Group Reunion is the principle of stability without feeling obligated. Because the group is meeting with whom "you want", a Group Reunion cannot be lived without total friendship.

It is very important to have a fixed place, day and time for the celebration of the reunion, within the freedom and the agreement of its members. Anywhere and anytime of any day can be used to hold the Reunion.

Each member contributes to the Friendship Group Reunion, to the extent of their ability, their "best": idealism, dedication, and spirit of charity.

The Friendship Group Reunion has an agenda that should not be altered. When changes are made that change its structure, the results may be good and perhaps worthwhile, but it will not be a Cursillo Friendship Group Reunion. Therefore, Groups should not deviate from the agenda.

The agenda of the following steps:

Begin with the prayer to the Holy Spirit in order to be conscious that what is beginning is something serious.

Each member presents to the others the most significant actions you have carried out during the week, in relation to:

*Piety* - What spiritual aids helped you nurture your vital union with Christ? What moment did you feel closest to Christ?

*Study* - What have you done to know God's gift better?

*Action* - What apostolic success did the Lord want to accomplish in His Church through you this week in your family, your neighborhood, in your environment?

*Apostolic Success or Apostolic Failure* – What apostolic activities brought you happiness and/or disappointment this week?

How did you fulfill last week's plan and what are your plans for next week?

After everyone has shared and been listened to, pray an *Our Father* for all the intentions of the group, and give thanks to the Lord for the start of a new week. Close with the Prayer of Thanksgiving and a Hail Mary.

Now, just a few words about Group Reunions with those whom "WE SHOULD" group in certain community situations.

The teams of leaders, who are selected to serve in a Cursillo Weekend, make Group Reunions.

The members of the Diocesan Secretariat make Group Reunions.

The members of the School of Leaders, make Group Reunions.

And in the Ultreya, Floating Group Reunion is made to live together and to know the brothers and sisters we walk together with as a Christian Community in action.

Having discussed the Group Reunion in the Postcursillo phase of the Cursillo Methodology, let's discuss the other vital part of the Postcursillo, that is, the Ultreya.

What is the Ultreya? It is the reunion of the groups – the coming together of Christians in community to share and mutually strengthen, in their lives, the living out of what is fundamental to being Christian.

Ultreya provides a lived experience of community or a living reality of many different people and circumstances that are united in Christ and are prepared to share their Christian experience with everyone else.

Ultreya is the weekly contact with our brothers and sisters who live along the lines that the Cursillo Movement has laid out for them.

- It is the place where one lives, or where one should live what was said in the Cursillo.
- It is a meeting place – a hub of Christian life.
- It is a place to get together with our friends who live out what is fundamental to being a Christian; or if they are not living it out, would like to, or regret not living it out.

“The Ultreya affords the person the opportunity to meet and make friends, those friends who become key in their fourth day journey – it is also the meeting of the groups – to revitalize, to renew.

The whole community shares what each lives, the best of everyone.

The Ultreya is the place where those who have started their conversion process in a Cursillo can establish those essential and life-giving friendships with others who share their same sense of life”. (*Eduardo Bonnín, Evangelization through Conversion*)

There should be three stages of every Ultreya: (*Structure of Ideas*)

The first stage is the Floating Group Reunions that I just mentioned. Groups of 3, 4 or 5 people set up a Reunion as they arrive.

They follow the order of Group Reunion:

- Invocation of the Holy Spirit
- Sharing of personal piety, study, and action
- Moment closest to Christ

Thirty minutes should be allowed for Group Reunion.

The second stage is the Ultreya Experience

- A witness rollo is given by an individual about how he or she lives the Christian life or how he or she would like to or is sad not to do so. The witness should be about 15 minutes
- Then 2 or 3 people respond with an echo to what was said – they each have 2 to 3 minutes to address the topic of the witness in truth and charity from something they relate to in their own lives
- Then, a summation is given by the Spiritual Advisor reflecting on what was said in light of the Gospel

The third stage of the Ultreya is Prayer – Encountering Christ in front of the Blessed Sacrament if possible.

This final stage includes:

- Community Prayer
- Thanksgiving
- Offering petitions
- The Lord’s prayer
- De Colores
- Departing

We cannot overemphasize how important it is for Ultreya leaders to follow these stages without deviations.

Adding other elements to the Ultreya, such as instructional rollos or Bible studies, or deleting vital elements such as the floating Group Reunions or prayer time, will convert the Ultreya into something that does not meet its intended purpose.

Witness speakers need to know what the criteria is for their witness rollo so that they are not confused about what to share.

Ultreyas should be on time, be brief in sharing, and end on time.

Leaders should be present and participate actively and regularly.

And sponsors are encouraged to invite their candidates to attend the Ultreya with them.

To wrap up the Postcursillo phase of the Cursillo Methodology, it should be clear that the Cursillista who regularly participates in Friendship Group Reunion and Ultreya is a person who is also building Christianity in his or her family, neighborhood, workplace, in his or her moveable square meter, through a life that proclaims the best news that God in Christ loves us and communicating it through the best means which is friendship!

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, those of us who have been called to live a Cursillo Weekend have been called to live the Cursillo method in our everyday lives, right where we are at the moment. And those who have been called to leadership in the Movement must appreciate and respect the Cursillo method properly to be able to apply it in the most appropriate manner to the mentality and purpose of the Cursillo Movement!

DeColores!

## One Method, Three Phases

The Precursillo generates the Cursillo Weekend

The Cursillo Weekend generates the Postcursillo

The Postcursillo generates the Precursillo



## **Resource Documents**

Structure of Ideas – Eduardo Bonnín, Francisco Forteza, and Bernardo Vadell, National Secretariat, National Cursillo® Center, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition © 2007

Leaders' Manual – National Secretariat, National Cursillo® Center, 9<sup>th</sup> Edition © 2006

Cursillo Manual – National Secretariat, National Cursillo® Center, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition © 2007

The Fundamental Ideas of the Cursillo Movement – OMCC, The World Organization of the Cursillo Movement, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition © 1992

My Spiritual Testament - Eduardo Bonnín, Foundation Eduardo Bonnín Aguiló, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition © 2009

The Study of the Charism – OMCC, The World Organization of the Cursillo Movement, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, © 2010