



**The British Anglican Cursillo<sup>®</sup> Council**

<sup>®</sup>Cursillo Reg. U.S. Pat. Off.

# **Fourth Day First and The History of Cursillo**

*Revised 2018*

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## Introduction

These booklets, which form the Resource Manual or Handbook for British Anglican Cursillo (BAC), are revised versions of the original documents gifted to BAC from the Episcopal Church of the USA in 1989. In the early to mid-2000s and again in 2013/4 They had been revised for basic differences between the American ways of doing things and for language alterations, but it became apparent that the booklets were not being read or used effectively by Diocesan Cursillo.

This major revision and rewording of the booklets was made by a group of experienced Cursillistas in 2017/8 and is intended for use by Diocesan Cursillo in order to explain and guide such groups in the practicalities and use of the Cursillo method. We believe that this reflects best practice.

In line with recent legal requirements there are also attached Guidelines and Policy Documents, particularly in regard to safeguarding, insurance and financial matters.

It is recommended that any future reviews of these booklets refer back to the original documents received from the Episcopal Church of the USA (ECUSA), copies of which should be held by the BAC President.

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## **Introduction**

Cursillo is a movement of the church which offers a unique method through its 'Fourth Day' activities of meeting together regularly in small groups (Group Reunion), combining groups (Ultreya), and sharing in prayer, study and action with each other in order to grow in faith.

'Cursillo' is the shortened name for 'Cursillo in Christiandad' which translates as a 'course (e.g. a race track) in how to live a Christian life'.

The 'Fourth Day' is the component which maintains our commitment to our Christian living.

Traditionally the term 'Fourth Day' referred to the day after the experience of the Three-day weekend, but in fact it is where and how the movement began.

For this reason it is impossible to separate the History of Cursillo and the concept of the 'Fourth Day'.

## **History and Growth of the Cursillo movement**

### **The Beginnings**

The first Cursillos were developed in Mallorca, Spain, under the leadership of a priest, Eduardo Bonnín and other young men involved in Spanish Catholic 'Action' groups. They were

active, zealous Christian laymen who sought ways to make their environments more Christian and to bring young men to a deeper faith in Christ. They wanted to make leaders who embraced and embodied their faith. They knew that in their daily work they had many opportunities to witness to Christ, and they believed that such witness could change the character of their workplaces, communities, and society itself.

### **1. They studied and prayed together**

Not knowing exactly how to begin to tackle such a big task, they began to meet weekly in small groups. They studied and prayed together. They began to plan ways to bring Christ into the everyday settings in which they lived. They found strength and mutual encouragement from each other as they carried out their plans. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, they experienced new excitement and depth of commitment among themselves.

### **2. The development of the weekend**

As more young men joined in these activities, a concern for training others in Christian witness developed. The leaders determined to hold weekend retreats as training sessions. Such weekends would focus on what is fundamental for being a Christian and how they could put faith into action. The intention was to form mature Christian leaders.

### **3. The Three-Day Weekend**

The three-day weekend initially developed as workshops to give insight and understanding in an own individual's faith and how this faith can be put into action with the support and prayer of fellow Christians.

An examination of the flow of the Weekend clearly demonstrates that the talks of the first two days are intended to prepare the way for the Fourth Day message on the third.

More details and the construction of the three-day weekend can be found in the booklet 'The Three-Day Weekend'.

### **What Makes the Fourth Day?**

Historically, Cursillo began with the intention of forming mature Christian leaders and witnesses, persons who would take seriously the call of God to bring the living Christ into their own situations.

The whole Cursillo method starts with the 'Fourth Day'. Without it as the focus of the Cursillo, the Three-day Cursillo Weekends are not much more than any other Christian course.

### **The Fourth Day provides:**

- A unique method, a strategy, to help a committed Christian to persevere in prayer, in study and in Christian action.
- A way of holding each other accountable.

### **The Fourth Day works through:**

- Regular meetings with a group of friends or colleagues to share progress in study and action and to share moments close to Christ – Group Reunions.
- Planning Christian action together.
- Meeting together with other Groups at Ultreyas. (See booklet on this).
- A Rule of Life in which individuals are encouraged and stimulated to continue to deepen their spiritual life and to review their own 'Rule of Life' regularly.
- Acquiring a Spiritual Director to be a prayerful friend.

## **The Point of the Fourth Day**

The point of the Fourth Day is to underscore and support apostolic action.

The emphasis is on meeting in order to:

- share the grace of God with one another;
- plan ways to share that grace with the lost, lonely, sick, struggling, outcast, downcast;
- hold each other accountable for carrying out our plans.

Cursillo gives the church a method for becoming a more active Christian. It is based on linking with other committed Christians through the Group Reunion and Ultreya, and progressive growth through Spiritual Direction and genuine piety.

This method is intended to promote and underpin active witness - apostolic action – and to give Christians the confidence to share in faith and action.

## **-The Fourth Day and other aspects of Cursillo**

If Cursillo could be likened to a train, with a powerful engine driving it, the powerful engine which drives Cursillo effectively is the Fourth Day: it provides the energy which sets the train in motion and leads the rest of the train in the right direction.

The components which make up Cursillo – the Fourth Day and the Three-day Weekends (which includes the preparation and follow-up) - comprise the whole Cursillo movement.

The fourth day activities of Group Reunion, Ultreya and following the rule of life provide the unique method by which Christians are encouraged to persevere and grow in faith and prayer.

It is essential, however, to understand that the Fourth Day came first, and the strong commitment of the founders to the Fourth Day led them to the development of the Three-day Weekend and all that this involves.

(Please see the 'Weekend' booklet for further information)

### **Cursillo's place as a movement of the church**

Cursillo is an instrument of the Church to do what the Christian community has always understood as its task. Cursillo does not exist to enlist members in its "cause." It does not exist as a church within the Church. Rather, taking its cue from the New Testament - indeed, from Pentecost - it is out to release the creative and God-given power of saints, those who are aware of God's gift to them, who are also apostles, those who desire to share their God-given gifts with others!

Cursillo is a strategy and a method at the disposal of the Church to help Christians become what - on the authority of the Gospel - they should become.

It aims to raise awareness of what the fundamentals of what the Christian life are, and to enliven and energise Christians in order that they have a chance of living out their vocation, whatever that may be.

### **How the Fourth Day Works**

Helping Christians to become effective apostles and grow as saints is the work of Cursillo. The following explains the nature and purpose of the Fourth Day.

*More detail to each of these activities is given in other booklets in the Resource Manual.*

## **Group Reunion**

The Group Reunion comes first.

Jesus promised that "wherever two or three of you are gathered together, there am I in the midst." (Matthew 18.20)

Grouping reflects a natural need which human beings have to share life with a circle of friends and receive support. It has the potential to enliven and empower each other.

The essence of the Group Reunion is to remind the Cursillistas that they are accountable to God and to each other for their growth and witness. The Group Reunion card provides a simple and natural "checklist" which can help focus the efforts of each person. The card also serves the very useful function of opening those grouping to one another, allowing trust and mutual support to develop.

*(For more information, see the booklet in this series on the Group Reunion)*

## **Sponsorship**

Sponsors may want to introduce a potential participant to the method of the Group Reunion before a three-day weekend and should be prepared to always find a group or create a group for their participant after the weekend experience.

The most vital and vulnerable moment in the life of a new Cursillista comes in the days immediately following the Weekend. If grouping begins here, or has already been experienced, it is likely to solidify the message of the weekend and result in a fruitful life in the Fourth Day. If, however, the new Cursillista does not become quickly grounded in a group, the message and impact of the three-day weekend may evaporate.



It is, therefore, highly recommended that sponsors promise to incorporate their participants into a Group Reunion as soon as possible. This is part of putting the Fourth Day first! It is also appropriate that Spiritual Advisors from a weekend should encourage new Cursillistas to become part of a group.

*(For more information see the booklet in this series on Sponsorship)*

### **Ultreya**

The Ultreyas are another area that call for special attention in the Fourth Day. They are intended primarily as opportunities for the smaller groups to get together and share experiences "out there" in the real world. The best Ultreya is not one in which a stirring lecture is given on the general nature of the Christian life, nor on the before-and-after effects of attending Cursillo.

An Ultreya should be where Cursillistas are inspired by each other's example, and in which simple instances of Christian action are given.

*(For more information, see the booklet in this series on the Ultreya.)*

### **Spiritual Direction**

The essence of Spiritual Direction is in the formation of a significant relationship - a friendship in Christ - in which a growing Christian is paired with a person mature in spiritual wisdom and experience. Such a friendship serves to challenge and guide the growing Christian into a deeper relationship with his or her Lord.

As a part of "putting the Fourth Day first," Spiritual Advisors should give special attention to the purpose and process of Spiritual Direction in their talks on the Weekend. Then, too,

Secretariats should seek and support programs for training Spiritual Directors - both lay and ordained. Leaders at all levels within the Cursillo Movement should find a Spiritual Director for themselves so that they are continuing to grow in their faith and so that they can testify to new Cursillistas of the value of Spiritual Direction.

*(For more information see the booklet in this series on the Spiritual Direction)*

### **Implications:**

Putting the Fourth Day First has some practical implications:

1. Cursillo is seen as a method and a tool for the church to use committed Christian men and women, who want to serve their Lord in a more intentional and effective way and showing them how this may be done.
2. It helps us understand and make better use of each of the Cursillo components. If what we are interested in is Christian witness, then we will seek, find and invite persons who have the qualities of maturity, curiosity and commitment which will help them become fruitful witnesses. This puts the Pre-Cursillo and especially sponsorship in a new light.
3. If what we are interested in is the authentic Cursillo, then we will make the FOURTH DAY much more central to our thinking and our work. In some places, this has meant postponing other aspects of Cursillo planning until Fourth Day communities are organised and functioning. In all places, it means getting Cursillistas - especially Cursillo leaders - involved in grouping and in gathering in Ultreya, and in actively pursuing and expressing genuine piety (prayer, study and spiritual direction).

**Conclusion:**

Whilst the Three-Day Weekend is an experience which can motivate and enliven a committed Christian in a new way, the Fourth Day is the ongoing method which sustains and motivates and leads into Christian action.

Cursillo provides a method designed to facilitate the offering to the Church of a group of Christians dedicated to living the life of grace and to working with all their strength to help to bring others to live it.

It is essential that leadership of the local Movement - the Secretariat and the Servant Community, under the leadership of the Bishop of the diocese - put the Fourth Day in its proper position.

The Fourth Day is at the heart of the Cursillo method.

