

# Introducing Cursillo



## What is Cursillo

Cursillo was first gifted to the Anglican Diocese of Wellington in 1988 from the Brisbane Diocese in Australia as part of a world-wide movement of the Christian Church which aims to "Change the Environments" through small Christian communities committed to living and spreading the Gospel.

Today this local "Mission Movement" offers a method by which our relationship with Jesus may be developed, lived out with the support of other Christians, and used by God to change the world about us. This is the true calling of a Matthew 22:37-39 experience.

## Our Aims

This ministry offers a method by which our relationship with God may be developed, lived out with the support of other Christians, and used by God to change the world about us. Cursillo aims to inspire, challenge and equip us as church members for Christian action in our homes, communities, fellowships and places of work and leisure. The name CURSILLO reflects its Spanish origins, its full title being "Cursillo de Cristiandad" which means 'short course in living Christianity'.

## The Cursillo Movement

Involvement in the "Cursillo Movement" begins with a three-day "live-in" (usually from Thursday evening to Sunday evening). These three days are spent in studying, discussing, worshipping together in a structured programme of talks by lay people and clergy. In addition there are discussions, music and other activities centred on a daily Eucharist. Many people find that after this shared experience, Christian living takes on a new dimension with a fresh awareness of God's love and purpose for each one of us where we live and work. Those who have completed the "Three Days" also usually share a common understanding and purpose thereafter. About 25 pilgrims attend any Three-Day Cursillo and there is usually a waiting list. Cursillo is led predominantly by lay people but is dependent upon encouragement and support of the clergy. Unlike a spiritual retreat your Three-Day Cursillo is made only once.

"Cursillo is a movement of the Church which, with its own method, makes it possible to live what is fundamental for being a Christian, in order to create nuclei of Christians who all engage in seasoning their environments with the Gospel, helping to discover and achieve their personal vocation." Firstly, Cursillo is intended to help Christians learn and live what is fundamental to being a Christian. And, secondly, having done that, to help these same Christians discover and live out a personal calling.

Another familiar way to express this same two-fold idea is that Cursillo is intended to make saints and apostles. Saints are people who know God, who know God's love and grace, and who live their lives from this relationship. Apostles are saints who have a mission or calling to share that same knowledge with others.

Cursillo attempts to reach its two-fold goal by:

1. Helping Christians plumb the depths of their faith to find its reality and richness;
2. Inspiring Christians to get on with their mission in the world by hearing and heeding God's call;
3. Connecting Christians to networks of other Christians that will enable them to carry out their mission;
4. Holding up examples of everyday Christians who are acting as "apostles" in their ordinary life settings.

## Who is Cursillo for?

It is for any baptised person active in the Anglican Church who is at least 20 years of age. Cursillo is for growing Christians who are open to experience the grace and love of God in new ways through a Christian community. In particular, it is for those who are prepared to commit themselves to make a difference in their world as a result of this experience.

## What happens afterwards?

As one of the founders of Cursillo once said: "It is possible to encounter God in many ways other than Cursillo, encountering God is easy, it is following Christ afterwards that is the problem." The focus and strength of the Cursillo Movement lies well beyond the three days – it's about the rest of our life by...

- Expanding your spiritual life through study and congregational participation, and

- Becoming more active as a disciple of Christ in the world around us, usually through the local church.
- To nurture discipleship, the movement offers specific opportunities.
  - A small "group reunion" that briefly meets, often weekly, to provide mutual support and maintain spiritual accountability
  - Regular occasional gatherings for larger fellowship and encouragement
  - Opportunities and training to take part in and lead future Cursillo activities
  - Further periodic short courses to deepen understanding of the Cursillo Movement.

## The Cursillo Movement

There are three stages to the work of Cursillo. They are:

- the Pre-Cursillo,
- the 3 Day Cursillo, and
- the Post-Cursillo.

### 1. The Pre-Cursillo

This is the enquiry and preparation stage. It is usual for a person to be invited to attend a Cursillo. Each person (pilgrim) is sponsored to a 3 Day Cursillo, so in the Pre-Cursillo a pilgrim is 'prepared' through being involved in activities that help them understand the Cursillo Movement. Men and women attend separate Cursillo.

### 2. The Three Days

The Cursillo begins one evening and continues through the next three days. These three days are made up of a series of talks and meditations, all of which are intended to focus the pilgrim on "what is fundamental for being a Christian". The Cursillo is conducted by a team of lay persons and some clergy. Central to the Three Days are the sacraments, particularly the Eucharist.

The outcome of the Three Days should be a realisation on the part of each pilgrim that:

- (a) Christian witness is not an option, but a commission. (Matthew 28:19)
- (b) Each of us has a part to play in that witness. (1Cor 12:27)
- (c) Each of us needs to be linked with others to be effective in our witness. (John 15:4)
- (d) We can find that "linkage" in what is called the Fourth Day - the rest of our life following our Cursillo! (2Timothy 2:2)



Cursillo is designed to be experienced, and that makes it difficult to describe. It is an opportunity to live for a short time in Christian community, distancing ourselves from the pressures of the outside world. It is not all listening, learning and work. There is a climate of joy and expectancy throughout. The talks are interspersed with discussion, prayer, worship, songs, laughter and times of reflection and silence.

### 3. The Post-Cursillo

Cursillo exists to provide an apostolic calling with tools to strengthen this witness to others. Cursillo offers Christian Community or Group Reunion. This is simply a group of Cursillistas (3 to 5 people) who meet together briefly but regularly, to pray together and to plan ways in which they can carry out their witness, giving an account to one another of the progress made or where they find they need prayer and direction. Cursillo also offers *Utreya* (a Spanish word which was a pilgrim's call to "persevere"). They draw the smaller Group Reunions into one large gathering for encouragement on the Christian journey. None of the activities of the Post-Cursillo are intended to become a replacement for regular local church involvement. *They are an equipping adjunct to local fellowship and never to create an exclusive clique.*

### Day of Deeper Understanding

Following the 3 Day Cursillo weekend pilgrims are strongly encouraged to attend a Day of Deeper Understanding. These take place on a Saturday the date of which is advised at the Cursillo 3 days. They are an integral part of the Cursillo process and are designed to enable Cursillistas to understand better the strategy and methods of the movement and how to use it more effectively in "changing the environment" for Christ. (Mark 9:50)

### How do I apply?

You first need a sponsor. This is someone who has already attended a Three-Day Cursillo and who will undertake to explain, pray for you, and assist in involving you in the movement. The Vicar of your parish must also give consent and endorse your application. In the case of a priest, the Bishop counter-signs the application form.

## What does a Three-Day Cursillo Cost?

There is no application fee. The total cost per person includes accommodation, meals and materials have been donated to you by past pilgrims, and you are offered the opportunity to do the same when you attend. Your sponsor has the current cost for such a weekend and your gift would be appreciated for future Cursillo pilgrims. No one is ever denied the chance to attend because of lack of finance.

## Is Cursillo for you?

- Are you baptised, and a communicant member of the Anglican Church?
- Do you have a growing faith and wish to live out that faith in the everyday world?
- Are you friendly, a good listener and one likely to influence others?
- Do you wish to be involved in a Movement which helps people to be better equipped for the work of representing Christ in the wider community?

If you can answer "Yes" to each of the above then Cursillo could be for you.

Cursillo is not ecumenical. In New Zealand it is found predominantly in the Anglican denomination. The first Catholic Cursillo weekend has recently been held in Auckland. It is operated as a separate identity within each Diocese under the direction of the Diocesan Bishop. A person's application to attend a 3 Day Cursillo must be endorsed by the Vicar of his/her Parish, or, in the case of a priest, the Bishop.

## What Cursillo is not

1. A Para-church organisation. Cursillo is not an organisation as such - it is a movement within the Church. What is distinctive about Cursillo is "its own method". It functions in small groups of Christians who meet regularly and frequently to pray for, support and encourage one another in their Christian obligation to be witnesses to Christ
2. A parish renewal programme. Cursillo does provide spiritual renewal for many people as they experience an encounter with Christ during a 3 Day Cursillo, and this is a bonus to parish life. However, the goal is not to provide more persons to commit themselves to more jobs in the parish, but to assist parishes in their Christian outreach into the community.
3. A body of the spiritually elite. From the beginning, Cursillo has sought to be a kind of servant community within the Church, bringing together people who are awake to the need to be active witnesses to Jesus Christ and who actually carry their witness into everyday environments where they find themselves.
4. A problem solver. People suffering from personal crises should be catered for by the more traditional resources which the Church offers.

## Sponsorship

Each person who attends a 3 Day Cursillo is sponsored. The sponsor must reside in the person's parish or area. The role of the sponsor is to support, encourage and offer practical help (where necessary) to their pilgrim. It is a role that the sponsor enters into seriously in order that the pilgrim may be able to understand clearly all that the Cursillo Movement provides.



## In summary....

We recall the many friendships, the music, the laughter, the tears, and that great sense of being part of a special community in a spirit-filled environment. Our Cursillo summary could easily turn into a sales pitch for the Cursillo "weekend".

But that would be to miss the main point of Cursillo which is the Fourth Day, and especially the Group Reunion (small group meetings). Weekends are great, but weekends end and then we must leave the comfortable surroundings we have been enjoying and return to the "real world" where life goes on. The point of Cursillo is not to put on great weekends. It is to provide a method for our living a Christian pattern of life in the world "where life goes on". That pattern- framed in our Rule of life- will be most successfully followed when we live alongside a group of other engaged Christians who can provide one another with encouragement, support, accountability and companionship.

## Testimony

"I was initially unsure of the weekend and what Cursillo was all about but that changed as I experienced God's love for me through those attending. At the weekend I saw real Christian Community actively working in the leadership and others there. The times of worship and community prayer showed me a side of Jesus in the people around me." Now in hindsight the most important part about this ministry was not the weekend but that

will always be the starting point. It's in the ability to allow me to walk the journey with others well past that point in time. I am spiritually stronger for the continuing journey with other Cursillistas. My love for Jesus continues to grow as I learn to rub shoulders with His family. De Colores (Proverbs 27:17)

*From, John Roche, Diocesan Lay Director (2013)  
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**For more information:**

# Wellington Diocese Anglican Cursillo Directory

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