



A History of Cursillo (Including Tasmania)

The Cursillo Movement is a movement, which originated in the Catholic Church. The name Cursillo, is Spanish, meaning short course and is often associated with a 3-Day weekend - which is only one aspect of the Cursillo Movement. The proper name is Cursillo de Cristiandad (short course of Christianity). There is much more to the Cursillo Movement than just a 3-Day weekend.

This Movement evolved from Spain, where it got its origin, in the 1940s. The Cursillo Movement did not develop by accident. It began when a group of men dedicated themselves to bringing the young men of their city of Majorca, Spain, to know Christ better. It developed as they prayed and worked together; it developed as they talked together, sharing their thoughts about the state of the world and the effectiveness of their efforts to bring the light of Christ to it. On the natural level alone the story of the Cursillo Movement is exciting. It's a story filled with the adventure of new discoveries and works of outstanding dedication, tragic misunderstandings and setbacks, as well as impressive patience. These young men and the clergy who supported them endured many unpromising situations in the faith that God would work.

But it is even more an exciting story on the spiritual level. It is the story of how God taught a group of men how to work for Him in an effective way, a way that bears fruit. In January 1949 the first Cursillo was given and the Cursillo Movement began. Those who make Cursillo's today would find much of the first Cursillo familiar. The Cursillo has been refined and changed somewhat, but today's Cursillo weekend remains basically the same as those first Cursillos.

It was, however, no accident that the first Cursillo was so fully formed that a movement could begin from that date. The first Cursillo was neither a lucky accident nor a blueprint that came directly from heaven, but grew out of a process of development. Nor were the first leaders just a chance collection of men. They had been working together for some time trying to bring men to Christ so they could work together to Christianise the world.

But the Cursillo, on the other hand, was not just a well worked out human product. It grew in the climate of spiritual renewal. It was developed by men of prayer who were seeking to serve the Lord. It was formed by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit working in men who had dedicated themselves to bringing others to a knowledge of Christ.

The first stirrings of what later was to become the Cursillo Movement began on the Island of Majorca during World War II. The Spanish Civil War had ended in 1939, and the years after the Civil War were a time of ferment in the Spanish Church. Before the war, a pilgrimage to the shrine of St. James at Compostela had been planned. This spiritual journey to the great Spanish pilgrimage centre of the Middle Ages would provide a time for the young men and women of Spain to dedicate themselves in renewed way to the work of the apostolate. After being postponed several times by the disruption of war, it was finally rescheduled for 1948. The pilgrimage set a tone. The spirit of pilgrimage is a spirit of restlessness, of dissatisfaction with spiritual lukewarmness, of moving onward. It is also a spirit of brotherhood among fellow pilgrims who are striving together to reach the goal of a life fully given to the love of God and man. The pilgrim

style has marked much of the spirituality of the Cursillo Movement. The first Cursillo in the United States was held in Waco, Texas, in 1957. The key figure in the beginning were Father Gabriel Fernandez and two airmen from Spain, Bernardo Vadell and Agustin Palomino, who were training with the United States Air Force. Father Gabriel had arrived in Waco in 1955 from Spain where he had made his three days under two of the founders of the movement, Father Juan Capo and Eduardo Bonin. The priest and the airmen were responsible for putting on the first two weekends in Waco.

Airmen Vadell and Palomino were transferred to Mission, Texas, just after they had completed the second weekend in Waco. By late 1957 the travelling airmen had put on the first weekend in Mission. In 1958 they started a centre in Laredo, Texas, and soon after, the movement was introduced in Corpus Christi.

In 1959, the Cursillo spread throughout Texas and to Phoenix, Arizona. In August of that year the first national convention of spiritual directors was held, and Cursillo magazine began publication. In 1960, the growth of the Cursillo quickened in the South-west, and weekend's were held for the first time in the East in New York City and Lorain, Ohio.

Until 1961, all weekends were held in Spanish. That year the first English-speaking weekend was held in San Angelo, Texas. Also in 1961, first weekends were held in San Francisco, California; Gary, Indiana; Lansing, Michigan; and Gallup, New Mexico. By 1962, twenty-five more English-speaking weekends had been held.

In 1962 the Cursillo Movement came to the Eastern United States. Weekends were held in Cincinnati, Brooklyn, Saginaw, Miami, Chicago, Detroit, Newark, Baltimore, Grand Rapids, Kansas City and Boston. In the West, the first weekends were held in Monterey, Sacramento, Los Angeles, Pueblo and Yakima.

The movement spread rapidly with the early centres carrying the Cursillo to nearby dioceses. As of 1981, almost all of the 160 Catholic dioceses in the United States introduced the Cursillo Movement.

But the movement did not remain in the Catholic Church. It has its equivalents in the Anglican Communion, amongst the Lutherans, the Methodists and Presbyterians, and in our own Uniting Church.

The first official Cursillo Weekend in the Episcopal Church (in English) was conducted with help from Roman Catholic sponsors in the Diocese of Iowa. From this beginning, the movement spread through the Episcopal Church of the United States and the Anglican Church in Canada. It was well established by the mid seventies.



Cursillo was first introduced to the Anglican Church in Australia when it was brought by Canada to the diocese of Canberra and Goulburn in October 1979, with the help of the Catholic Cursillo movement of this country. In 1988, Canberra Goulburn were invited to take Cursillo to the Diocese of Gippsland.

Arnold Osborne (was living in Hobart until his death, on 24 Apr 2012, aged 92) and his wife Jean (Dec.) were part of M1 & W1 in Goulburn. Arnold, as acting Archdeacon of Hobart, recommended that Bishop Newell bring Cursillo to Tasmania. **The first Anglican Cursillos in Tasmania were held between September 21 and October 6, in**

1995 at Ulverstone and New Norfolk. There were 56 participants who came from 23 parishes throughout the diocese. They joined the group of 26 Anglicans who had already attended a Cursillo and now lived in Tasmania. Of the total, 15 were clergy. The Cursillos were conducted by a team of 32 Anglicans from the Diocese of Gippsland 16 each of men and women who had been preparing for the event for nearly a year. They came by sea and air and stayed for 18 days at their own expense. Not only was this a most generous gesture of love for Tasmanian Anglicans but also an enthusiastic and caring expression of faith they shared with the participants.

Gifts were received by the new movement here from Cursillo Movements in Rockhampton, Brisbane, Sydney, Armidale, Canberra and Goulburn, as well as \$1,000 from Gippsland. Greetings were also received from most of the 15 Cursillo Movements in Dioceses in Australia and New Zealand.

Since these days, Cursillo has continued to flourish in our island state. In 1995, the Bishop appointed Peter Johnson as Lay Director and Max Jones as the Spiritual Director. Also on the secretariat were, Pat Crawshaw, Sandra Pitt, Keiron Mills, Michael Preece, Sheila Holmes, Lynne Bowditch and Dennis O'Donnell. **In 1997, the first, ALL Tasmanian Cursillos, were run**, and by 1998, from our small beginnings, the number of Cursillistas in the state exceeded 200. By 2009 over 500 people had made their Cursillo in Tasmania.

Through Cursillo, we have a wonderful opportunity to share an experience that has crossed the boundaries of nations, languages and denominations – an opportunity that should not be missed!

