

Southern Nebraska Register

Cursillo celebrates 50 years in the Lincoln Diocese

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LINCOLN (SNR) - The Lincoln Diocese Cursillo community invites all to join Bishop James Conley and all cursillistas in celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Cursillo movement in the diocese June 28 at the John XXIII Diocesan Center in Lincoln.

All are welcome to participate in the celebration, whether or not they have lived a three-day Cursillo weekend.

The celebration will begin with Mass celebrated by Bishop Conley at 4 p.m., followed by a catered meal in Dawson Hall.

What is Cursillo?

A Cursillo (pronounced kur-see-yo; the full name is "Cursillo de Christiandad") is an encounter with Christ. Cursillo is a Spanish word meaning "little" or "short course," so a Cursillo is a "short course in Christianity." It begins on a Thursday evening and ends the following Sunday evening (the "Three Days").

The primary objectives of the Cursillo movement are to develop in adult Christians a consciousness of their power and mission to become leaders in the work of Christian renewal, and to sustain them as they provide a Christian leaven in civic, social and economic life.

Cursillo aims to transform, in a Christian way, the environments where people live and work. Because the task of bringing Christ to one's environment is not an easy one, Cursillo has two important means for growing and persevering in the Christian life following the three-day weekend: group reunion and Ultreya.

The group reunion is a small group of friends who meet weekly to share with one another their efforts toward growth in piety, study and action. This meeting is referred to as a "friendship group." The weekly group reunion is important because cursillistas need to first experience personal growth before they can bring a Christ-like attitude to their environments. And because attempts to bring Christ into various environments can sometimes be frustrating, the group reunion also provides the support needed to persevere in challenging times.

The second means of growing and persevering is the Ultreya (a Spanish word meaning "Onward!"), which is a gathering (usually monthly) of the larger Cursillo community. It is a time for members of each group reunion to meet with other members of the Cursillo community.

Cursillo teaches that conversion is not limited to one experience. Though conversion does have a starting point, it is ongoing and, thus, occurs during every minute of every day. The follow-up tools of group reunion and Ultreya help the cursillista to continue daily down the path of conversion and growing closer to Christ.

Pope Francis

Pope Francis addressed thousands of cursillistas who had gathered in Rome for a European Ultreya April 30, specifically greeting the bishops and priests who accompanied them.

"You are called to have fruits from the charisma that the Lord confided to you," he said, "in the origin of the Cursillos ... These pioneers of your movement were authentic missionaries: they didn't doubt in taking initiative and, bravely approached people, involving them with sympathy and accompanying them on the path of faith with respect and love.

"Following that example," he continued, "today you also announce the Good News of the love of God, approaching your friends, the people that you know, your companions of study and work, so that they also can live a personal experience of the infinite love of Christ which liberates and transforms life.

"And it's so necessary to leave, without weariness, to find those who are far away from God! ... In fact, we have the natural desire to offer mercy when we experience the merciful love of the Father for ourselves" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 24).

Francisco Salvador, president of the executive committee of Cursillo's worldwide organization OMCC, referred to the pope's comments May 1.

"Based on its original charism," he said, "the Cursillo Movement presented a proposal for a conversion and a challenge to holiness in normality ... Holiness for men and women, in the simplicity of their daily living testimony ... Being a saint at home, being a saint in the workplace, and being a saint in society ... Being a saint wearing a suit and tie, or a worker's blue suit.

“By promoting the encounter with oneself, with Christ, and the inevitable encounter with the others,” he said, “the Cursillo transforms the lives of thousands of men and women, and helps to sanctify the world, evangelizing both the environments and the lives. The Movement only loses efficacy when it separates itself from the charism ... that being a person-to-person evangelization, through friendship, in order to ferment the Gospel in all environments.”

History

Cursillo came to the Lincoln Diocese 50 years ago, with its first three-day weekend July 22-25, 1965.

Born out of a spirit of renewal in the Church that preceded the Second Vatican Council, the Cursillo movement originated in Spain in the early 1940s, which is why many Cursillo terms are of Spanish origin.

Bishop Juan Hervas of Mallorca and a young layman, Eduardo Bonnin, were the two primary leaders of the first Cursillos in Christianity. The first official Cursillo was held in 1944, and has since spread throughout the world.

The first Cursillo in the United States took place in May 1957, when Spanish Air Cadets who were in the United States for training held a weekend in Waco, Texas, for a group of Spanish-speaking men. The movement spread rapidly throughout the United States. Cursillo also provided the catalyst for such movements as Marriage Encounter, Teens Encounter Christ (TEC), Christians Encounter Christ, Residents Encounter Christ (REC), and KAIROS, each of which addressed the needs of a specific group.

Cursillo formally came to the Lincoln Diocese in July 1965, when the first men’s three-day Cursillo weekend was held at Pius X High School in Lincoln. A team from the Omaha Archdiocese led this first Cursillo. Prior to this weekend, a number of priests and laypersons from the Lincoln Diocese had lived cursillos in other dioceses (or areas of the world), and they assisted the Omaha team in putting on the first Cursillo in the Lincoln Diocese.

Following the July 1965 weekend, the priest who brought Cursillo into the Lincoln Diocese was assigned to further his education at Catholic University in Washington, D.C. In spite of his absence, Cursillo continued to grow in that a number of priests, sisters, and laypersons went outside the Lincoln Diocese to live Cursillo Weekends. In addition, some cursillistas from the Lincoln Diocese became part of the teams putting on weekends in neighboring dioceses.

Following an April 1968 meeting between Bishop Glennon Flavin, who was installed as Bishop of Lincoln in August 1967, and cursillistas in the Lincoln Diocese, the bishop appointed a diocesan spiritual advisor for the Cursillo movement. Those cursillistas who had lived their weekend in the Lincoln Diocese in 1965 and those who had gone elsewhere during the three-year hiatus, then met and formed a “Secretariat,” a group of Cursillo leaders who implement the movement according to norms and guidelines established by the National Secretariat.

In early September 1968, a meeting of all interested cursillistas was held to announce a School of Leaders (as it is known today). The School of Leaders began formally meeting for a series of workshops every Monday evening, with regular attendance of 35 to 40. Once formation had begun through School of Leaders, The second men’s Cursillo weekend was held in May 1969 and the first women’s Cursillo was held in October 1969, with both still being directed by teams from outside the Lincoln Diocese (Council Bluffs).

The Lincoln Diocese first formed its own teams for the third men’s Cursillo in December 1969 and the second women’s Cursillo in April 1970, and since then, more than 1,000 persons have lived Cursillo weekends in the Lincoln Diocese.

John Springer is the lay director of the Cursillo movement in the Lincoln Diocese and [Father Mark Seiker](#) of [St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in North Platte](#) is the spiritual advisor. To know more about Cursillo, please contact John at (402) 826-2699.

RSVP

To attend the June 28 celebration at the John XXIII Diocesan Center in Lincoln, attendees are asked to RSVP by June 18; meal reservations cannot be accepted after this date. There is a discounted price for early reservations. Seating for the banquet is limited, so early reservations are encouraged.