

Canadian Anglican Cursillo

ROLE AND FUNCTION OF CLERGY WITHIN AND BEYOND THE PARISH



THE PURPOSE OF CURSILLO

The Cursillo Movement is a ministry of the Church to help the Laity understand their individual callings to be Christian leaders in the church, in the workplace, in family and social life, and leisure activities. The Cursillo Method consists of three equally important facets:

- Identification of potential areas in community life to be influenced by the Gospel.
- The Three-Day Cursillo Weekend.
- The follow-up support system that focuses attention on Christian action through faith and study.

Cursillo seeks to serve the whole Church. It seeks to equip Christians to be the church wherever they are, and in whatever stream of tradition or theology they resonate. The Cursillo Weekend Event is a short course on Christianity that includes 15 talks by Laity and Clergy on Christian life, concentrating on the experience of open relationship with God and others, as much as on the presentation of a simple method for living the Gospel. The Cursillo Weekend is not the "raison d'être" of Cursillo, but rather one step in a journey of enabling people to grow in their faith and ministry. Following the Weekend people are encouraged to continue their experience in small groups (Group Reunion) on a regular basis. These Group Reunions are not exclusive and may include people who have not attended a Weekend themselves. Group Reunions provide support and encouragement through sharing of members' Christian journeys, specifically in the areas of Piety, Study, and Christian Action. From time-to-time there may also be regular gatherings of the larger Cursillo Community (Ultreyas) to which all are welcome.

CURSILLO AND THE CLERGY

Although Cursillo emphasizes the ministry of the Laity, their role of Clergy (at all levels) in the Movement is of utmost importance. Both Laity and Clergy have clearly defined roles, and mutual support and teamwork is essential for the health of the Movement and the ministry of the Church. The role of Clergy, who seek to be a healing and empowering force in the Church, is definite and profound in all aspects of Cursillo ministry. In Cursillo, the sacramental life is central, and the priestly function within the community is fundamental.

This conscious offering of ministry by the Cursillo Method is at the service of the Church. All Clergy who have not attended a Cursillo Weekend are encouraged to do so. Valuable insights will be gained both

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into what Cursillo means to those who have participated and into a deeper understanding of how the Movement can have a positive effect on both Laity and Clergy in parish life, growth, and renewal.

CLERGY AND CURSILLO IN THE PARISH

The Parish Priest is given the guidance and authority of the Holy Spirit in leading the spiritual life and development of people and community. Just as parishes differ from each other, there are many different ways that Cursillo fits into the life of the parish. In the development of Parish Pastoral Plans, the experience, commitment and depth of Cursillistas may be part of God's calling to that parish. Cursillistas have a primary responsibility to ensure that they are part of the parish environment. They are not to be a group of separate and distinct Christians.

The Parish Priest needs to be aware that Cursillistas may from time-to-time gather as a group (Group Reunions and Ultreyas) for support and encouragement through prayer, study, and to plan strategies for enriching their personal journeys as well as deepening the spiritual awareness of others in a realistic way. Such gathering should not exclude non-Cursillistas within the Parish with similar desires for Parish development.

Cursillistas may also be actively helping others to discover their own potential for Christian service. The Clergy should be aware of this and be ready to assist and affirm the emergence of new ministries. As part of the ongoing activities of the parish, there will be chances to us aspects of the Cursillo Method to enrich the life of the parish. Cursillistas need encouragement to continue the efforts to find their personal apostolate within parish, home or work environments.

The Parish Priest can further the spiritual development of all parishioners, including Cursillistas, by:

- Personal example and leadership in the encouragement of Cursillistas, and non-Cursillistas within the Parish in forming Group Reunions, facilitating Ultreyas, and generally supporting the work of the Cursillo Movement in the Parish.
- Appointing, or having Cursillistas in the Parish elect from their membership, a representative to do the legwork in reminding people about Cursillo events, co-ordinating Group Reunions, and providing liaison with other Parishes and the Secretariat.
- The encouragement of continuing effort of Cursillistas in finding their personal apostolate within parish, home, or work environments. They need to be encouraged not to retreat into an easier but unauthentic pattern limited to specific group activity.
- Being aware of the potential of the Cursillo method to enrich the life of the parish and being willing to assist and affirm such ministry.
- Assisting in actively seeking out and identifying the potential leaders of the parish and of other environments in the community and encouraging the Cursillistas in the parish to befriend them and invite them to join a Group Reunion or attend a Weekend (see following section on Sponsorship).
- Being sensitive to the desires of the Cursillistas of the parish to pray for needs as they arise.

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- Being open to Cursillo activity aimed at increasing the personal involvement of Christians in the Christian life and personal outreach to others in the power and love of Christ. This is Christian apostolic action from which everyone in the parish and wider community can benefit, and in which everyone should be invited to participate. Such openness can enrich parish life by bring Cursillo strengths right into the heart of the parish and enables others to discover their potential for service.
- Responding directly to requests for spiritual direction or recommending good long-term spiritual directors (people with knowledge of the spiritual life, with training, with patience and love).

The Sponsorship Function of Clergy

Perhaps one of the most important things to understand about Cursillo is the sponsoring of Weekend Candidates who should be considered only after due thought and prayer have been given to their suitability.

- Candidates for a Cursillo Weekend are sponsored by others involved in the Cursillo Movement. You, as Clergy, will be asked to assess the appropriateness of a person attending a Cursillo Weekend.
- You may know reasons why a person should not attend a weekend, such as family, medical, or spiritual turmoil, which may be unknown to the sponsor. The Cursillo Weekend is not intended to provide solutions for people presently experiencing serious problems. Ideal candidates are mature Christians who are able to influence their environments for Christ. Your assessment is not just a rubber stamp.
- If the candidate is suitable to attend a weekend, sign the application form. If not, advise the sponsor that this may not be the appropriate time for this individual to attend a Weekend.
- Actively seek out and identify potential leaders of the parish and encourage Cursillistas in the parish to befriend them and invite them to join a Group Reunion or attend a Cursillo Weekend.

CLERGY AND CURSILLO BEYOND THE PARISH

In addition to living out their lives in the Parish and influencing environments for Christ in the wider community, Cursillistas may be involved in the wider Cursillo Community through participation in Group Reunions, Ultreyas, Weekend Teams, Secretariat, and National Secretariat. Clergy should remain open and supportive of such involvement. It is important for Clergy to familiarize themselves with the Cursillo method and where possible, become full immersed in it by participating in a Weekend as a candidate. Clergy often find that it is a privilege to be active in Group Reunion with those who can share most deeply failures and successes in a confidential environment.

The Role and Function of Clergy in Group Reunions

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Priests in Parishes with a Cursillo presence are encouraged to support Cursillo. They can offer Spiritual Direction and may become part of a Group Reunion where they share with others the failures, successes, and the joys of a common call.

The Role and Function of Clergy in Ultreyas

The usual function and role of Clergy at an Ultreya is one of Spiritual Direction and leading Scriptural discussion. A Priest is assigned to respond to the Lay Witness Talk in order to briefly ground the discussion in the Scriptures, and to provide insight as to how the discussion might show those present how to be the hands and feet of the Lord in their apostolic action.

Where outreach, visitation, or other duties happen in the evening and interfere with Clergy attendance at Ultreyas, it is important that the leaders of the Ultreya support and strengthen them through prayer.

Clergy on Cursillo Secretariat

Local Secretariats require Clergy representation to provide advice and guidance on clerical matters of interest to the Secretariat and the wider Cursillo Community, spiritual direction and vital input on all other issues.

Upon advisement from the local Secretariat, the Spiritual Director for a Secretariat is normally appointed from the Clergy by the Diocesan Bishop for a specified term of office (usually two to three years). The Clergy on Secretariat need to attend meetings on a regular basis and their input is vital. Clergy on Secretariat must be Cursillistas.

The Role and Function of Clergy with regard to Cursillo Weekends

The Cursillo Weekend is a three-day live-in weekend. Preparation for a Weekend begins months in advance with team selection and training. All members of the team, including Clergy, are expected to attend the complete course, including training. The spirit of the Weekend focuses entirely on the teaching of Jesus Christ and is designed to help individuals come to a fresh awareness of the ways in which they can live out their Christian lives. During the weekend there will be worship and fellowship, as well as 15 talks given by Laity and Clergy, which are designed to help the individual become more fully alive in Christ. Five of these talks (three dealing with Grace, one on Faith and one on the Sacraments) are given by Clergy.

Team Selection and Training – Pre-Weekend

Lay and Clerical leaders for a Cursillo Weekend are invited to form a team and deliver the Weekend. The Weekend Lay Director and Spiritual Director are appointed by and are responsible to the Secretariat and the Bishop of the Diocese for the Weekend. The success of a Weekend depends a great deal on thorough and prayerful Team training. During this time the talks take shape, method is reviewed, details are settled and, most importantly, a Christ Community is formed. It is into this expression of Church that we invite the candidates on a weekend. The whole process from beginning to end is underpinned by

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the prayer support of the Cursillo Community. The role of Clergy as spiritual advisors on Weekends is vital.

The Lay Director and the Spiritual Director for a Weekend work together very closely. They will jointly arrange the dates and time for Team training. Attendance at all Team Training is essential. The Spiritual Director gives full support and encouragement to everyone on the team. All need blessing, reassurance, and sometimes, advice. All matters of a doctrinal or liturgical nature are under the purview of the Spiritual Director. However, the Lay Director bears the overall responsibility for all secular matters pertaining to the Weekend and it is inappropriate for the Spiritual Director(s) to assume principal leadership of the Team.

Team Training is a Spiritual Activity. It is a response to God's call, a celebration of God's Grace, and a growth in service to God and His people. The blessings of unity and love should be evident in this manifestation of Christ's body, the Church. Guiding the team's Spiritual formation should be a top priority shared with the Laity.

Worship should also be an essential part of Team preparation, and therefore all Team Meetings should include time for worship and prayer. In preparation of the schedule for Team Meetings, the Lay Director and Spiritual Director will arrange worship for each meeting. It is important to involve other Team members in this worship; however a Priest should close each meeting with a blessing. The worship services are to be familiar liturgy from the BCP or BAS; this is not a time for experimentation. If an occasional form (such as a healing Eucharist) is used, it should be carefully explained since not all Team members may be familiar with it.

The Lay Director of the Team is responsible for selecting team members. Once Team selection is complete, the talks are prepared by the Team members and then reviewed by presentation to the Team.

Talks are prepared in advance in writing and presented to the Team according to the schedule. These talks are designed to convey specific parts of a precise message, so the outline provided for each talk must be followed. It is necessary to write the talks in advance of the presentation to ensure the inclusion of essentials and the exclusion of extraneous material. It keeps the speaker within the required time frame and gives the Team a chance to hear precisely what the speaker intends to say on the weekend. It is important that the Clergy talks be presented and reviewed during team training. All presenters, both Lay and Clergy, should take to heart the comments of Team members. They are intended to be an honest appraisal for the benefit of the speaker and the candidates on the Weekend. Following this Team review, the talks are revised as necessary.

When the team is reviewing talks, the Spiritual Director should address doctrinal and pastoral issues only. Comments on content, style, and manner can be left to others. However, one should ensure that the essentials of the outline have been covered, and that the message is not being expressed misleadingly. To do this adequately, one must be familiar with all the talks. Let the speaker know that the talk is valuable and appreciated.

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It is extremely important to keep the attention of the talks and the team focused on the specific themes and approaches to the faith that together form the methodology of the weekend. Other ministries are not denied or ignored. They exist and are quietly performed in the course of normal ministry by the Priest but must not become a focus or specific charism (Priestly or Lay) or feature of a particular Team's training or Weekend.

During the Weekend

Cursillo is not just a weekend experience but introduces an ongoing method for living the Christian life. The Weekend Spiritual Director is a key person on the weekend, normalizing it as a ministry of the Church, representing the authority of the Bishop, and making available the full teaching and sacraments of Christ's Church. Of utmost importance is the affirmation of the role of the Laity in real leadership, the role of the Sacraments, and the pattern and content of the Lay Talks.

The Cursillo Weekend has a specific methodology dedicated to bringing an enriched teaching and experience of faith into the best possible focus for continued growth within the normal variety of parishes and styles of ministry. Clergy must avoid adding things that could lead to disappointment and controversy that might detract from the intent and focus of the Weekend.

In addition to leading worship, and giving the Clergy Talks as scheduled in the flow of the weekend, counselling is an important part of the Weekend spiritual Director's task. In giving spiritual counsel, it is wise to remember the stages of the Weekend, and the content of upcoming talks. Let the dynamics of the weekend have their effect by preparing for what will come without giving it away prematurely. Spiritually, some people move a great distance during the Weekend. They need time between events to think the previous one over, and to integrate the spiritual counsel with what follows.

People who are disturbed, or suffer obvious psychological problems need to be treated with sensitivity and care. They should not have been invited to a Weekend, and these problems will not be solved there. Try to keep them on an 'even keel'. Do not allow them to disturb or dominate the whole weekend. Availability of the Weekend Spiritual Director(s) for counselling may be announced several times as the Weekend progresses.

Spiritual Director(s) should not begin a formal counselling process on the Weekend that would need to be continued after the Weekend is over. If ongoing counselling is indicated the candidates should be provided with information as to where it may be available. There may be occasions when a referral to the parish priest is appropriate. This should only take place with the consent of the candidate.

Each candidate should be encouraged to join a Group Reunion and to seek out, with prayerful consideration, a long-term Spiritual Director. Candidates should be enabled to more fully enter into the Christian life of their home environments and return home eager to contribute to their parish.

IN CONCLUSION

Cursillo - Role and Function of Clergy within and Beyond the Parish

Cursillo does a particular ministry very well. It seeks to add depth and understanding to the Christian life, and a way of growing deeper, and being part of the transformation of the world by individual Christians. Through its focus on small groups, and leadership development it can be a useful tool for parish growth and renewal.

It is advisable that Clergy, who are involved in Cursillo, should be familiar with the movement and its methodology. The best way to do this is by participating as a candidate on a Cursillo Weekend.

If opposition to Cursillo occurs, regardless of the source, Lay or Clerical, it needs to be dealt with prayerfully and expeditiously. Disquieted persons should be approached with an attitude of Grace to determine the source of their unease and through prayer and discussion attempt to clarify the issues with an emphasis on principals rather than personalities. In all cases it is vitally important to discern the will of God through prayer, and to seek Grace to follow His will. |In the end, the issue may have to be left quietly and confidentially in the hands of God. Cursillo has never claimed to be a spiritual panacea or appeal to all persons.

The role of Cursillo with a parish's pastoral plan may differ from parish to parish. This conscious offering ministry by the Cursillo method is at the service of the Church. If Cursillo is not in your Diocese and you are interested in renewing or initiating this ministry, contact your Bishop, or the Canadian Anglican Cursillo Secretariat (see the Web Site www.anglicancursillo.com).

Bibliography and Further Reading

CACS Library (may be downloaded from the CACS Web Site Anglicancursillo.com

Diocesan Secretariat
The Authentic Three-Day Weekend

NEC Library – Contact your local Secretariat or see the NEC Web Site at nationalepiscopalcusillo.org

What is Cursillo?
Spiritual Direction
Sponsorship
Role of Clergy
Bylaws and Legal Documents of the NEC
Cursillo Information Day – Clergy (CID/C)
Clergy Workshop