



A Cursillo National Document

HISTORY OF CURSILLO

Cursillo is a fairly recent movement in the Christian Church. Its beginning was in Majorca, Spain, in the early 1940's. It did not develop by accident. It began when a group of men dedicated themselves to bringing the young men of their island of Majorca, Spain, to know Christ better.

It developed as they prayed and worked together, sharing their thoughts about the state of the world and the effectiveness of their efforts to bring the light of Christ to it. When the Spanish Civil war ended in 1939 it was a time of ferment in the Spanish Church. Before the war a great pilgrimage to the Shrine of St James at Compostela had been planned. This shrine had been a focal point for the Christian faith during the Middle Ages. After several postponements due to the second World War, this pilgrimage was re-scheduled for 1948.

Preparation for the pilgrimage provided a focus for the activities that led to the development of Cursillo and helped set this tone. The spirit of pilgrimage is often a spirit of restlessness, of dissatisfaction with spiritual luke-warmness, of moving onward. It is also a spirit of comradeship among fellow pilgrims who are striving together to reach the common goal of a life fully given to the love of God and humanity. This pilgrim style has come to mark much of the spirituality of the Cursillo Movement and gives it much of its distinctive character.

Those who first developed the Cursillo Movement worked together in harmony as a team from the very beginning. They prayed together, shared their Christian lives together, studied together, planned together, acted together and evaluated what they had done together. Together they worked at the task of forming Christian life among the young people of Majorca. Out of their common efforts, something new in the life of the Christian Church was born.

Cursillo is obviously a Spanish word and it means "a short course". It is not a religious word and it is possible to hold a Cursillo in virtually any subject that one would care to name. A Cursillo, as we conduct it, is a "short course in Christian Living". In fact, this is Cursillo in the narrow sense for Cursillo in the Christian sense is much more than that, as we hope to reveal over this weekend.

The first Cursillo or "short course" was given in the late 1940's and developed through until the mid-1950's in Majorca. During this time the main outline of the Cursillo method was shaped and refined.

The movement spread as a Roman Catholic renewal to the mainland of Spain – at first not without opposition, then to the Spanish-speaking South Americas, and finally to North America in 1957.

By the mid 70's the Episcopal Church in U.S.A., and the Anglican Church in Canada, had embraced the movement and given it an Anglican flavour, while retaining all that is fundamental and basic to the original concept.

The movement, while sometimes referred to as a Lay movement, is in fact a movement of the whole Church. It involves priests and people together as the *Laos*, the whole people of God. It has a mentality and a method as we shall discover.

The first Anglican Cursillos in this part of the world were held in Australia in September and October 1979, in Diocese of Goulburn.

In 1987, representatives of the various Anglican Dioceses met in Grafton where it was decided to form a National Secretariat for the Cursillo Movement, and to call the movement the Anglican Cursillo Movement of Australia.

In May 1987 Archbishop Brian Davis invited Brisbane Diocese to establish Cursillo in New Zealand. In June 1988 two teams of men and women (40 people in all) travelled to New Zealand for a period of almost four weeks and conducted four Cursillos in the Diocese of Wellington.

In the 30 years since then, Cursillo has spread to the Dioceses of Christchurch (1996), Waikato-Taranaki (1997), Dunedin (2000), and most recently Waiapu (2011).

Cursillo is not a club or a cult. It is not a secret society.

It is a *movement*, a movement which began in Spain in the ferment of renewal. It retains some terms in Spanish to identify it, and as a mark of honour and gratitude for its origins. If some things seem a little strange to you, bear with us; they seemed strange to us at first!

There is nothing dull about a Cursillo Three Days. It is full of work enjoyed in the name of Jesus Christ. It is a joyful workshop in the fundamentals of our Christian faith.

But let's be clear. A Cursillo is not a "Three Day Wonder" solving all the problems of the Church and society. Rather it aims to send people out to be more aware of living as Christians in their environments, Monday to Saturday. It is an encounter with Jesus Christ and an experience of being part of a Christian community.

So, we have only one aim over these three days, to be in company with our Lord and to share Him with you. For this reason, your Cursillo should be characterized by a spirit of love and generosity and openness to God. God can do great things with us over these next three days!