



## Succession Planning

*Presented by Cecelia Hamilton, Region IV English Coordinator at the 28th National Cursillo Encounter held at Seattle University in the Archdiocese of Seattle – August 18, 2018.*

Let's begin with the Holy Spirit Prayer. Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and enkindle in us the fire of Your love. Send forth Your Spirit and we shall be created. And You shall renew the face of the earth. Let us pray: O God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit instructs the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Holy Spirit we may be truly wise and ever rejoice in His consolation. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Have you made plans for your retirement, for a vacation later this year, or even what you're going to do tomorrow when you return home? Several years ago, at work, my boss and I had a talk about the number of people who could be retiring within the next few years. Of the 60 salaried workers at the plant, there were about 10 of us in supervisory roles who were close to retirement age. The company policy wasn't focused on planning for future retirements as much as on expanding the capacity at the various plants. As a result, when an experienced person left, there were issues and the new person was expected to learn the ropes quickly.

I gave my boss a three-year notice on my retirement date and soon after he did something about it. I went from the Operations Accountant at the largest plant to the Operations Accountant at one of the smallest. The Accountant for that plant switched positions with me – this allowed plenty of time for us to work together. This swap freed me up to do a lot of other work. Beside going to California once a month to support my new plant and eventually train my replacement, I traveled to Montreal to work with their accountant, who was leaving and their replacement. After we purchased a plant in Maine, I worked with a new accountant for them. During this time, I created various Excel spreadsheets for all the Operation Accountants and validated new system reports. My boss and I were doing what is called "Succession Planning."

So, what is succession planning? You might want to write this down. Based upon Wikipedia, "Succession planning is a process - for identifying and developing new leaders - who can replace veteran leaders - when they leave, retire or die." It entails first identifying, then developing internal people with the potential to fill key positions, thus increasing the availability of experienced and capable people, that are prepared to assume these roles as they become available.

Here are five steps for doing this, which you should write down leaving some room after each:

- 1) Identify those with potential or willingness;
- 2) Identify the gaps;
- 3) Develop the person's knowledge;
- 4) Engage the person in leadership; and
- 5) Improve the person's commitment.

Even though this may be what businesses do for their success as I described earlier, these key points can also be viewed through the eyes of Cursillo. You might be surprised how they fit with our Cursillo materials.

Let's begin with the **1st Step, identify those with potential or willingness.**

In the Leaders' Manual under Precursillo and candidate selection, we read. "The criteria for selection must always be based on the effectiveness of the candidate as the leaven of his/her environment and circumstances." If you are not a friend of the candidate, it is hard to know their potential or their circumstances. Sometimes the costs of the weekend facility encourage us to meet certain numbers; however, we still need to seek out possible leaders for our movement. Does it seem like your diocese is mainly focused on having weekends and not incorporating the new Cursillistas into living their fourth day?

The purpose of candidate selection according to the Leaders' Manual is, "The purpose will always be to give Christianity a strong backbone wherever it may be, by means of living and life-giving vertebrae." With the help of the Cursillo tools for persevering: Group Reunion, and Ultreya, most people can become effective Christian leaders through a life of Piety, Study, and Action. While Group Reunion focuses on the person, the Ultreya focuses on the community. Having the support of a community of believers encourages us to journey in the company of friends.

As we read in the Leaders' Manual, "An active group of leaders must do more than just be able to understand and explain the Cursillo mentality they must have made it a vital part of their lives that it becomes a leavening element in them, inspiring others. The School must sustain leaders for the Movement." While everyone attending school may not be the next Lay Director for the diocese, it is important that those working teams and serving on the Secretariat are knowledgeable and committed. The Lay Director and one or two key people on the Secretariat, especially if one has human resource experience, can encourage School of Leader attendees to take more of a part in leadership – maybe by chairing a committee. Let's not forget the importance of prayer and being open to what God is calling us to do.

Our candidates must be prepared for the weekend in view of the Postcursillo, after all, the rest of our life is more important than the 3-Day Cursillo. A personal and authentic witness of our fourth day, should encourage others. One of the things I remember about my sponsor, was wishing I could be just like her. She was not afraid to share her faith with others and has something that draws you to her. She took me to my first School of Leaders even though I was a quiet and shy person. Little did I realize how becoming involved in School, Ultreya, and Group would change my life. Looking back, I know that the Holy Spirit had a plan for me – one better than what I thought possible.

In the June 2014 National Newsletter, we read, "The purpose of the Postcursillo is to live and share what is fundamental to being Christian in each individual's moveable square meter (environment). This is to attempt to keep the candle lit that Christ, by means of the Cursillo Weekend, placed in the center of our moveable square meter so that it will illuminate the path for others."

If our sponsors are not committed to fulfilling their responsibilities to their candidates, who steps up? Weekend table leaders, other team members, the Ultreya, or are they left on their own? I'm sure we can all think of many who we believed would be good future leaders, however they didn't stay involved with Cursillo. They may have been called to some other Christian activity, but did we fail to provide the support they needed? It's all our jobs as Cursillistas to help these babe chicks after the weekend, not just their sponsors.

Your regional service team can provide a "Sponsors' Workshop" or a "Postcursillo Workshop" that can be given for your diocese or a workshop specific to your diocese's needs. This is a good way for all of us to be reminded of the importance of making our friends, friends with Christ and continuing to support them during their Fourth Day.

### Let's take a look at **Step #2, Identifying the Gaps.**

Once we have identified a person or persons interested, and we know their skills and abilities, we compare their skills to the role description. If there are skills missing, we need to train that person for the role, if possible. For example:

- if the person is to be treasurer, they should have financial skills (more than balancing a checkbook) if they do not, they might not be cut out to be treasurer.
- if they are to be secretary, computer skills are a must. Those are trainable. Our new Regional Service Team secretary took the initiative to get a recorder for our business meetings as her handwritten notes were sometimes hard to read.
- if they are to be School of leaders Chair, they should be comfortable speaking in front of groups. if not, maybe start small; witness talk at an Ultreya, move up to a technique talk at School of Leaders (which they should be attending), maybe a Rollo on a weekend, all the while getting the person more comfortable speaking in front of a group.
- Some dioceses have a position for Assistant Lay Director, training to be a future Lay director. Train the Assistant or other Secretariat member, if don't have Assistant, by having them run a Secretariat meeting when the Lay Director is gone. This person could also attend the business meetings at the Regional Encounters.
- Finally, meet with the Spiritual Advisor to get feedback.

All these are ideas to help bridge the gaps. The Secretariat is to serve the entire Cursillo Movement and needs to incorporate new people into the various positions as the terms come to an end. We are only hurting the movement, if we don't pass on these responsibilities to others.

### Next, let's look at **Step # 3, Develop the Person's Knowledge.**

There are many ways for a person's knowledge to develop and not always for the best – TV, movies, books, magazines can be good or bad depending on their content. In the Study Rollo during the 3-Day Cursillo, we heard that the best book is the Bible. There are many good Catholic publications available as well. Group Reunion and Ultreya are essential to help sustain and support our Piety, Study, and Action as they keep us accountable. This ongoing conversion is a commitment to serve each other and the work of Cursillo, which is the work of Christ and His Church.

There are many resources for developing a person's knowledge:

- One obvious resource for developing the person's knowledge is the School of Leaders. The School is where we study the writings of our Founder, where we study the Charism and

the history of Cursillo. Cursillistas who aspire to serve as leaders in the Cursillo Movement and/or serve as a member of the Secretariat should be attending the School of Leaders.

- Another obvious resource for developing the person's knowledge is to have them read and study the writings of the Founder. There are several books that have recently been translated from Spanish to English by the Foundation of Eduardo Bonnín and the assistance of US Cursillo leaders, such as "Eduardo Bonnín, An Apprentice Christian" and "Cursillo History and Memory." Yesterday, you heard about two new books.
- Another resource is the National Cursillo web site. There are prior & current newsletters, articles, videos, talks from prior National Encounters, etc. I have often searched for materials for talks and was glad to find some for this talk.
- Finally, a fourth resource that is available to all Cursillistas who want to learn about the Foundational Charism is the Cursillo de Cursillos. The CDC offers a wealth of knowledge of what Cursillo is about and how each one of us is called to live and share the Charism of God's love and friendship with others in our environments.

From The Fundamental Ideas of the Cursillo Movement we read, "As an operational structure of the Movement, the School of Leaders is a community of Christians who, united in the atmosphere of Group Reunion, seek every day to become more centered, more committed and more united, so as to accelerate in themselves, in the Movement, and in their environments the living out of what is fundamental for being Christian." Since School isn't talked about on the weekend, it would be a good idea after the weekend - maybe at a follow-up Sunday - to talk about the importance of Group Reunion, Ultreya, and School of Leaders to the new Cursillistas, sponsors, and the other 4<sup>th</sup> Day attendees. This is done to ensure they understood the *why* of Group Reunion and Ultreya. And to talk about the purpose of the School. New Cursillistas only know what they heard on their weekend. They do not know the movement has a Secretariat and School of Leaders.

After Ultreya one night, I noticed some attendees going back inside the building after we closed Ultreya in front of the Blessed Sacrament. I asked my sponsor, who was walking beside me, what was going on and discovered she was going to School of Leaders, so out of curiosity I went too. It makes me wonder how many Cursillistas miss the opportunity to learn more about the Cursillo Movement. This provided me the opportunity to be around leaders willing to live the Cursillo method and to live what the Leaders Prayer says: "My God, give us a spirit of self-sacrifice so that we may offer everything for Your cause: our time, our abilities, our health and even our lives if necessary."

Did you know there was School of Leaders before the first Cursillo weekends in Mallorca? In the introduction to School in the Leaders Manual, we read, "A diocese can begin a Cursillo Movement when it has a core group of Cursillo leaders who have chosen to serve within the Movement, as their apostolic vocation." I learned that people from my diocese traveled at least two hours to attend a weekend in a neighboring diocese, so that they could start a School of Leaders and begin the process of bringing Cursillo home. At various gatherings in the years since I made my Cursillo, I have heard many of the stories of these beginnings – like being in a church basement close to

where coal was stored for heating or sleeping on cots in a crowded room. We all have stories to share.

School is essential to the continuance and development of the Movement. If we don't have leaders attending School how can we hold weekends and support the new Cursillistas in the Postcursillo?

Now let's look at **Step #4: Engage the Person in Leadership.**

The first thing a leader should do is get rid of all ambition and desire for power. Humility is an important trait for leadership. As Cursillo leaders we must be concerned about upholding what is right and not be concerned with keeping our position intact. One should not be concerned about "authority" or "control" but rather service, responsibility and accountability. Within the Cursillo Movement, Lay Directors, Spiritual Advisors, Secretariat members are called to stand firm on the truth, whether it is popular or not, whether it threatens their "job security" or not. All Cursillistas have an important role, to bring Christ to others, regardless of what their official title may or may not be.

Several years ago, my diocese started ridding the 3-day weekend of the fluff that had become part of the weekend. As you probably have experienced, this was not popular with a lot of people. Fortunately, most of the changes have been incorporated.

Does the Secretariat or School encourage the Rector/Rectora to invite new Cursillistas to work the weekend? This is a good way to get new people involved. Sometimes we get into a habit of asking our friends and those who worked prior weekends with us to work again, however this prevents others from sharing this experience. There is much to absorb from the rollos and hearing them from another speaker during formation helps increase one's knowledge. Are we striving for the weekend teams to be selected from the School, attending Ultreya, and actively participating in Group Reunion? Those in the conference room and giving the rollos need to witness to living their 4<sup>th</sup> day. I know many dioceses struggle with this, however we should work toward this goal, even if it is a little bit at a time. Maybe we need to evaluate whether we are taking steps to make this a reality or not.

Are we more concerned about keeping a position than getting someone else to step up? Why do we struggle getting others involved?

As a Regional Coordinator, I am trying to involve the others on our regional service team in discussions, planning, and things that come up. There is a report for the regional coordinator to do yearly and I've asked them to work with me to determine what our region is doing and what we can do. We work together as a team to determine talks for the Encounters based upon any feedback we have received. I have always felt that four heads were better than one! My goal is having someone ready and maybe eager to take over for me when my term expires next year. Having someone to witness at Ultreya or do the Technique presentation at School encourages that individual to take a leadership role. Many of us are hesitant to step up and give a talk. I have a friend who hesitated for many years, until she attended Mass where a nearly blind seminarian gave the homily and was ordained not too long thereafter. She asked herself - if he can, why can't I and was then willing to give her first rollo on the next Cursillo weekend. Maybe someone is just

waiting to be asked. The first time I was asked to give a talk, I immediately wanted to say no. However, after much prayer, I felt the Holy Spirit saying – “why not you.”

As Neil Armstrong said when he landed on the moon. “One small step for man; one giant step for mankind.” God knows what a person’s potential is and will provide what they need to reach their potential. We just need to do our part to encourage and to support each other.

In the **5th and last step** we will look at: **Improving the Person’s Commitment.**

A challenge in our movement is encouraging and developing commitment among people within the movement at all levels. Commitment is easy to define as we hear in Webster’s dictionary, “A commitment is an agreement - or pledge to do something in the future - or a state of being emotionally impelled.” Commitment is also about dedication, loyalty and responsibility. However, there is nothing written in any Cursillo literature that directs individuals to commit themselves to any aspect of the Cursillo Movement as Cursillo respects the freedom of the person.

After the Cursillo Weekend, we were on fire and ready to change ourselves and our environment. I imagine most Cursillistas felt the same. But, how long does that last? If we don’t do something to keep the candle burning, it will eventually flicker and go out. Are we allowing our new and current fourth day members to forget what they experienced?

We need to understand what commitment means. We need to determine what obstacles prevent us from increasing our commitment and then what methods we need to overcome these obstacles. By helping others to achieve their full potential in their commitment to the Cursillo movement, we make the movement stronger and more effective.

We have already mentioned some of the ways that promote continual growth and a better understanding of what it means to be fully Christian – Group Reunion, Ultreya, and School of Leaders. Another one is the Secretariat – a place of responsibility and service for all aspects of the Movement. Regional and National activities also provide opportunity for growth. If people on the Secretariat stay in the same positions or simply change positions it will be seen a clique, and others can and will lose heart in the movement, finding that their talents are not being utilized.

When was the last time your diocese offered a workshop? Did you know Cursillo offers a Commitment Workshop? Have you had a retreat for all the Cursillistas? Is the 4<sup>th</sup> Day community encouraged to attend Ultreya, School, Grand Ultreya, Weekend Closing, etc.? Do you encourage an Adoration Hour every week for the needs of your diocese, region and national? How about attending a Regional Encounter? How many have ever attended the National Encounter with people from all over the US and several language groups? You can all say yes, so invite others to attend next year. Communication with the 4<sup>th</sup> Day is necessary to keep people informed and involved.

Having a Cursillo de Cursillos (CDC) in your diocese is an excellent way to expand the knowledge and commitment of the 4<sup>th</sup> day. This three-day workshop provides a treasure of knowledge and a living experience of what is essential in the mentality, purpose, and method of the Movement. In December 2016 the Owensboro diocese hosted a CDC, which was attended by all the Secretariat except for the one who was sick, both the upcoming weekends Rector & Rectora and their



assistants, and other Cursillistas. These leaders along with a new Spiritual Advisor, have energized the diocese. We have grown from 1 School of Leaders to 3 in different areas of the diocese with 3 different priests, thus providing access for more people – like many dioceses traveling 1-3 hours on a weekday night makes it hard to attend, so we were excited about this growth. We still have plenty of work, however having people more empowered is a great way to start.

We need leaders at all levels of our movement (School of Leaders, Secretariat, and Regional Service Team, etc.) to safeguard the integrity and authenticity of the Cursillo Movement by embracing and promoting the Foundational Charism. “Proclaiming the best news of the best reality; that God, in Jesus Christ, loves us; communicated by the best means; which is friendship.”

I’ve been fortunate to have the opportunity to attend several National Encounters through the years, as well as lots of the other Cursillo activities. I still remember 11 years ago, when I went to the one in Dallas celebrating 50 years of Cursillo in the U.S. There were LOTS of people in attendance – most of whom I didn’t know, but we all shared a bond – our 4<sup>th</sup> Day. As part of the weekend we took a bus trip to Waco, where the first Cursillo was held and met some of the men who attended in 1957. The Encounter talks always provide information to take home.

In the National Cursillo Center Mailing in August 2009, we read, “We should be honest enough to admit that there is a serious shortage of knowledgeable and committed leaders, who are eager to join the School of Leaders, to serve on the Diocesan Secretariats and on the Regional Service Teams. We should confidently face this challenge and prayerfully work for the changes. The most practical and straightforward book about the Cursillo leadership is “Whom Shall I Send? Discerning the Will of God” by Father Frank S. Salmani.”

I would encourage you to use this book in your School of Leaders – maybe for the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> time. Our calling as a Cursillo leader is a vocation. Our work is a call from God and this work will fuel prayer that will help our progressive conversion. If we accept the call as a Cursillo leader, prayer and study will be the fuel for the work of the movement.

Jesus had a great succession plan, when He commanded his followers in Matt 28:19, “Go and make disciples of all the nations.” They were encouraged to go and spread the Good News and get others to spread the message. By our Baptism, we are called to do the same. Cursillo encourages us to share the Good News that God loves us by making a friend, being a friend and bringing our friend to Christ. All of us are called to embrace our Fourth Day, however some are called to be Cursillo leaders. Through prayer we discern what God wants us to be. Just think about it - Jesus called some ordinary fishermen to follow him and be his disciples. These ordinary men did extraordinary things in the name of Jesus, with the support of the Holy Spirit. Who will you identify and call on in your diocese for a leadership role in Cursillo? Could it be you or you or you?

Let’s remember the following: A leader is one who is grateful for the love and friendship with Christ and should act according to the method to make friends and to lead them to Christ. The School of Leaders is a group of friends believing in the purpose and method so that Christ can be shared with many people.

Often times, I have a close moment when I read something that hits perfectly with what I am doing. In the process of working on this talk for the 2017 Spring Encounter, there had been many times when I was a bit overwhelmed. So, when I received a daily reflection from Dynamic Catholic, I was reminded that I wasn't alone.

Earlier this year when I was asked to base today's talk on the earlier one, I was glad for the additional help I received. The quote from that day in March 2017 by John R. Wood taken from his book 'Ordinary Lives, Extraordinary Mission' still fits. You might want to write this down and put it somewhere as a reminder: "Allow God to lead you, so you can lead others."

References:

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