



Servant of God

Eduardo Bonnín Aguiló

Founder of

Cursillos in Christianity

1917 – 2008

October 2025

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The Birth of **THE CURSILLO METHOD¹**

¹ Cursillo History & Memory by Francisco Forteza Pujol, FEBA, 2014

I learned from my sources that the birth pangs of the Cursillos in Christianity movement developed after that Holy Week in 1943, when Bonnín put together this profound experience in the Course for Pilgrim Leaders with his deep personal interest and concern for catalyzing the environments due to his experience of living in a de-Christianized environment among his companions in the barracks. He concluded that something similar, but at the same time different from the Course for Advanced Pilgrim Leaders, could work in different ways. It could inject new Christian energy not only into a predetermined task, like the pilgrimage to Santiago, but also into the concrete realities of everyday life.

From those insights came a document, Study of the Environment, which Eduardo initially wrote that same year. He made it public for the first time that same year at the diocesan seminary of Mallorca during celebrations for the feast of the Immaculate Conception. The Rector of the seminary, Don José Rossell, had invited him precisely for that purpose.

Soon afterward, for the second Course for Advanced Pilgrim Leaders in Mallorca, Ferragut and Bonnín asked the national leaders of Young Men's Catholic Action to include the presentation of the Study of the Environment on the agenda. Knowing its content, they readily agreed, and Bonnín became a "professor" in the course, thus assuring that his basic ideas were well understood in the positive and relaxed atmosphere.

Those of us who have worked in the Cursillo Movement and thought about it critically and analytically know, without a shadow of a doubt, that the document Study of the Environment, which is now the first Rollo of the third day of a Cursillo, already contained, for its founder, a synthesis of what was to be the Cursillos in Christianity.

This is fundamental: in the real world, people are moved more by their environment than by structures, organizations, and social groupings, and a penetrating knowledge of the environment is needed if we are to transform it. Those who have their own vision and personal identity in these environments are to be distinguished from those who are the passive multitude —the dough, as it were. Concentrating attention on the former and using different strategies in dealing with them, depending on whether they can be regarded as members of "our team" or of "the other side", is vital. This concept is what we could call the backbone of the subsequent Cursillo Movement, wherever it is authentic. This will be clearer if we note that, following this plan, to win "the others" over, it is necessary first to win their hearts, and only afterwards to try to illuminate their minds and ultimately energize their wills. This will be precisely the psycho-pedagogical route, the quintessential method of the Cursillos in Christianity. It also becomes clear that, for those already initiated into "our group", the process will be precisely the reverse: first must be the will, then intellect, then the heart. Necessarily, this also shapes the essential method of the Postcursillo. When Bonnín spoke of the environment in general, he had already sketched the outline for the guidelines of what would later be known as the Precursillo.

After the leaders of National Catholic Action had brought in Bonnín as “professor” at the Course for Advanced Pilgrim Leaders, it was only natural that Eduardo should join that lay organization. His joining raised great hopes at the very moment that Ferragut, because of age, had to relinquish the diocesan presidency in Mallorca, and the local Council inevitably changed. The new president, José Font, who was also Director of the Institute of Intermediate Instruction in Palma, proposed the new member as a Director of the Diocesan Council, in charge of “spiritual reconstruction”. This is a strange label, obviously reminiscent of the post-Civil War era; it graphically expressed, however, the work that Bonnín was expected to do.

Font and the other members of the local Council saw Bonnín, due to his unique abilities, as a logical successor in the diocesan presidency. Therefore, from the beginning, they gave him a free rein to experiment and put his revolutionary ideas into practice.

The attitude adopted by the diocesan Chancellor, Don José Dameto, unusually tolerant for those days, was essential at this juncture. Don José was a congenial and refined man, the scion of an aristocratic family, who knew better than many of his fellow priests how to respect the initiative and autonomy of the laity, so extolled in theory and so restricted in practice in the Catholic Action of the ‘40s and even afterwards.

It was in this climate, elaborating his plan of studying the environment, that Bonnín worked out, from his experience with the Advanced Pilgrims Leaders Cursillo, a whole new method for leavening in a Christian way, persons and environments who were far-away from Christianity, and to revitalize those who were close.

He realized that, under normal circumstances, almost no one was able to interrupt his daily routine for an entire week. Therefore, his program was compressed so that it concluded in three and a half days. He reshaped every talk given by laymen, even when the title was merely coincidental, such as piety, study, action, leaders, and marginal works, to adapt them to the mentality of non-believers and align them with the principles of the Study of the Environment.

Bonnín did not eliminate the initial retreat given in the Advanced Pilgrim Leaders Cursillo, but did introduce the Stations of the Cross, using the prayers of Father Llanos, as the opening exercise of the retreat. He foresaw that during the stations, a leading role should be assigned, inconspicuously, to those who presumably would have greater difficulties feeling comfortable in the Cursillo. He also left unchanged the five talks on grace given in the Course by the priests; he preferred not to tread on their territory.

Turning to the organization of the Cursillos, he did substantially change the duties of the team of Leaders, known as “professors,” at the time, careful that they should not be seen as being separate from the other Cursillistas, they served table at meals, were present at the Rollos and all other exercises, etc. He made sure that they had a genuine personal relationship with each one (he called it “corridor work”). At the same time, he used the environment as a medium for relaxation, encouraging jokes and secular songs that were neither religious nor merely folk songs, and reinforced the dynamics of the table group or decuria.

There is no doubt in my mind that the Cursillo Movement was born from Bonnín’s work in rethinking from A to Z the Courses for Advanced Pilgrim Leaders and Pilgrim Leaders and adapting them to a radically different purpose with an innovative mentality that

was fundamentally different and is found in the outline of the so often mentioned Study of the Environment and previously incorporated into the Cursillo for Advanced Pilgrim Leaders, at least in Mallorca.

The first opposition that Bonnín met when he tried to put his new method into practice centered around his conviction that one and the same program should be used with persons of different cultural and social levels. And he held similar views about working with believers and non-believers. This was the first “piedra de escándalo” (cause of scandal) that Bonnín tried to short-circuit by citing authors who, perhaps nearly forgotten today, are worth recalling because they had a definite influence on the early development of Cursillos. Among others were Beda Hernegger, Fr. Will, Alfredo María Cavagna, Fr. Cruz Ugalde and Fr. Charles O. de Chautard: all of whom were investigating rather than theorizing about what the lay apostolate might or ought to be.

There seems to be no doubt that this controversy about altering or not altering the new method to fit the culture and religious status of each group of Cursillistas was first led, in opposition to Eduardo, by Don Sebastian Gayá, a young and influential priest, responsible in Mallorca for the university chaplaincy.

Soon afterwards, however, Gayá changed and began to play an important part in the growth of the Cursillo Movement when he became Counselor of the Diocesan Youth Council and replaced Don José Dameto. Perhaps his change of heart took place when he invited Bonnín, in 1944, to take part in the “School of Propagandists” which he directed. Eduardo then used the Rollo outline presentation he had prepared as the final element of his method, which would become the Rollo entitled “Cursillista after the Cursillo”; this outlines in detail the model of the lay person the Cursillo wants to foster.

Or perhaps the changed attitude of Don Sebastian toward the nascent Cursillo Movement only came later, when Bishop Hervás named him Counselor of Youth with instructions to foster and supervise the new Movement. What is clear, from the documents I have, is that from the very beginning, Bonnín took a great interest in having Gayá join his initiative, and that the latter did so after first resisting the intercultural or inter-class dimension of the new method.

Apart from Gayá, Bonnín had to contend with many others to maintain his plan of a Cursillo free from any restriction based on creed, culture, or status, as long as the person was seeking truth and was sincere (which he called “people with marrow and bone”). Thus, he defended his position, with little success among the “elite” (priests and laymen with better education), but with a ready acceptance from ordinary people. At this juncture, the permissive stance of Father Dameto was decisive. With a group of laymen, mostly from rural areas, who admired his views but did not understand their integral structure, Bonnín was able to organize a Cursillo weekend according to his plans.

The first Cursillo that followed these plans was held at a villa in Cala Figuera de Santanyi in Mallorca, from August 20 to 23, 1944. The Spiritual Director of this historic event was Father Juan Juliá, the Rector was Eduardo Bonnín, and the “professors” re Jaime

Riutort and José Ferragut. Fourteen men took part¹. In 1989, they celebrated the 45th anniversary of the first Cursillo, reunited at Mass and at a dinner. All those still living either attended or sent their regrets and greetings.

The first Cursillo weekend in 1944 had all the essential elements of a Cursillo in Christianity, except for the first and last Rollos, which were not a definite part of the method until the 1950s. I have heard Bonnin repeatedly reiterate that from this very first meeting at Cala Figuera, he has used the same physical plans in all subsequent Cursillos. He always wanted it well known that the first was inherently a true Cursillo. My personal experience confirms this. I know that on each occasion, Bonnin had before him the basic outline of the Cursillo and a large assortment of file cards that he kept rearranging to fit the problems and concrete needs of each Cursillo. He merged these with surprising ability, giving his Rollos with innovative ideas and examples and comparisons—his very personal parables—that seemed to each listener directed to the heart of his concrete problems.

Without a doubt, the Cursillo at Cala Figuera was authentic both because of the personal conversions it effected and its widespread influence in the environment. Almost certainly, the other directors of diocesan Catholic Action thought this was simply a new Pilgrims' Course (Cursillo), but shorter and with a series of changes in line with "Eduardo's way", which had been found more practical than the "Madrid way" and therefore ought to be repeated. But the controversy about giving special Cursillos based on the culture and religious orientation of the candidates continued. For Bonnin, the open and heterogeneous experience of his military service made his method an essential and non-negotiable point.

Since the Cursillo at Cala Figuera, approximately one similar Cursillo per year was held, in the midst of skepticism from all, except Bonnin and those who had participated in the previous ones. These new Cursillos were interspersed until 1948 with others for Leaders and Advanced candidates of the Pilgrimage, which the "National Acción Católica" leaders were still giving in Mallorca.

The second Cursillo in Christianity (although called simply Cursillo at that time) took place at the Shrine of San Salvador, in Felanitx, in south Mallorca. Held in September 1946, it again had Don Juan Juliá as Spiritual Director, Eduardo Bonnin Rector, and as "professors" Antonio Ruiz and Guillermo Estarellas. The latter were two young directors of Catholic Action who would later become prominent leaders.

The diocesan Chancellor, José Dameto, was present at the closing exercises. It would seem that this was the first overt approval of the new system by the local Church.

The third Cursillo was given April 16-20, 1947, with Don José Estelrich as Spiritual Director, Eduardo Bonnin Rector and a single "professor", José Seguí.

¹ Four have now (1990) died: Sebastián Mestre, Antonio Binimelis, Leopoldo Febrer and Bartomomé Obrador. Those still alive are Miguel Rigo, Francisco Oliver, Onofre Arbona (afterwards a distinguished director), Francisco Grimalt, Salvador Escribano, Damián Bover, Antonio Mesquida (today a priest), Francisco Estarellas, Antonio Obrador and Antonio Mas.

Saint Oscar Romero - First Cursillista Saint.

OMCC

On **October 14, 2018**, the Church joyfully celebrated the **canonization of Saint Óscar Arnulfo Romero**, the Salvadoran archbishop who **gave his life for faith, justice, and the poor**. His testimony continues to resonate powerfully in the hearts of Christians, especially among those who have experienced the **Cursillos de Cristiandad Movement**, as **Saint Óscar Romero is the first saint to emerge from this ecclesial movement**.

From a young age, Romero was a man deeply passionate about Christ and the Church. He was born on **August 15, 1917**, in El Salvador, and from early on, he felt the call to the priesthood. His ministry was marked by a **profound love for the Eucharist, a life of intense prayer, and a special sensitivity to the suffering of his people**.

His Encounter with the Cursillos de Cristiandad Movement

Throughout his pastoral life, **Óscar Romero participated in and promoted the Cursillos de Cristiandad Movement**, an experience that profoundly shaped his vision of evangelization and the role of the laity in the Church. **This movement, born in Spain in the 1940s, seeks to foster a personal encounter with Christ and the transformation of the world through a faith lived with joy and commitment**.

As **the first saint from the Cursillos Movement**, Romero understood that every Christian is called to **be a leaven in society, to live their faith authentically, and to proclaim the Gospel boldly**. His ministry was deeply influenced by this **renewed vision**, where faith is not confined to sacristies but **goes out into the world with courage and love**.

A Shepherd with the Smell of His Sheep

On **February 23, 1977**, **Óscar Romero was appointed Archbishop of San Salvador**. His appointment surprised many, as some considered him to be a **conservative and uncontroversial figure**. However, his closeness to the people, his love for the truth, and his deep spiritual life led him to become a **true prophet of justice**.

Amid a society wounded by violence, poverty, and oppression, **Monsignor Romero raised his voice for the weakest**. From the pulpit of the **San Salvador Cathedral**, his homilies **became a beacon of hope and denunciation**, boldly proclaiming the Gospel and defending the dignity of every person.

"The mission of the Church is to identify with the poor; thus, the Church finds its salvation."

These words reflect his **radical commitment to Christ and the most vulnerable**, a commitment that ultimately cost him his life.

Martyr of Truth and Faith

On **March 24, 1980**, while celebrating Mass in the chapel of **Divina Providencia Hospital**, he was **assassinated by a gunshot to the heart**. His martyrdom was not the end of his mission but rather **the beginning of a seed that has borne fruit throughout the Church**.

Saint Óscar Romero is a **living testimony** of what it means to be a **committed Christian**, of what it means to “**make a Cursillo and live it to its ultimate consequences.**” His life reflects the essence of the **Cursillos de Cristiandad Movement: to be a saint in the ordinary, to transform the world through faith, and to fearlessly proclaim the truth of Christ.**

A Saint for Our Time

The canonization of **Saint Óscar Romero** by **Pope Francis** confirmed him as a **model of contemporary holiness**. His life continues to inspire **laypeople, priests, and bishops to live their faith with passion, to defend human dignity, and to be witnesses of God’s love in the world.**

 **As the first Cursillista Saint, he leaves us a clear message:**

 **It is not enough to know Christ; we must follow Him radically.**

 **It is not enough to attend a Cursillo; we must live it every moment.**

 **It is not enough to see injustice; we must raise our voices and act.**

May **Saint Óscar Romero** intercede for all of us, so that we may live our faith with **joy, courage, and fidelity**, and so that, like him, we may be **authentic Christians who bring the Gospel to every place where God has placed us.**

 **Saint Óscar Romero, pray for us! ¡De Colores!**

<https://omcc-cursillos.org/san-oscar-romero-first-cursillista-sanint/>



THE BENEFITS OF ATTENDING A CURSILLO REGIONAL OR NATIONAL ENCOUNTER

Deepening Faith, Building Community, and Sharing the Cursillo Experience

Cef Aguillon, US National Cursillo Coordinator, English

Introduction

The Cursillo movement is a vibrant and transformative experience for Cursillistas seeking to deepen their understanding of Cursillo and their faith, enabling them to live it more fully. One of the most powerful ways to grow in the Cursillo journey is by participating in regional and national encounters. These gatherings offer unique opportunities that go far beyond the Cursillo weekend, strengthening both personal faith and the broader Cursillo community. Regional Encounters are held twice a year, and the National Encounter is held annually. This talk will focus on the National Cursillo Encounter.

Imagine, for a moment, that you arrive at the airport and head toward the baggage claim area. When you get there, you see people wearing colorful T-shirts holding a sign that reads, “De Colores or Cursillo.” You can’t help but smile and wave at them. What happens next is an exchange of hugs with the Cursillistas at baggage claim. The feeling is overwhelming—you start to feel at home, and the excitement of attending the encounter increases. These are volunteers who took the day off work to ensure transportation is available from the airport to the encounter location. This is just one example of the hospitality and friendship you can expect. There’s much more!

Appreciation Notes

The National Secretariat and Staff sincerely thank **Most Rev. Bishop Eusebio Elizondo**, National Cursillo Movement Episcopal Advisor, for his service, leadership, and friendship. We also thank him for his support of Cursillo and its Charism. We hope to see you at the 2026 National Encounter. De Colores!



The National Secretariat and Staff extend their sincere appreciation and gratitude to **Fr. Mark Seiker** for his exemplary leadership while he served as National Spiritual Advisor since October 2019. Please join the National Secretariat in thanking Fr. Mark for his dedication, friendship, and for caring, and encouraging us. He taught us, challenged us and helped us grow in our faith.

It takes many volunteers and committees to run a successful encounter. You are part of the success. Thank God for all the volunteers — they are truly appreciated!

Here are some examples of the opportunities and benefits of attending a National Cursillo Encounter.

1. A Purposeful and Rewarding Learning Opportunity

Here are some examples of the opportunities and benefits of attending a National Cursillo Encounter.

Cursillo encounters are meant to be immersive learning experiences. Attendees take part in:

- **Eucharistic Celebration:** The first Mass of the encounter is celebrated on Thursday evening, Friday, and Saturday. This is where we encounter Christ to ask for his blessing before encountering others.
- **Multilingual Ultreya:** There is one Ultreya for all language groups. Cursillistas break into small groups, share their tripod, and conclude with sharing their moment close to Christ. They listen to the witness talk, the echoes, and the spiritual summation. The coordinator ensures all three stages are included in the Ultreya.
- **Laity and Spiritual Keynotes:** A keynote address is delivered by a member of the clergy and one by a layperson, while all language groups are together in the same conference room.
- **Group Reflections:** The attendees break into small groups to reflect on the keynote talks presented.
- **Workshop Breakout Sessions:** Each language group moves to its assigned room to participate in the workshops. These sessions delve into Cursillo principles and methods, offering fresh insights and strategies for living out the Fourth Day. No matter how long you've been involved in Cursillo, there is always something new to learn and bring back to your local Cursillo group.
- **Regional Reunions:** Time is allocated for all dioceses within each region to come together and share about Cursillo in their respective dioceses. This is an opportunity to meet Cursillistas from the different areas of the region.
- **Multilingual Rosary:** All language groups come together to pray the rosary and attend Mass.
- **Fiesta Celebration:** The final act of the encounter is the fiesta, where Cursillistas share their talents. The different language groups share a song, dance, or a similar cultural practice. It is a time filled with joy and enthusiasm.

2. Making Friends and Forming Lasting Bonds

One of the joys of a Cursillo encounter is meeting people from different backgrounds who share a common faith and vocation. The environment is warm and inviting, fostering genuine connections. Many of the attendees build lifelong friendships, finding support and encouragement in their spiritual journey from people who become like family. These bonds often extend well beyond the encounter itself, creating a network of faith-filled companions across the country.

3. Strengthening Christianity in Action

Christianity in Action is central to the Cursillo movement. Regional and national gatherings embody this spirit by bringing together people from different dioceses and regions. Sharing stories, successes, and struggles helps attendees see they are part of something much bigger than their local Cursillo group. The sense of unity and shared purpose built at these events energizes and motivates attendees to strengthen their own Cursillo communities at home.

4. United in the Eucharist

There is something truly transformational about celebrating a multilingual Mass with hundreds of fellow Cursillistas. The liturgies at regional and national gatherings are joyful, lively, and often multilingual, reflecting the diversity of the movement. Attending Mass together strengthens the spiritual foundation of Cursillo, reminding participants of Christ's central role in their lives and in their mission.

5. Meeting Lay and Clergy Cursillistas from Across the Nation

Encounters offer an opportunity to connect with both laypeople and clergy from various dioceses and language groups. These interactions foster mutual understanding and respect as participants learn about the unique challenges and successes in different regions. Sharing ideas and experiences benefits everyone involved, helping to build a more unified and vibrant movement.

6. Building Bridges Across Dioceses and Regions

When Cursillistas from different parts of the United States come together, it's an opportunity to walk together, share best practices, and support each other's efforts. Participants return home with new ideas, resources, and a renewed sense of mission, helping to strengthen the movement in their own dioceses while contributing to the national vision and mission.

7. Sharing and Spreading the Cursillo Experience

Perhaps most importantly, regional and national gatherings celebrate the Cursillo experience itself, the methodology, and a charism of friendship with self, Christ, and others. By sharing stories, songs, prayers, and traditions, participants keep the movement alive and vibrant. These encounters serve as a reminder of the call to be leaven in the world—living witnesses to the joy and hope of the Gospel.

In Closing

Attending a National Cursillo Encounter is an inspiring experience that deepens your faith, strengthens the Precursillo, Cursillo, and Postcursillo, and renews your dedication to the purpose of Cursillo. Through learning, friendship, worship, and connection, participants are encouraged to carry the spirit of Cursillo back to their local communities, Secretariat, School of Leaders, and beyond. If you have the opportunity to attend a Regional or National encounter, take it—your faith journey and your Cursillo community will be even more meaningful because of it. You are invited to attend the 2026 National Cursillo Encounter. Bring a friend!