



History of Cursillo in the USA

Source: Presented by Fr. Esteban Jasso, T.O.R. at the 27th National Cursillo Encounter held at Trinity University in the Archdiocese of San Antonio – July 28, 2017.

De Colores brothers and sisters Cursillistas!

After living the first Cursillo in Waco, TX on May 27, 1957, I entered the Franciscan Third Order Regular (TOR) on September 17, 1957 to begin the year of postulancy in Loretto, PA. The following year I was sent to Mallorca to begin my novitiate at the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Cure followed by two years of philosophy, one in Palma de Mallorca and one in Porciuncula, Mallorca. During these two years I was invited to the Ultreyas in Palma de Mallorca. They were very strong experiences of the Cursillo Movement. I had the pleasure of meeting the Founder of Cursillo, Eduardo Bonnín and the men who assisted him, such as José Ferragut, Francisco Forteza, Juan Capó and Bishop Juan Hervás, and others. As well as, the Franciscan religious of the Third Order Regular who participated in the first Cursillos: Fr. Tomeu Nicolau, Fr. Amengual, and Fr. Font. After living in Mallorca from 1958 to 1961, I was sent to study Theology for 4 years at the University of St. Thomas in Rome, Italy where I was ordained a priest on February 21, 1965. I then returned to Spain for 6 months of pastoral studies in Madrid. After living 8 years in Europe, I returned to Waco, Texas to celebrate my first Mass.

Historical Background of the First Cursillo in Waco, TX

In 1955, something important happened at the St. Francis Parish in Waco, Texas. Fr Gabriel Fernandez established a Catholic Action group which paved the way for the first Cursillo in Christianity in Waco, Texas. The men from Catholic Action of Waco participated in the first Cursillo which included some of us who are here with you today: Luis Salinas and yours truly, Fr. Esteban Jasso.

After my two years of military service during the Korean War, I returned to Waco and to my surprise found out that Catholic Action was active at St. Francis, my parish and without being present, I was appointed as its first President and later I was appointed Diocesan President for Catholic Action by Bishop Reicher of Austin. During those two years, before the first Cursillo in Christianity, Fr Gabriel prepared us with the Cursillos de Conquista and an impressive youth ministry. In 1957, God blessed us with the arrival of Bernardo Vadell and Agustín Palomino in San Antonio, Texas. They immediately contacted Fr. Gabriel to prepare for the first Cursillo in Waco.

First Cursillo in Waco, Texas - May 27, 1957

The young men who attended the first Cursillo were from the Catholic Action group at St. Francis Parish in Waco, Texas. As a young member of Catholic Action, my life was firmly centered on prayer and living in Grace by way of the sacraments. During this time, I lived powerful personal experiences of Christ and Mary. However, what impressed me the most of the first Cursillo was the witness by Bernardo Vadell and Agustín Palomino. At that time of my life, listening to Fr.

Gabriel preach, who was an excellent preacher, I found it normal since that was his mission as a priest. However, for a layperson to speak and preach of Christ, the Church and its doctrine with strength and conviction was quite a compelling revelation for me and without a doubt, for the other young men. I fell in love with the mission of the laity in the Church and this led me to begin thinking about my vocation to the priesthood. I made the decision to enter the Franciscan Third Order in which I've been in for 60 years, 52 years as a priest. This year will I be 85 and I am "De Colores" with you Cursillistas from Waco, the US and the world.

The "Rollos" given by Bernardo and Agustín with such vigor and grace reached the depths of my being. The Rollos were like a summary of the essential Doctrine of the Church. Each of the Rollos enlightened my baptismal faith to give it all the splendor that God wants to see in each one of us. Without a doubt, the Cursillo in Christianity was a true Pentecost for all of us.

I remember that during my four years of studying Theology at the University of St. Thomas in Rome, Italy, the theologians were very interested in what was said about Cursillos in Christianity and the impact experienced by those who lived it. The professor who was going to oversee my thesis advised me to select the topic of Cursillos in Christianity. Especially the aspect of going into detail on whether the results [of living Cursillo] were simply sentimental or from Grace. The answer was: "that natural life recovers through Grace what is lost by sin" and "Grace restores in the human being what sin has destroyed" and the person's dignity as a child of God, is restored. Man must prepare the way to grace with all the human means that God has given us.

As Fr. Antonio Perez correctly stated: "That is why it has been said that the life of Grace, with the apostolate as its consequence, is the essence of Christianity and therefore, the essence of the Cursillo Movement."

Sentimentality [feelings, emotions] does not change the person. Sentimentality will disappear, it is blown away with the wind, but an experience lived in Grace will remain throughout life. The Cursillo is a convincing experience of Grace in order to begin living as children of God, committed to his Son, the Holy Spirit and the Church.

It is important to recognize that Cursillos in Christianity were ahead of the Second Vatican Council from which we still have much to discover. The Cursillos are a Movement founded by laity committed to Christ and his Church, as were Eduardo Bonnín Aguiló, José Ferragut, and other young men from Mallorca's Catholic Action. It is an honor and privilege to tell you today that I met these men during my three years in Mallorca from 1958 to 1961. They were well prepared and saintly. The Ultreyas which I was able to attend were many and they were full of a life De Colores. The song De Colores lived in the person and it was shared with others in the Group Reunions. The religious of my Franciscan Order were spiritual directors of the first Cursillos that took place between those in Cala Figuera and the first numbered Cursillo at San Honorato in 1949. I am convinced that the Cursillos have not given everything they can give to the Church and to the world. There is so much we need to do for Cursillo today. Ultreya! We must go much further in search for Christ.

Our Commitment to Cursillos

1. Return to the founding sources of the Cursillos in Christianity Movement.
2. Safeguard the Orthodoxy of Cursillos in Christianity.
3. Become leaders who think and people of prayer like our Founder. We are very prone to activism that we forget to be more creative in our action.
4. Cursillos in Christianity are an excellent means in the Church for the New Evangelization. New in its ardor, in its methodology and in its expression.