

Cursillo Movement Continues... and comes full circle!

By Father Larry Van Damme

With the closing of Margyrove Retreat Center, some are wondering if the Cursillos in Christianity movement in the Upper Peninsula will continue. Since 1974, Cursillo weekends have been held at Marygrove. As the new chaplain for this lay-apostolate, I am happy to say it continues to be blessed with faith-filled lay leaders prayerfully preparing for Cursillo weekends on July 9-12 (men) and July 24-26 (women). These gatherings will be held at St. Michael Parish in Marquette, home of the first Cursillos when the movement came to the Diocese of Marquette in 1963. Cursillo has come full circle!

For those not yet familiar with the movement, Cursillo (pronounced *Koor-see-yoh*) is actually a Spanish word for 'Short Course' – a short course in Christian Living. It was begun in Spain by laypersons in 1944, while refining a technique to train Catholic Christian pilgrimage leaders. The training evolved into weekend 'courses' from Thursday night through Sunday afternoon. Now worldwide, Cursillo intends to help participants have a profound encounter with Jesus and to grow in how we joyfully make Christ known in our everyday environments.

The inspiring, informative, and practical talks given throughout a Cursillo weekend are offered both by lay people who comprise a Cursillo team and by clergy, as the team includes one or two priests who are available for Masses and Confessions. A deacon or a professed religious may offer a talk as well. The weekend provides many opportunities for prayer, worship, good meals, and joyful fraternity.

I made my Cursillo weekend in 1987, prior to entering seminary. I was invited by people already active in the movement - 'Cursillistas' - who noticed that I desired to grow in my relationship with Jesus and to live my faith more fully. The weekend's fine talks on grace, the sacraments, Christian study, prayer, service, and other aspects of our Catholic faith awakened most everyone's faith. The experiences shared by lay presenters were especially helpful as we learned new ways to understand, share, and live out our faith.

After making a Cursillo weekend, regular reunions with fellow Cursillistas help in committing oneself to daily prayer, Christian study and action. Now in my 27th year of ordained ministry, I am not surprised that many of my dedicated parishioners over the years happen to be Cursillistas. The movement works!

A somewhat unique aspect of this Christ-centered movement in our diocese is its Protestant counterpart – the non-Roman Cursillo Movement. As growth of Cursillo here paralleled the ecumenical movement, our Catholic Cursillo leadership invited non-Catholics to participate as well, and to hold their own weekends at Marygrove. Because of beliefs and disciplines particular to Catholics, it is necessary for the non-Romans to have their own weekends. Yet, the method and emphasis on daily prayer, Christian study and action is similar for both movements.

This summer the non-Roman Cursillo weekends will be held on the same dates as the Catholic Cursillos, but at Messiah Lutheran Church in Marquette. Lodging for both Cursillo groups will be in a new residence hall at Northern Michigan University. For married couples in which one spouse is Catholic and the other is of another Christian denomination, the parallel movements allow for both to participate in a Cursillo weekend as well as in the Cursillista community afterward

In a meeting with Cursillo leadership last year, Bishop John Doerfler commented that the movement aligns wonderfully with the principles described in his Pastoral Letter entitled “Transforming Fire: A New Pentecost to form Spirit-Filled Evangelizers.”

As Cursillo enjoys his continued support, I join with its lay leadership in inviting you to pray for the movement and to consider becoming active in it if you have not done so already.

For more information on the Cursillos in Christianity movement, visit www.cursillosintheup.org. Interested individuals may get more information by calling:

Terry & Anne Dehring (906-250-0938) Marquette County;

Janet Lindstrom (906-786-3852) Delta County;

Sheryl Carobine (906-282-1258) Dickinson County;

John Benson (906-296-9388) Houghton County;

Louise Holmes (906-875-3585) Iron County;

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