

Servant of God

Eduardo Bonnín Aguiló

Founder of

Cursillos in Christianity

1917 – 2008

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The Birth of **THE CURSILLO METHOD¹** (PART 2)

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

Two Cursillos using the new method were held in 1948. The first was during Holy Week, with the initial retreat directed by Fr. Amengual. The Spiritual Director was Fr. Bartolomé Nicoláu, the Rector José Ferragut, and as “professors” Bonnín, Riutort and Mir. The second was in April; the Spiritual Direction was shared by Fr. José Estelrich and Fr. Miguel Sastre, Bonnín was Rector, O. Arbona and A. Salvà were “professors”.

There are two peculiar features of that Cursillo during the Holy Week of 1948 that are worth underlining.

On the one hand, it was in that Cursillo when the first distinction occurred between the priest who imparted the “spiritual retreat” and the one who spiritually directed the Cursillo as a whole. Few priests were inclined to interrupt their activities for three and a half days and dedicate themselves to a new method, designed by laypeople, which was not particularly prestigious at the time, and lacking a stipend. On the other hand, it was much easier to convince restless, prestigious clergy to dedicate the initial afternoon of the Cursillo and the first hours of the following day to present three meditations on topics with which they were already familiar, since they had been selected from the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius.

The priest who conducted the “spiritual retreat” returned to his ordinary responsibilities after finishing his intervention, while those present, following the directions of the Rector of the Cursillo, kept silent. Therefore, he never had the chance to get in touch with the Cursillistas, nor with the specific atmosphere of the Cursillo.

The second prominent feature of this 4th Cursillo is that the lay team that directed this Cursillo can be considered, more than any other team ever, as the founders of the Movement in the strictest sense. Among them, Bonnín and Riutort will remain actively present in Cursillos to this day, while Ferragut and Juan Mir will very soon abandon all leadership in the Movement, without trauma or rupture.

It is evident that, of the four, Bonnín was the one who formulated the project conceptually and in methodological guidelines. And almost single-handedly set them into motion. However, the other three were also involved from the very beginning. With their observations, they influenced many of Eduardo’s theoretical elements, particularly Ferragut and Mir, and with their practical support, especially Riutort, gave concrete form to what could have remained otherwise a simple plan.

I had the opportunity to meet both Ferragut and Juan Mir before they died, and I find it interesting to relate those encounters briefly to clarify something that I believe has always remained unclear in the historical narratives of Cursillos. These two laymen — main characters like few others, along with Bonnín — of the prehistory of Cursillos disappeared almost at once from the visible and institutional network of the Movement. Personally, I was curious to discover whether their voluntary seclusion was due to theoretical disagreements or practical incompatibilities with Bonnín, or with other later protagonists in Cursillos, or whether it was due to other causes.

When I met with Ferragut in the mid-'60s, I discovered a man who displayed humanity and a sense of humor. He apologized for the fact that his professional dedication to architecture, a true vocation for him, had made him abandon the apostolic activity, because he had thought then, in the '40s and '50s, that his dedication to Cursillos was unnecessary, given the strength and personality of Bonnin and other lay people that Cursillos helped to surface. Now, in the '60s, however, he regretted that there were not more outstanding lay people close to Eduardo, and he insisted that I take on a role that he should surely have taken on himself.

The case of Juan Mir, whom I met about the same time, was very different. It was one of these instances where it is impossible to know where shyness ends and humility begins, or vice versa. He had always been apostolically active, but always behind the scenes, refusing to involve himself in acts that could minimally be qualified as "mass gatherings". He always refused to address any audience, no matter how small, that included non-believers; this was for him more than flesh and blood could stand.

Consequently, when the Movement began to grow and develop, there was no way to count on him to intervene openly in a Cursillo, a Cursillo-closing ceremony, or an Ultreya, but he was a very endearing person of singular depth in the context of a small group or in a School of Leaders, provided he felt "at home". His admiration for Eduardo was matched only by the enormous respect that Bonnin showed toward him, kindly cutting off every attempt that the rest of the group made to break his apparent complex and to have him commit himself more openly.

Also, in those years, he had already been diagnosed with cancer, facing it with what I must say was a supreme attitude: on the one hand one could see he was fearful and almost hypochondriac, always taking great care of his medication and food; and on the other he accepted it with firm simplicity, taking it as "one of the few occasions that God had arranged for me to do something serious", granting him the power to bear it with serenity.


Let us return to the basic story.

During those years, between 1944 and 1948, several nuclei of Cursillistas were therefore formed in Mallorca, some of them attracted by the nascent Cursillos in Christianity, and others coming from the Catholic Action, re-launched now through the Courses for Advanced Pilgrims and for leaders of Pilgrims which showed now a new style and a new dimension of Christianity, really young and masculine, that contrasted clearly with the discredited Catholicism of the Island.

In the initial rural nuclei, Felanitx, Son Mesquida, Calonge, Inca, and Manacor, the groups orbited around the local lay leaders, such as Miguel Fiol, Onofre Arbona, Francisco Oliver, etc.

In the capital, Palma, the initial group of Cursillistas acted through the School of Leaders of the youth branch of Catholic Action, to which very qualified clergy began to pay attention, attracted by its thrust and growth. Among these, Rev. Gabriel Seguí, of the "Sacred Hearts," stood out. It was there that he gave a complete course on the Study of and Meditation on the Gospels that is still remembered by many of those pioneers. Rev. Sebastián Gayá and Father Bartolomé Nicoláu, Franciscans of the Third Order Regulars, also collaborated with the School of Leaders, though more sporadically.

Among the lay members of that School of Leaders, apart from, of course, Eduardo Bonnin, José Ferragut and Juan Mir, we should stress the significance of the already mentioned Riutort, Guillermo Estarellas, Antonio Ruiz, Miguel Fiol and Onofre Arbona, along with others no less significant in this phase of conception and birth of the new method, such as Bernardo Ribas, Vicente Bonet, Jerónimo Salleras, Antonio Frau, Fausto Morell, Miguel Mulet, Pascual Moragón, Viver, etc.

This School was considered by the institutional Church to be the foundational nucleus of Cursillos. Therefore, Monsignor Hervás gave special consideration to the School from the beginning of his mandate as Bishop in Mallorca. Indeed, for months, once a week, the members of the School were received as a group at the mass that was celebrated at dawn in the Episcopal palace, during which the Bishop conducted a meditation for them. 



ADVENT

The Season of Preparation



WELCOME, MOST REVEREND FELIPE PULIDO, NEW NATIONAL CURSILLO EPISCOPAL ADVISOR

It is with great joy that the National Cursillo Secretariat announces a special Advent gift for the Cursillo community – Most Reverend Felipe Pulido has graciously accepted the National Secretariat's invitation to serve as the National Cursillo Episcopal Advisor for the Cursillo Movement in the United States.

Auxiliary Bishop Pulido was born and raised in a small town located west of Mexico City, and attended minor seminary in Uruapan, Michoacán. There, he attended middle school and began high school, but in 1988, he and his family left Mexico and moved to the Yakima Valley, where he finished high school. As a teenager, he worked in the fields, picking fruit and vegetables. Later, he worked as a teaching assistant at the Epic Migrant Head Start program in Yakima. For a period of about five months, he helped care for Father Jerry Corrigan, a priest in his parish who was dying of cancer. He and Father Corrigan had many conversations and, during one of them, the priest invited him to consider entering the priesthood. In 1994, he began his priestly formation at Mount Angel Seminary in Oregon. Four years later, he began theological studies at the Pontifical North American College and later at the John Paul II Institute for Marriage and Family, both in Rome.

He was ordained to the priesthood on June 28, 2002. At the time of his appointment as auxiliary bishop of San Diego, he was serving as vicar for clergy and as vocations director for the Diocese of Yakima, as well as pastor of St. Joseph Parish in Kennewick, WA.



WELCOME, MARIBEL GOMEZ, NATIONAL CURSILLO CENTER COORDINATOR

Maribel Arenas Gomez lived her Cursillo in November 1999 in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles in Spanish. Attending the 4th World Ultreya in Rome in 2000 gave her the opportunity to meet Eduardo Bonnin Aguilo and this inspired her to study the Charism of the Cursillo Movement. In that same year she and her husband, Juan Gomez, began serving on the Diocesan Secretariat as Secretary and then coordinating the Precursillo. She also served on the Los Angeles English Secretariat coordinating the School of Leaders. Her service as secretary of the World Body of the Cursillo Movement (OMCC) executive committee from 2006-2009 was followed by her service on the North American Caribbean Group (NACG) from 2010-2014.

Maribel has been married to Juan Gómez for 34 years and they have three sons and a daughter in law: Albert, Luis and Monique and Antonio. At first, she was quite reluctant to apply for the position of National Cursillo Center Coordinator, but friends helped her see that her experience in operating her family business and her years of teaching could serve the Cursillo Movement and be a wonderful way to share what she has received from studying and living the Charism of the Movement. In discernment she prayed not to do what she wanted but what God wanted and discovered she truly wanted to put it all in God's hands and apply.

EMMANUEL
God With Us



Celebrating the 60th Anniversary of THE FIRST US NATIONAL SECRETARIAT

HISTORICAL REFLECTION

The 60th anniversary of the establishment of the first US National Secretariat marks a significant milestone in the history of Cursillos in Christianity. Norma Rodriguez, Region VII Spanish Coordinator, highlighted this important event during the recent National Secretariat meeting held from November 6-8, 2025, in Pittsburgh, PA.

ORIGINS AND EARLY PRAYERS

In June 1965, the Plus Ultra newsletter featured a heartfelt prayer request from the Cursillistas at St. Francis Parish. This appeal called upon all Cursillistas to pray for the success of the upcoming National Convention for Cursillos in Christianity. The newsletter captured the spirit and hope of the community as they prepared for a pivotal event in Kansas City.

NEWSLETTER ANNOUNCEMENT

The newsletter included the following message:

“We have sensational news for all our Cursillistas in Chicago and East Chicago, Indiana. A National Convention of Cursillos in Christianity will be held with great solemnity in Kansas City from August 21-24, 1965. There are high hopes that this Convention will be a great success. We sincerely ask all our Cursillistas to intensify their prayers and sacrifices so that the Holy Spirit may enlighten the minds of those who will bear the weight of this Convention and thus bring to fruition a National Secretariat of Cursillos in Christianity, a Secretariat we so desperately need and are urgently calling for.”

LOOKING BACK

This momentous occasion not only commemorates the founding of the National Secretariat but also honors the faith, dedication, and unity of the Cursillista community throughout the years. Happy Anniversary, National Cursillo Secretariat!



National Secretariat Membership Updates

WELCOMING NEW NATIONAL SECRETARIAT MEMBERS

We are pleased to announce the addition of several dedicated Cursillistas to the National Secretariat team. These individuals have accepted roles as Regional Coordinators and will serve the dioceses within their respective regions, offering leadership and support:

- ✧ **Jennifer Tilghman** - Region II English Coordinator
- ✧ **Terry Johnson** - Region III English Coordinator
- ✧ **Ken Meeker** - Region V English Coordinator
- ✧ **Scott Ready** - Region VI English Coordinator
- ✧ **Thanhhoa Dinh** - Region VIII Vietnamese Coordinator
- ✧ **Robin Barkin** - Region XI Filipino Coordinator
- ✧ **Kathy Szabo** - Region XII English Coordinator

We look forward to seeing their leadership and commitment as they support their regions and contribute to the vision and mission of the National Cursillo Movement.

GRATITUDE TO OUTGOING MEMBERS

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the National Secretariat members who have recently completed their terms of office. Their service, leadership, and friendship have made a meaningful impact on the National Cursillo community. The following Cursillistas are especially recognized for their valuable contributions:

- ✧ **Terri DiBacco** - Region II English Coordinator, National Cursillo Coordinating Group Chair
- ✧ **Dan Kubisiak** - Region III English Coordinator, National Cursillo Coordinating Group Member at Large
- ✧ **Irma Padilla** - Region VIII English Coordinator
- ✧ **Joseph Phuc Nguyen** - Region VIII Vietnamese Coordinator
- ✧ **Penny De Leon** - Region XI Filipino Coordinator
- ✧ **Cecilia Obrochta** - Region XII English Coordinator

Thank you for your dedication and exemplary service to the National Cursillo community.

RECOGNITION OF NEW LEADERSHIP IN THE NATIONAL CURSILLO COORDINATING GROUP

Updates to the National Cursillo Coordinating Group have been announced. The following members will serve in new leadership roles within the group:

- ✧ **Roberto Sarabia** - Region I Spanish Coordinator, Chairperson
- ✧ **Linda Ketzner** - Region IV English Coordinator, Vice-Chairperson
- ✧ **Rae O'Rourke** - Region XI English Coordinator, Secretary
- ✧ **Rene Trujillo** - Region II Spanish Coordinator, Member at Large

We commend these members for their willingness to serve and look forward to their leadership and service in the National Cursillo Coordinating Group and the National Secretariat.