

Canadian Anglican Cursillo



THE ROLE OF CLERGY IN CURSILLO

INTRODUCTION

From the beginning, Cursillo was understood as a ‘movement of the Church’ involving all the orders of ministry and equipping ministers, lay and ordained, to be apostles of Jesus Christ.

The centre of authority in Cursillo is not solely in either the clergy or in the laity but is in the community as a whole. Cursillo fits the understanding that ministry is of the laity, bishops, priests, and deacons. In Cursillo, as in the Church generally, all must carry out their proper function within the Body of Christ. Only in this way can all grow in their understanding and commitment to the ministry which our Lord gives to the whole.

Cursillo often awakens and empowers the laity to their ministry of representing Christ and God’s church to the world. But this does not mean that Cursillo is a ‘lay movement’. Cursillo’s aim is to help the whole Church, and each of its orders, to be itself. Of course, awakened laity enables the clergy to assume their proper roles in the Body more naturally and effectively. Thus, Cursillo is sacramentally based and proclaims the message of God’s grace.

Cursillo seeks to identify people who are leaders – who influence or have the potential to influence the environments in which they live for Christ. This understanding of leadership is dynamic and functional, as opposed to structural or organizational. The emphasis is on DOING. Clergy who have identified Cursillo as a part of their apostolic ministry should not wait to be chosen to offer their gifts. They should begin to offer their gifts now. The role of clergy in Cursillo is that of a servant.

1. THE AUTHENTIC CURSILLO WEEKEND

The Authentic Cursillo Weekend is a microcosm of Cursillo – a Cursillo – in -miniature. It focuses all the elements which span the Cursillo strategy from the Pre-cursillo to the Post-cursillo Fourth Day.

The Authentic Cursillo Weekend is built on the Cursillo ‘tripod’ of Piety, Study, and Action. All the elements are combined in a natural context and flow:

- The sacraments, meditations and prayers constitute the religious centre of Cursillo – **PIETY**
- The talks and discussions open a way for a meaningful dialogue and reflection – **STUDY**
- And the relationships that grow around the table group and the whole community, help to develop the concepts of group reunion and ultreya and lead to – **ACTION**

Although the Authentic Weekend is Cursillo - in miniature, it is useful for considering the practical development of the clergy role as a Spiritual Director or Advisor.

2. ESTABLISHING THE WEEKEND TEAM

- It is important that a good pastoral leader is identified before putting together a team for the Authentic Cursillo Weekend
- When the Lay Director and Spiritual Director for the team have been chosen, they should begin to group. Time is needed for this ‘team in miniature’ to form and develop mutual confidence.
- The relationship between Lay Director and Spiritual Director is of central importance. No specific rules govern their relationship. Yet, generally speaking, the Lay Director and Spiritual Director together are responsible for the team formation and the Authentic Cursillo Weekend – arrangements, meetings, schedule, and process.
- The Spiritual Director is responsible for the message formation and spiritual progress.
- The two have a relationship comparable to the producer and director of a play or film. Their concerns overlap considerably. Trust is essential.
- As members of the team are chosen, they, too, should begin to group. Eventually, as the team is formed, Group Reunion will mark the distinctive spirituality of the team AND the Cursillo Weekend.

3. GRASPING THE ‘FLOW OF THE MESSAGE’

The climax of the Cursillo Weekend comes with the revealing of the Fourth Day – Group Reunion and Ultreya. Getting to the climax, however, depends on understanding the flow of the talks – what each intends and where the crucial turning points are.

- The clergy for the Cursillo Weekend should meet to review the talks which are to be delivered. Sometimes a professor or experienced Cursillista can perform this as well.
- The Meditations move from diffuse anxieties and a general awareness of God’s love down to a specific address in ‘Christ’s Message’.
- The talks do the same: from general consideration of what it means to be a real human being, to finding very personal ways to be a Christian in a specific environment. Each day finishes with a talk that sums up the talks and activities of the day and prepares the way for the next.
- Within each clergy talk and meditation an attempt has been made in the commentary to show the central turning points – the focal issues presented.
- The clergy for a Cursillo Weekend team should have a deep understanding of the overall message, and each of its parts – only in this way can they give sound guidance to the Cursillo Weekend as a whole.

NOTE: The Third and Fifth meditations need special attention. The third meditation is an attempt to present the human and divine Christ vividly as a person for the Cursillistas. It needs to impress on the Cursillistas a deep appreciation of the Lord whose word is both real and human and is at the same time God’s own. The fifth, ‘Christ’s Message’, is the least structured of all and therefore requires meditation, the most preparation. This preparation should be completed in the course of the Cursillo Weekend because it concerns the specific candidates who are involved.

The person who gives this meditation should be spiritually mature and very attentive to the Cursillo Weekend as it unfolds.

- The Third and Fifth clergy talks also deserve special attention. The ‘Sacraments’ talk can be very diffuse and extensive. It should not be. It is not a repeat of confirmation instruction.
- The last clergy talk, ‘Christian Life’, CAN come after the ‘Environments talk (and did so in the older format). But provision is made in the Workbook for this talk to come, more logically, after the ‘Community in Action’ talk.

NOTE: It is the last clergy talk and so presents the opportunity to tie the ‘loose ends’ together – catching up the missing elements or emphasising those which needed clarification. Furthermore, it presents a key piece in the message of the Cursillo Weekend and of Cursillo generally: namely, developing a Rule of Life and making use of Spiritual Direction.

4. HELPING THE TEAM TO GROW

- The Lay Director and the Spiritual Director should give careful attention to the selection of the team.
- Insist that an essential part of each team meeting be Group Reunion.
- Inspire the team to give themselves freely as an offering to God. This sets the dominant servant theme of team formation.
- The basic work of the team members is to form spiritual friendships with the candidates.
- Challenge the team members to reflect on their faith. Make use of the time for preparing and presenting talks as an opportunity for exploring and deepening faith.
- A large part of the Spiritual Directors work is helping the team come to see the overall integrity of the Cursillo Weekend and how that really shapes vital Christian witness and living.
- Spiritual Director and Spiritual team should be sensitive to all forms of Christian spirituality and discipline. But at the same time, they should be firmly committed to the simple outline of spirituality which Cursillo presents.

NOTE: Team formation and the Cursillo Weekend are NOT the places to present distinctive forms of spirituality – such as speaking in tongues, or various forms of healing ministry. Cursillo is intended to awaken apostolic zeal. Other forms of Christian spirituality are best dealt with in other contexts.

5. GUIDING THE AUTHENTIC CURSILLO WEEKEND

- Work closely with the Lay Director – this is a team effort.
- Invite the gifts and ideas of others on the team – and from candidates – in the planning and carrying out of the liturgical services.
- Be available – and announce this availability – for conferring and counselling with team members and candidates.

- Listen to the talks, as they are being given, during the Cursillo Weekend – note where essential ideas are not covered or are not emphasised and fill in the gaps where possible and natural.
- Time should be taken, in team meetings, to get the pulse of the Cursillo Weekend. Be prepared to calm anxieties. Team members may need to be reminded that Cursillo is supported by prayer, and that the Spirit will after all guide the results – they do not need to be anxious.
- Be open to candidates, their fears, trials, and joys, to team members and to the Holy Spirit.

6. FOLLOWING THE AUTHENTIC CURSILLO WEEKEND

- Continue to meet with the Lay Director for a short time in Group Reunion.
- Evaluate together the Cursillo Weekend – candidate selection, sponsor participation, team formation and Fourth Day Community support. Report these evaluations in writing to the Secretariat, suggesting solutions to problems, things learned and ways to improve.
- As Spiritual Director, prepare a series of letters to be sent to the candidates at intervals following the Cursillo Weekend. These might encourage them to begin Grouping, to attend Ultreyas, or offer Palanca. Such letters, coming at intervals, remind the Cursillistas that Cursillo is ongoing, and not a one-time experience.

7. BEYOND THE AUTHENTIC CURSILLO WEEKEND

Cursillo-in-miniature is not enough! Cursillo is about Christians being empowered and active as saints and apostles, bringing Christ to the world. Clergy responsibility in Cursillo does not end with the **Cursillo Weekend**.

The principles that undergird the clergy role apply as well to the Pre-cursillo and Post-cursillo as to the Authentic Cursillo Weekend.

8. CLERGY SHOULD BEGIN TO EXERCISE THEIR ROLE: IN THE PRECURSILLO

- They should be involved in Group Reunion.
- They should plan specific action – perhaps including (but not limited to) inviting key people to attend an Authentic Cursillo Weekend.
- Attend Secretariat meetings. Make suggestions of areas that need to be evangelized. Volunteer to serve where needed.
- Be a part of the Servant community – joining with others to study the Cursillo Method in depth and finding ways to train leaders and apply the strategy. In some places it may be necessary to ‘agitate’ to get the Secretariat to form a ‘Servant community’.

9. IN THE POST-CURSILLO

- Clergy have a responsibility to continue in Group Reunion.
- Clergy should help and encourage candidates into local communities, encouraging grouping and finding groups, starting one where necessary.
- Suggest ways in which gifts of Cursillistas may be used.
- Clergy have a key role to play in Ultreya. When called upon, to give a response to the Witness (Action) Talk.
- To be sure that the Ultreya does not become merely an attempt to renew the feelings aroused by the Weekends.

10. IN CANDIDATE SELECTION

Candidate selection is a part of the Pre-Cursillo and essential to the Cursillo strategy.

- Clergy are required to sign the form of application for a Weekend.
- Clergy are encouraged to speak to the diocesan Spiritual Director if they have any questions.
- Prepare both the candidate and their sponsor to take their responsibilities seriously.
- The candidate should know, at the very least, what Cursillo is for and what will be expected of them when the Weekend is over.

11. IN SPONSOR DEVELOPMENT

Many Cursillistas may be helped to grow in apostolic outreach by sponsoring someone. This requires real discernment and wisdom but can open doors for some who feel too timid to 'share their faith' in other ways.

- Sponsorship education should begin immediately. (see the booklet in the Resource on Sponsorship) One image of the sponsor which is helpful is that of a 'godparent' or one about to be baptized. It implies ongoing concern and the willingness to make sacrifices for the one sponsored.
- Clergy can help by thinking through with sponsors the various ways in which they can carry out their responsibilities. Prayer is a very important part of the sponsor's work.
- Resources
 - CACS Guidelines:
 - The Authentic Cursillo Weekend
 - ECM Library – <http://www.episcopalcurstilloministry.org/>
 - What is Cursillo?
 - Spiritual Direction
 - Clergy Talk Workbook