**THE HISTORY OF THE MOVEMENT**

The Cursillo got its beginnings in Mallorca, Spain when Eduardo Bonnin inspired by reading a February 6, 1940 address by Pope Pius XII who in it acknowledged that there were a great number of people who had moved away from the Christian life. He challenged the Church leaders to make every effort possible to bring others back to Christian values. Eduardo carried out a thorough and deep study of the situation in a serious and systematic way and put it on paper. ‘Eduardo worked out a script which already at that time – 1940 – was named STUDY OF THE ENVIRONMENT. He tried to figure out how to reach that ENVIRONMENT and how to make that ENVIRONMENT a Christian one.”

This very first talk of Eduardo, the Study of the Environment, concluded that the world was becoming less and less Christian and consequently, Christians were even less influential in their cultural and social environments. The situation stimulated him to develop what we know today as the Cursillos in Christianity Movement.

“Serious historical study of the movement has been delayed because the most valuable historical evidence had to be obtained from archives of Eduardo Bonnin, whose account of the history is not accepted by the National Cursillo office of Spain. Eduardo Bonnin did not feel that he enjoys the freedom to write the real history of the movement, but he was very concerned that it be done”.

Spain does not accept Eduardo’s historical events because they want to be the “founders”. Eduardo did not want to write the real history (about himself) although others were and calling themselves “founders”.

Although Eduardo doesn’t mind who takes credit for being the founder, but, he does care that we stay faithful to the Foundational Charism. We are not the only ones who call Eduardo the founder, the Vatican recognizes this fact in a book entitled Signs of Hope- Picture of seven Ecclesial Movements presented to Pope John Paul II.

There is so much literature with the “real history”, but unfortunately mostly available in Spanish only at this time.

Why has more emphasis been placed on the role of Eduardo Bonnin in receiving the Foundational Charism? Eduardo states: “It is not through a desire to be recognized as the lead player, but rather in the service of the truth and to clarify concepts and events, that we (Secretariat of Mallorca) have found it opportune to make available to people interested in the Cursillo Movement, what occurred in the beginning, and in this light to make it clearer, always counting on the grace of God, we have tried to be faithful to the intention with which the Cursillos were proposed, prayed, reflected, structured, and for which we give thanks!”

The Mallorcans and many of the world Cursillo leaders repeatedly pleaded with Eduardo to shared his understanding in order to preserve the Foundational Charism, while he was still able to do so.

There is little doubt as to the involvement of a renewal group called “Catholic Action” in the growth and the advancement of Cursillo. In Spain, Catholic Action was divided into the men’s branch, the women’s branch, the young men’s branch and the young women’s branch. The leaders of the young men’s branch (on the island of Majorca) were the founders of the Cursillo Movement, who worked together as a team.

Before the Spanish civil war & WWII, a pilgrimage to the shrine of St. James at Com/pos/tel/a had been planned. This spiritual Journey to the great Spanish pilgrimage center of the Middle Ages would provide a time for the young men and women of Spain to dedicate themselves in a renewed way to the work of the apostolate. After being postponed several times by the disruption of war, it was finally rescheduled for 1948.

The spirit of this pilgrimage was a spirit of restlessness, of dissatisfaction with spiritual lukewarmness, of moving onward –this was the setting for the Cursillo Movements origins.

The “Catholic Action” young men’s group was working very hard on this Pilgrimage. It was this planning which lead to the 1st Cursillo. “Catholic Action” was having regular training sessions for those that would be leading the pilgrimage. These sessions were called Cursillo de Pilgrimage Captains. And after a short time they started having Cursillo de Pilgrimage Scouts, for those who were planning on going on the pilgrimage.

These Cursillos (short courses) were a week long, usually during holy week. And knowing that Eduardo would be a great leader he was asked to attend a Cursillo de pilgrimage Captains, even those he currently was not even a member of “Catholic Action”. He saw value in these Cursillos and joined “Catholic Action” and soon became president of the Mallorca young men’s group.

He and his team felt that a week was too long and that they might be able to use a little twist on the Cursillos. They included men that may not be planning on attending “the pilgrimage”. Those that were far-away from the Catholic faith. Eduardo’s talk on the Study of Environment was the foundation.

This Movement evolved in the early 1940s under the leadership of Eduardo Bonnin. It began when a group of men dedicated themselves to bringing the young men of Mallorca to know Christ better. It developed as they prayed and worked together, sharing their thoughts about the state of the world and the effectiveness of their efforts to bring the light of Christ to it. This process gave birth to the Cursillo in Christianity.

“The essential structures of Cursillo were clearly fixed by 1944. Without a doubt, the 1st Cursillo in Christianity was the one that took place in Mallorca August 19-23, 1944. This judgment is based on items from the Bulletin and from some of the young who participated.”

“In this Cursillo we find all the structures of the future Cursillos. They began with a retreat day, the 20 young men were divided into 2 tables of 10 to achieve the 3 ideals of Catholic Action: Piety, Study, and Action. They presented poster, followed by an exchange of impressions. There was an atmosphere of a frank and youthful joy. This Cursillo ended with a solemn closing, in which the young cursillistas, the President of Young Men’s Catholic Action and the diocesan spiritual director participated. Fr. Juan Julia was in charge of the spiritual direction and dogmatic formation of these youths.”

The leaders of the group were (all of whom had been presidents of the Diocesan Council of Catholic Action), Jose Ferragut, Eduardo Bonnin and Jaime Ruitort. They did presentations on the themes that are the talk of the Cursillos in Christianity. Eduardo Bonnin was rector of that Cursillo. That the Cursillo Movement began with this Cursillo is a very important piece of information.”

“Perhaps this version of the first stages of Cursillo is not in complete agreement with other versions which are being circulated. We should not be surprised at this discrepancy because there are only a few who witnessed the origins of this renewal movement.”

In Mallorca, the concern for working effectively as Christians was also increased by the arrival in 1947 of a new bishop, Juan Hervas. He was looking for new ways of bringing men to a genuine love of Christ. The center of the Bishop’s efforts was on the young men’s “Catholic Action” group that was working on the pilgrimage to St. James.

With the arrival of Juan Capo from his studies in Rome, a group was assembled that would “found” the Cursillo Movement, Basicly the onlt change between 1949 & the original in 1944 was the addition of the 1st meditation. Even if Cursillo had already taken place there is little debate as to Bishop Hervas and Juan Capo unquestionable leadership in the advancement and spread of the Cursillo Movement throughout the world.

To clarify and eliminate the possibility of misunderstanding Bishop Hervas and Fr. Juan Capo may not have been there when the 1st weekend took place but they are still founders by way of advancement and acceptance of the Movement within the religious community. Bishop Hervas was attacked by well-meaning clerics for his support. His defense leads to his removal from Mallorca and his transfer to Ciu/dad Real. His successor tried to change the thrust from Lay to clerically controlled & from environments to ecclesiastical institutions. Rather than founder Bishop Hervas should be called its Episcopal champion.

The Cursillo of 1949 was not the first but only the 1st under Bishop Hervas and the 1st one that started the tradition of numbering weekends.

In 1955 when Bishop Hervas was transferred is when Cursillo begins to move beyond the Island of Mallorca and with the disapproval of the new bishop the official Cursillo was unable to survive on Mallorca.

Too many priests were afraid of a Movement which they did not control. And this movement had a pastoral plan different then there diocesan plan.

It was Bishop Hervas who wrote a very import letter called “the Pastoral Letter” during this period. It was this document that, designed for religious, was essential to the survival of the Movement.

It was this period that also compiled the “Leaders’ Manual” as we have it today.

“Meanwhile Eduardo Bonnin continued to direct an unofficial Cursillo Movement on the Island, which, without the bishop’s blessing, maintained the original Cursillo genius”. Eduardo and all the Cursillista keep the Cursillo alive by living their 4th day and doing all the thing of Pre Cursillo necessary to evangelize the island.

Eduardo Bonnin defines Cursillo thus “Cursillos in Christianity” is a movement from the Church which, through its own method, intends that the realities of what is Christian become incarnate, in the singularity, originality and creativity of the person, so that discovering his potentials and accepting his limitations, exercises his freedom from out of his conviction, reinforces his will through his decision and lives a friendship of his individual and communal living.

We are either Christians or we are not; there is no in-between. Millions of people have lived their 3-Day Cursillo here in the United States. If each person had a true and progressive conversion, they would be like water that does not need to be told to “moisten”, or light to illuminate, or like leaven that ferments the dough. We are Christians in our daily lives and in our natural environments. Therefore, there is no need to say to a Christian that they need to evangelize; that they need to transform their environments. A Christian lives his/her Christianity 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 52 weeks a year, every year of their lives.

The first Cursillo in the United States was held in Waco, Texas, in 1957. The key figures then were Father Gabriel Fernandez and two airmen from Spain who were training with the United States Air Force. Father Gabriel had arrived in Waco in 1955 from Spain where he had attended his Cursillo under two of the founders - Father Juan Capo and Eduardo Bonnin.

The two Airmen were transferred to Mission, Texas, just after they had completed the second weekend in Waco. By late 1957 the traveling airmen had conducted the first weekend in Mission. In 1958 they established a Cursillo Center in Laredo, Texas, and soon after, the movement was introduced in Corpus Christi.

In 1959, the Cursillo spread throughout Texas and to Phoenix, Arizona. From that point on, the growth of the Cursillo Movement quickened throughout the United States.

All weekends were held in Spanish, until 1961. That year the first English-speaking weekend was introduced in San Angelo, Texas.

Throughout the 1960s, Cursillos were introduced (Spanish and English) in places such as Lorain, Ohio; New York, New York; San Francisco, California; Gary, Indiana**; Lansing, Michigan**; Gallup, New Mexico; Cincinnati, Ohio; Brooklyn, New York; Saginaw, Michigan; Miami, Florida**; Chicago, Illinois; Rockford, Illinois;** Detroit, Michigan; Newark, New Jersey; Baltimore, Maryland; Grand Rapids, Michigan; Kansas City, Kansas; Boston, Massachusetts; Monterey, California; Sacramento, California; Los Angeles, California; Pueblo, Colorado; and Yakima, Washington.

In 1964 the 1st English Leaders’ Manual” was translated. The Cursillo Movement in the United States was organized nationally in 1965. At this meeting a National Secretariat was organized, and a National Cursillo Office was established. Furthermore, it is linked to the National Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Vatican II caused a change in the religious talks but the Lay talks were not changed by Vatican II.

Now let me talk about Rockford, a Chicago group that had only been around for 1 year came out to put on the 1st weekend at Muldoon High School in Rockford on Aug. 8-11, 1963. We had one man who had attended a Chicago weekend, Francis Murphy, and he was the Assist Rector and was Rector in Nov. 1963 for the second weekend. So you see we really were one of the early dioceses to have the Cursillo Movement.

Fr. William Knott was the 1st Spiritual Director of the movement and is now out at Sun City, AZ. There were 3 additional men’s weekends in 1964 and in 1965 we had the 1st women’s weekend.

There was been two men’s and 2 women’s weekend every year since 1980 except for 1984 when the Bishop required all weekends be cancelled due to a renewal retreat that all parishes were required to hold.

Today it is a worldwide movement with centers in countries such as: Australia, Austria, Canada, France, Germany, Great Britain, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Philippines, Puerto Rico, Portugal, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, United States, Yugoslavia, and several African countries. The movement is a member of the International Catholic Organizations of the Pontifical Council for the Laity in Rome. In 1980 the Cursillo Movement established an international office, called the OMCC (Organismo Mundial de Cursillos de Cristiandad). The OMCC coordinates the four existing international working groups (Latin America, Europe, International English Language Group, and Asia/Pacific Group), whose leaders meet periodically to further its work.

I have much more information that I could have talked about but I think I will leave you with this.

At a meetings in Rome in 1966, Pope Paul VI had the opportunity to address the movement. Among his words of encouragement were the following:

*“Whether some methods become obsolete, whether new manifestations of the Spirit arise, the permanent task of the layman will continue to be the infusion of Christianity into life through the encounter and personal friendship with God and in communion with his brothers. The layman, upon forming himself in Christianity, reforms his mentality and conforms his life to Christ’s image by means of faith, hope and charity; acting with complete responsibility he transforms the temporal structures in which he is immersed, guided in his action by the glance of Christ he continually tries to remake the world according to God’s plan and design . . .*

*“We know that in your plan of spirituality and apostolate in the Cursillo Movement the mind of the Church is the guiding light that orients you . . .*

*“Beloved sons and daughters: Our soul is so oppressed by the vision of the evils which afflict the Church and mankind. But permit us to express our overwhelming joy that, at this moment, floods our soul before the immense chorus of your manly faith in Christ, your fidelity to the Church, your fervent*

*loyalty to this Chair of Peter and to the ministry of the Episcopal hierarchy.*

*“Cursillo in Christianity, Christ, the Church, the Pope, are counting on you!”*

That was Pope Paul VI and in 1980 Pope John Paul II said

*“Your movement devotes itself to drawing forth from Christians a commitment to live lives consistent with their faith whether individually or as a community – and to bring this ferment to the environments where you live.*

*“You have discovered anew the explosive truth of the evangelical message: God, Father of all, comes to us as we encounter him in Jesus Christ to reunite us through the grace of the Spirit in one family which is the Church.*

*“In her we are truly able to experience even now the love which will be the inexhaustible fountain of eternal joy in heaven. Here then is the synthesis of all of Christianity. This is the news that all human hearts hope for without realizing it. Therefore dedicate yourselves more and more to being tireless apostles in your environments.*

*“My apostolic blessing goes with you as a pledge of this divine grace which enables you to live forever.”*

DeColores,

If anyone has questions I will do my best to answer them