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Joseph C. Leshock

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THE DOCTOR PRESCRIBED A CURSILLO

JOSEPH C. LESHOCK, M.D.

Since the primary purpose of Catholic Physicians' Guilds is to improve the spirituality of its individual members, it behooves the officers and directors of these groups to appraise any movement which will promote this primary end. The Cursillo Movement magnifies and vivifies the basic eternal teachings of the Church and induces a profound increase in the life of grace in the soul. Therefore, it is mandatory that we evaluate this for possible use within the framework of our individual Guilds. Further impetus is given by the fact that a doctor was primarily responsible for its inception, development and growth.

Specifically, the word *Cursillo* is Spanish and means a short course of lectures. The *Cursillo Christianidad*, therefore, means a short course of lectures on Christianity. This, then, is the substance of a Cursillo, a series of lectures on Christianity during which there is a profound, constant, and overwhelming attention to the life of grace in the individual soul. In a limited sense, we Americans may compare the Cursillo to a retreat. However, in a retreat the work of the priest is two-fold—to teach the doctrine of the Church and to convince the retreatants that the Catholic way of life is the happiest and best way of life for them. In a Cursillo, the Priest's conferences cover the doctrine, while lay helpers do the convincing for the retreat-

ants. Fully two-thirds of the lectures are given by lay "professors." Instead of retreat silence prevailing, the "free time" at a Cursillo is filled with stimulating conversation, discussion and analysis among the participants, together with happy spirited song.

The history of the Cursillo dates back to 1944 on Majorca, a Mediterranean island off the coast of Spain. Dr. Edward Bonnin, a practicing psychiatrist on the island, was deeply disturbed by the religious apathy among the people of that area. Through his efforts, a group of some thirty laymen and priests were organized to seek a better way to bring about a more Christ-centered life among the islanders. In working with the Bishop of Majorca, the Most Reverend Juan Hervas, it was decided that a Cursillo would best achieve their purposes since this would combine both the elements of a retreat with actual lectures in Christianity. For the next five years Dr. Bonnin and his group labored intensely to develop their project into a complete and well-planned program.

By 1949 it was established, the lay-professors were well trained and integrated into the procedure with the priests, and this first apostolic group was ready to follow the admonition of Christ in going forth and really teaching. The first Cursillo Christianidad was held at the San Honorato Monastery and was attended by twenty-nine

islanders. Three days later the Cursillo was successfully concluded. Catapulted from this insignificant beginning, it was repeated eighty times during the next three years, inducing a marvelous new religious vitality on Majorca. Under the apostolic direction of Dr. Bonnín who constantly emphasized that this Movement was not intended to supplant the work of any Church group or institution but rather to bring a new vigor to all such endeavors, nevertheless, it did spread throughout all Spanish-speaking countries in Europe and South and Central America.

In May 1957, two Spanish air force officers, Augustine Polomino and Bernard Vadell, both Cursillistas, were assigned to the U. S. Air Force Base in Waco, Texas for training. They were appalled at the religious apathy of the Spanish-speaking residents of the area, and imbued with grace from their Cursillo in Spain, they were moved to effective action. A Cursillo was organized and the Movement immediately spread throughout Texas; soon every diocese in the State was organizing its own group. From this beginning the Cursillo has reached many sections of our country and in each place has left the tell-tale sign of a vitalized, apostolic laity.

The Cursillo itself is usually attended by some forty to sixty men who live together for three days in an atmosphere of joy, prayer, and brotherhood; the entire group is divided into smaller

groups of approximately ten men who work together in studying the substance of the lectures. Five lectures are given each day on specific topics of Christianity by laymen who are trained for their work; these are the professors; the remainder are given by the priest conducting the Cursillo. There is complete participation by all men in the study of every lecture, utilizing all methods of learning. There is daily Mass and Communion, and frequent recourse to the help of our Lord in visits to the Blessed Sacrament.

Much could be said about the magnificent and manifold fruits of the Cursillo, but such laudatory expressions are inevitably cast in the role of exaggeration by the average listener. It may suffice to say that the glow of grace, joy, enthusiasm, and zeal resembles that of Pentecost Sunday, when "There were added to the Church that day 3,000 persons."

Detailed information regarding the Cursillo Movement may be obtained from the following Cursillo centers:

Phoenix Cursillo Center
909 E. Washington St.
Phoenix 34, Arizona
The *Ultreya* Magazine

Saginaw Cursillo Center
St. Joseph's Church
606 E. 6th St.
Saginaw, Michigan
The *De Colores* Magazine