



Cursillo Manual, Step-by-Step

Source: Presented by Concepcion Mayorga at the 27th National Cursillo Encounter held at Trinity University in the Archdiocese of San Antonio – July 29, 2017.

My name is Concepcion Mayorga, I was born in Zacatecas, Mexico. I currently live in Omaha, NE. I am married to my husband Jose Guadalupe or Lupillo and we have 4 children Anahi, Jose, Jorge and Camila, and a grandson Emiliano. Every day I thank God for the family He gave me. I lived my Cursillo weekend in June 1995, since then I've been an active member in all areas of Cursillo at the diocesan and regional level. I can say that Cursillo is my way of life.

I want to thank God for this opportunity to be celebrating the 60th anniversary of Cursillo in the United States. It is a privilege and an honor to share this celebration with all of you.

Today is also a very special day for me, because I am fulfilling 22 years of marriage. July 29th is my wedding anniversary and every year as a gift, my husband gives me the trip to the National Encounter.

When I was asked to be a presenter at the National Encounter, I felt frightened and nervous, the truth is that I still am. I shared this with my husband and friends and they encouraged me a lot. I am a very shy person and to stand in front of many people is not my comfort zone. Sometimes I prefer someone else to do it, but one day meditating and reflecting, I realized that if I only do the things that I know how to do, I will never be able to do more than I am capable of.

Recently Pope Francis in the European Ultreya said: There are more than 100 charisms in the Catholic Church. He also said that we must return to the roots to know where we came from and how we got here. It is necessary to adhere to the Charism of the Founder to keep us authentic, and not to have so many deviations. We know that Cursillo was born in the 1940's and has spread all over the world in different languages and cultures, but over time, in some dioceses, they have been adding some elements that are not part of Cursillo, however, it is important that we maintain its true essence. We are trying to return to the Founder and adhere to the Charism, so we can be more consistent in all dioceses.

At the National level, we have formed committees in 3 different languages, English, Spanish, and Vietnamese. The committees' purpose is to review the 3-Day Manual and the Step-by-Step (Rector's Guide) to facilitate consistency in Cursillo.

Today, with technology so advanced and the age of the Internet, everyone has access to books, documents, and articles from the Eduardo Bonnín Aguiló Foundation (FEBA). In some dioceses, they are talking about this as something new to the Cursillo, but it's not really like that, it's the same thing we already have. To avoid confusion and to maintain the Charism of the Founder, the US Cursillo will introduce a 3-Day Manual from Mallorca, Spain provided by Eduardo Bonnín and the Step-by-Step which is the explanation of why we do what we do in the 3-Days of Cursillo.

We should not worry because most of you already lived your Cursillo Weekend and all of you know what happens during the 3-Days, from preparation to the Clausura. There are only few differences that you will notice. Since we do not have much time I will only mention the changes that come in the manual, so that you are aware and have an idea of what is coming in the future. You can take this information to your diocese to prepare them so they won't be surprised. The plan is to adopt the 3-Day Manual from Mallorca, review it and then publish it. Workshops will be provided to let Cursillistas know the 'why' of these changes and start using it in all the dioceses in the United States. This process will take about two years. A plan for the workshops and implementing the Step-by-Step will be sent to all Lay Directors and Secretariats.

For example, on Thursday in Mallorca everyone (sponsors, candidates and team) meet in the town square. The team waits for the candidates to welcome them and begin the process of friendship. The team should pay attention to the timid person to make them feel welcome. The team takes the candidates in their cars to the place where the Cursillo is held. Other people usually go to the chapel to pray.

When everyone arrives at the Cursillo facility, the team will make a visit to the Blessed Sacrament to place the Cursillo in the hands of the Holy Spirit. While the rooms are distributed, the candidates are called by first and last name so that all become familiar with the names. The lodging accommodations are explained.

In the United States, we do something similar, but not in every state because of the inclement weather. For example, a lot of snow falls in Nebraska in the winter months and we cannot get together in the town square, but we all gather in the parish and drive in our cars to the place of the Cursillo. We are doing something similar even though it is not the same.

The Preliminary rollo begins with the prayer to the Holy Spirit. The candidates are welcomed and a brief presentation is given by the Rector. From this moment, the Rector takes control of the Cursillo without imposing his authority. The beginning of the silence retreat until after mass on Friday is announced. It is recommended that the mass be in the morning because it is part of the retreat phase. The other days can be flexible according to the circumstances and availability of the Spiritual Advisor.

The Pilgrim's Guides are distributed after the rollo which provides the morning and night prayers and other spiritual acts for the weekend. The purpose of the first night is to provide an opportunity to awaken the moral conscience of the Cursillistas, beginning with an analysis of their lives. The silence helps the candidates to look inside themselves and discover that the activities of everyday life often prevents them from encountering self and hear God's voice.

The Know Yourself meditation – The candidates are asked to let this be a pause in their life to reflect on who they are and to discover their possibilities and their limitations. It will be helpful for each candidate to review the movie of their life.

The Way of the Cross - Three Cursillistas are selected to carry the cross and the candles during the Way of the Cross. Later dinner is served; during dinner, a team leader reads the Bankruptcy Story,

(it talks about the King of Persia who calls 3 wise men to ask them what would be the greatest misfortune). The intent is to reflect and discover the time we have wasted in our lives without knowing God. The Prodigal Son meditation introduces the candidates to the compassionate Father who is always waiting for us with open arms. All of this provides the opportunity to an encounter with oneself. This encounter is most important because knowing who we are and our circumstances, facilitates the encounter with Christ and prepares them for the encounter with others.

We do the night prayers and we mention that we will do a special examination of conscience that is not in the Pilgrim's Guide. We read Jesus Christ Speaks to you.

If someone wants to go to confession, he can do it at this time. Remember, the Spiritual Advisor is available for confession to the candidates, not the team leaders.

It is necessary to take into consideration that we may need to make some adjustments to the schedule depending on the facility. One person is assigned to ring the bell so all can follow the schedule.

It is recommended that we not use electronic devices, but we must also respect the freedom of the person, and encourage them to give up their cell phones so they can pay attention and stay focused during the weekend. It is important to practice charity with each other. Candidates should not leave the retreat center.

Tomorrow the bell will ring at the designated time, if someone wakes up early, please do not wake up the others. Once everyone has gone to the dorms, a team leader walks through the dorms to make sure silence is maintained. It is important to understand that the silence also applies to the team leaders, not only the candidates.

The team meeting is very important. It is necessary to review the schedule for the next day, including the mass schedule. Review the registration forms and assign the candidates to table groups. It is important to separate the candidates from relatives and close friends. Before the team goes to bed, the team will make a visit to the Blessed Sacrament. The next day we continue with the same sequence for the team meeting.

Morning prayers - Ensure that all team leaders are on time for all the acts of the Cursillo Weekend. If the Spiritual Advisor is available and someone wishes to go to confession, this would be a good opportunity. It is recommended that the Spiritual Advisor be available during the 3 days for confession and spiritual direction. There should not be a designated schedule for this, but allow the freedom of the person to decide when they need to go to confession. The candidates can go at any time without interrupting the schedule of the rollos. Confession can be done during morning or night prayers, during meals or free time. Margaret from Canada, shared with us that they already put into practice the Step-by-Step from Mallorca and the Spiritual Advisor realized that confessions were much more profound and that more candidates approached confession and spiritual direction because the freedom of the person was respected.

The prayer to the Holy Spirit is said by the Rector/a before assigning the candidates to table groups (decurias). It is recommended that no more than 7 candidates be assigned to each table group including the team leaders. Each table group takes the name of a saint as previously assigned. A president (head of table group) and secretary are selected for each table group to ensure everyone's participation and to take notes. The candidates are told that at the end of the day, each group will provide a summary of the rollos.

The Ideal rollo calls us to be a person. It is not necessary to say the Holy Spirit prayer because we already did it. There are about two hours after each rollo is given to share, to discuss, to work on posters, to drink coffee, etc. After the Ideal rollo, the candidates are given the Hobby Sheet to fill out according to what they like to do, i.e. their favorite sport, their hobby, etc. This will help the team to know the candidates better.

We sing De Colores before the Habitual Grace rollo to clear our heads and warm up the environment. We do not give the candidates a song book because we want them to express themselves, to sing songs they know, even if it is not a religious song. We want them to share a joke, to feel comfortable, not to feel pressured.

One of the important changes will be the title of one of the rollos: The Layperson in the Church to The Layperson: A Christian in the World because layperson in the church focuses on participating in the Church and Christian in the world focuses on being an active and responsible Christian in the world which makes more sense to our role as Christians.

After the Piety rollo, the Rector provides a brief talk about making the most of the Cursillo. On Saturday night, after the table groups share their summary of the rollos, they have a "social" gathering. This time is used to tell jokes, sing a song, show some talent, and personal contact. It is important to stay within what is intended by the social gathering.

The mañanitas has brought much confusion and discord in some dioceses because they got out of control. The mañanitas used to be done in a simple manner, but then more songs were added which meant more time, and then the number of people increased out of control, and even professional Mariachi groups were brought in. Because of these problems, the mañanitas had to be eliminated. The reason for the mañanitas was to bring the Fourth Day community as a sign of affection, support and palanca to the candidates. Eduardo Bonnín experienced the mañanitas in a visit to Cursillo in Mexico and he liked it so much that he incorporated the mañanitas into the 3-Day Cursillo in Mallorca.

In the Total Security rollo, we provide a demonstration of Group Reunion. It is actually supposed to be done with Cursillistas from the Fourth Day community. A few Cursillistas selected beforehand come to share Group Reunion with the candidates. Perhaps we may think that it should not be done this way because we've said that the 3-Day Cursillo should be in a place without interference from other people. The reason the demonstration is done this way is to begin personal contact with the Fourth Day community, to show the candidates there is a community who will support them. The candidates will feel more confident when they come to the Ultreya and School of Leaders and they will also realize that there are other people who have lived their Cursillo and have persevered and that they can do it too.

During the closing ceremony, the new Cursillistas are not called by table group to share their witness. A simple invitation is made to whomever wishes to share their experience of the 3 days and thereby, respecting the freedom of the person without making them feel obligated. It has been proven that by keeping the Cursillo simple and respecting the freedom of the person, the friendship is more profound and sincere therefore, everyone wants to participate and share their witness. There are no crucifixes to hand out, only the completed Service Sheet is returned to each person as a reminder of the commitment each made with Christ. Keep in mind, the ‘why’ of all this will be explained during the workshops on the Step-by-Step manual.

This is the process outlined in Mallorca’s Step-by-Step manual. We do not want to impose anything to anyone, we just want to pass on this information so you can take it to your dioceses and prepare them, so these changes will not come as a surprise. If we implement the Step-by-Step as written by Eduardo Bonnín, simple, designed to respect the freedom of the person, it will be more effective and everyone who lives a Cursillo will come out full of Grace and the Holy Spirit.

In order to have a 3-Day Cursillo, we need the team of leaders to be fully prepared. It is recommended that the team be selected with sufficient time before the Cursillo so that they can get to know each other, so they can have a sense of community, spirit of service, humility and dedication, and of course, to live the three phases of Cursillo, and especially be attending the School of Leaders.

There are different options for selecting the team.

1. The Secretariat selects the team from the School of Leaders.
2. The Secretariat selects the Rector(a), and together they select the rest of the team from the School of Leaders.
3. The 3-Day Cursillo Chairperson recommends members from the School of Leaders to the Secretariat for approval.

Any of these options are acceptable as long as the final approval comes from the Secretariat and the team comes from the School of Leaders.

Once the team is selected, they need to share in a climate of Group Reunion so they can be witnesses of a living and visible community. Here is the secret, if we become one in Jesus, then there is no better witness than this. Although some team members may know each other from the School of Leaders, the Ultreya, work, etc., it is in the reunions where the team gets to know and share with each other in a more intimate manner.

During the time of team preparation, the leaders should give priority to the preparation, give of their time and dedication so they can be an exemplary community in such a way that others can say, “Look how they love each other”. In these meetings, it is important to continue the process of friendship. The closer the date of the Cursillo, the more frequent the meetings should be.

Distribute the activities or tasks for the Cursillo during the first meeting so that all the leaders know what their responsibilities are. Share a calendar with the date, time and location of the meetings with everyone. Take time to share the tripod of piety, study, action and moment close to Christ.

Other activities during the meetings can include giving the rollos, or the main points of the rollos. Plan ahead, so that each leader comes prepared and shares his rollo. When someone shares their rollo, the other leaders can make comments, observations, and suggestions with charity. The rollista must be open and accept the suggestions and comments of their team members. You can also review the 3 phases of the Cursillo, share about the 3 encounters, share about personal contact, responsibilities at the table groups, experiences in previous Cursillos without mentioning names, or dates. The last meetings can have a celebration of the Eucharist or some other spiritual activity.

Important – The team reunions/meetings do not replace the School of Leaders, Ultreyas, or Group Reunion which are planned separately. Every team member, which includes clergy and laity is one Group responsible for something that can be a definitive change in the life of those who attend the Cursillo. It is important to have a spirit of service. No matter what task or activity we are called to do, we must do it with the joy of serving with love. We must do our part as if everything depended on us, knowing well that everything depends on God.

With the truths proclaimed in the rollos, we want the candidates to want to live a life of grace that they realize their reality as a person, that they know where they are at this moment and that they discover their possibilities. Cursillo provides an opportunity for each candidate to encounter themselves and to experience the encounter with Christ and with the others. We are going to achieve this by listening to them and knowing them. Today everyone wants to speak out, but no one wants to listen. We need to listen to know their personality and their circumstances in order to be able to understand them no matter how irrational their behavior. Once we know and understand them, we can guide them by giving them the right response at the right time according to their personality and circumstance. Everyone is different; therefore, we need to respect their freedom.

We need to be authentic because many times during the 3 days, we are very attentive, caring, and we shower them with hugs and kisses, but outside the Cursillo we are different. It is necessary to be authentic so when the Cursillistas come to the Group Reunion, Ultreya, and School of Leaders, they will be able to see the same caring people who listened to them during the 3-Day Cursillo. Bishop Elizondo said, “people come seeking Christ and they only find me with my ideas, instead of showing them Christ”. It is important that we prepare technically and spiritually to serve on a team for Cursillo. What is essential to give a rollo is to live it, but it is also very important to know and understand it.

Eduardo Bonnín said that the 3-Day Cursillo is not intended to satisfy the hunger for God, but to create hunger or to awaken the hunger that already exists in our hearts. Cursillo is not about answering all our questions, but to provoke more questions, the kind of questions that sends each person in his pilgrimage of discovery to go deeper into what Cursillo is, not to be better Cursillistas, but to be better Christians.

As leaders and as team, we must recognize, from the beginning, that we are only instruments in the hands of the Holy Spirit and we need to be living in grace because we are the channel through which grace will pass. We must be honest and speak in truth at all times. We must be ourselves for we cannot have one interior motive and another on the exterior. We must be authentic so when Cursillistas see us at Group Reunion or at the Ultreya, they will see the same person they saw at the Cursillo, the same person who served them.

If the team serves with prudence, the candidates will attribute their conversion to the grace of God, not the rollista, Rector(a), the best meal, song, or palanca they received.

We will witness the fruits of Cursillo by giving an authentic witness of Christian life lived in grace. The greatest gift that the Lord gives us is the knowledge that we are his instruments and that He uses us to carry out his mission.

This is what Cursillos in Christianity can offer the world of today. We are not proposing riches to the man of our time, what Cursillo intends is to place in his life, the opportunity of living a life of grace that elevates him to the dignity of a child of God.

This is the message of Cursillo and when it is understood by the intelligence of the person and accepted in his heart, it allows the discovery that it is possible to be Christian in the environment where God has planted him. A Christian's criteria provide the opportunity to grow and develop knowing that being Christian, wherever he is, if he is a Christian of truth, he can convert his environment for Christ.

De Colores!