

Pre-Cursillo – Candidate Selection

Cursillo is a means of providing leaders for the Christian Community and candidates for Cursillo should be capable of leadership. This does not mean only the obvious leaders, but also those who by their quiet words to friends or by the example of their lives are able to lead people to God. It is necessary to study the environments, the groups that compose them, and to identify the individuals who are already functioning as the backbone of their environments – they should be our first choice! They are those persons whose opinions “count” and whose attitudes “move”: they do not make use of authority; it’s just something they do because they can’t help themselves.

The only way we can interest potential candidates to experience Cursillo is by living a conscious and growing life of grace through personal contact on a regular basis and establishing a sincere friendship with the person. **This process takes time.** Discussing Cursillo in all of the friendship groups and organizations to which we belong as well as anytime someone wonders why we do what we do; these are great opportunities to generate interest in Cursillo. Our goal is that our life choices clearly demonstrate how living the Cursillo method has helped us to become more apostolic and passionate especially in looking for opportunities to serve others.

Some basic criteria to consider for potential candidates:

- Are they open to discern and understand the Gospel Message?
- Do they have a commitment to the love of God, of oneself, and of one’s neighbor; to live in and for the community-in Christ, with Christ and for Christ?
- Are they open to discovering their talents and potential with a view towards serving the community?
- Are they able to receive the sacraments?
- Do they possess an attitude of progressive conversion, of transformation?
- Have they strength of character and self-control; able to make their own decisions; and are responsible?
- Do they demonstrate their desire to be part of something by their activities/actions within the parish or larger community?
- Give consideration to their health and age/vitality quotient

I am not at all certain that if I would have been asked the above or evaluated according to those guidelines, I would have been invited to make a Cursillo! And yet over time I have discovered the answers are yes to some degree or another!

The vital questions we need to ask ourselves regarding “friends” whom we have identified:
Have I brought my potential candidate to God?

Do I know the person or just know about the person?

Does “my” person demonstrate a seeking attitude in his/her relationship with God?

Is he/she trying to grow?

Are they looking for opportunities for apostolic action and evangelization?

Is this person interested in a serious commitment or a weekend ‘kick?’

What drew me to this person/what do I like about them/am I uncomfortable during any interactions with them?

Have I been forthcoming that a Cursillo weekend is only the beginning of a lifelong journey which takes time, commitment, and willingness to be in community? If you really explore these questions, it will force you into discussions with your friend that will bring out true attitudes of seeking.

I asked fellow Cursillistas to share reflections on the success or failure of identifying, befriending and sponsoring. I discovered some very good practices to share with you as well as thoughts on failures—those candidates who either did not choose to continue after the weekend and even a couple who ran as fast as they could to get away from Cursillo.

- 1) Take someone out to lunch for 1 on 1 private discussion;
- 2) Consider using an outline based upon the Sponsor's guide and your own experience to direct the discussion;
- 3) Giving a copy of the "Cursillo-What is it" booklet is an excellent way to follow through on the discussion.
- 4) Work through your group reunion discussing possible candidates and then have 1 or more members and their spouse(s) agree to initiate an approach to begin or more pointedly cultivate a friendship.
- 5) Sharing some of the aspects of the weekend can be helpful to alleviate concerns or prevent misunderstandings.
- 6) Often it has proved beneficial to invite a prospective candidate to join a small group reunion or attend an Ultreya.
- 7) Cursillistas witnessing to how their lives have been enriched and transformed by Cursillo is a powerful tool. A dinner or other casual get together is a great way to passionately share this with both husband and wife (when applicable).
- 8) Although there are exceptions [and we have a couple here today], most married candidates are far more likely to participate in 4th day activities and be active in the Cursillo community when they each have made the commitment and understand the dedication of the other.

[It's important to understand the dynamic driving the very strong recommendation that both husband and wife embrace Cursillo. I know of more than one example where commitment to grouping has been difficult when the non-Cursillo spouse plans activities for the same time so the Cursillista is forced to choose between Cursillo and husband or wife-not a desirable position to be in-especially when it becomes commonplace. That situation resulted in one committed Cursillista to just opt out entirely.

The Leader's Manual clearly emphasizes that although a Sponsor is the friend and primary contact, the reunion of the Leaders (in the School of Leaders) should include the plans, successes, and failures of dealing with the persons in those environments who are being prepared through personal contact. The Manual further describes the Pre Cursillo as a time of apostolic activity of a living community to the extent that dealing with things entrusted to us by God, we should plan before doing. The objective should not simply be to get these key people to live a Cursillo but to help them become an integral part of the Post Cursillo afterward so that they may be a seed of Christian growth in their environments. Throughout the Leader's Manual the message is to approach candidate selection as a well thought out planned assault (!) in which many persons participate and then trust in the Holy Spirit.

Additionally as one Cursillista discovered, timing can be everything. "Several men that I knew very well and who are very devout Catholics refused an offer to even discuss Cursillo. Perhaps I should have chosen a better time or situation to broach the subject or maybe been more subtle. These were cases where I wrongly **assumed** the person would be interested."

Personally I failed not once but twice – I knew *about* the persons, but I *did not know* them. I relied on my own judgement rather than seeking counsel from the Lord and others who may have known them better, others who could encourage me to be patient and 'put in the time' to really be a friend. Another Cursillista described an epic failure that permeated the entire weekend and was the result of bringing a friend to Christ/Cursillo before making a friend and being a friend.

A note taken from Nine Characteristics of the Cursillo Movement: (should strive for) A profound and exact knowledge of modern man, of their problems and their anguish. Learned from living in an environment which the Gospel must "leaven". This is no less true now than during Bonin's years

'perfecting' the Cursillo method BUT the landscape has changed dramatically. It is far more toxic, divided and desperately in need of being leavened everywhere we look!

Once you understand your friend's home situation, job requirements and other commitments that entail a lot of time and effort obstacles may be evident that could make living the 4th Day extremely difficult. In my experience if someone does not become drawn into grouping, Ultreyas, and all that the Cursillo community offers right after their weekend, they don't do it at all. So it may be prudent to evaluate the practicalities regarding your friend and even have a willing candidate wait for opportune life event changes.

Another area to consider: the seemingly 'perfect' candidate who is also 100% invested in a ministry or cause; will he or she be likely to also give intentional effort to the Cursillo community? Piety and study certainly benefit anyone who understands their value, BUT we also need to encourage action directed to sharing and spreading the Cursillo purpose and charism.

There is not a lot of guidance or words of wisdom regarding Edward Bonin's actual targets-the faraway. We have to assume he was speaking of Catholics who were fallen away, silently absent or those who always choose the back pews. In our environments where most folks do not live within walking distance of the Church, grocery store or corner drug store; in an area where Catholics are not the majority, where our neighborhoods are a mixed bag; and a County that is a hybrid of rural and city characteristics, this is no easy task.

We must be extremely vigilant in trying to identify possible candidates who are not already our friends or acquaintances. We may need to rely on someone we know who can help us become acquainted; asking ourselves do we/will we have the opportunity to become friends and are we willing to put forth that effort for this person?

Again from Nine Characteristics of the Cursillo Movement: (Maintain) A firm conviction that it is truly possible that anyone who is living on the fringe of religion, if he or she is hit with a fist full of Grace, would be able to surrender completely to Christ.

Unfortunately in many ways we have a lot more folks on the fringe- not attending Mass either due to valid concerns or the comfortable habit of watching Mass on TV from their couch. We have few if any social gatherings centered around/at church to offer relationships and community. Creative and very intentional befriending may present unfamiliar challenges to this very important process: identify, make a friend, be a friend or deepen a friendship, bring your friend to God, and then if the stars align, bring him or her to Christ through Cursillo.

If we don't choose to commit to this essential process, overcoming the obstacles and do it well, if we aren't fully invested in changing our environments one person at a time, will Cursillo remain viable and thrive in the Diocese of Knoxville? If we don't choose to share and spread this valuable method of living, who else can we count on to spread the Good News and work to bring our country and our world back to being God centered?

The PreCursillo Representative shall study and propose to the Secretariat the plan of establishment of an extension of the Cursillo Movement in the diocese.

During discussion on the By-laws I indicated I was confused about the description of Pre Cursillo responsibilities. Specifically, as the discussion evolved I realized. I want to thank Velma for giving me the opportunity to execute this portion of my job.