

Ever been a part of an organization—workplace, sports team, civic organization—where things just got out of hand? Many people with many ideas, going off in new directions, new rules, new amendments and regulations. Sometimes, an organization just has to say stop, let's get back to basics. Let's trim away the extra things that are confusing our mission. Let's go back to what has always been successful, what we know has always worked.

This is the goal of the Step by Step process. We, as an organization, are reviewing the format of the Cursillo weekends. We seek to improve the way that the 3-day weekends are organized, by going back to the original Cursillo plans that have worked so well, and refocusing our efforts on what has been proven to work.

This process begins by re-examining what we call the foundational charism of Cursillo. What is a charism? Paragraph #798 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church says:

"The Holy Spirit works in many ways to build up the whole body in charity by the many special graces (called Charisms), by which He makes the faithful fit and ready to undertake various tasks and offices for the renewal and building up of the Church."

The Foundational Charism of the Movement would be the special graces given to the founders of Cursillo. Let us then explore once again the familiar story of the start of the Movement.

Most of us have heard that the movement developed out of the Spanish Youth Catholic Action movement. While that is partially true, the initial impetus was actually an address given by Pope Pius XII on Feb.6, 1940 where he acknowledged that there were a great number of people who had moved away from the Christian life. He challenged the Church leaders to make every effort possible to bring others back to

Christian values. The reading of this address inspired Eduardo, who at that time was not a member of the Youth Catholic Action, to carry out a thorough and deep study of the problem. Eduardo wrote a paper, which even then in 1940 was named STUDY OF THE ENVIRONMENT, in which he concluded that the world was becoming less and less Christian and consequently, Christians were even less influential in their cultural and social environments. That situation stimulated him to develop the Cursillos Movement that we know today.

The first Cursillo weekend took place on August 19 to 23, 1944 in Cala Figuera. It was the first Cursillo carried out in 3 ½ days. Eduardo Bonnín was the rector. It contained all the structures of the future Cursillos.

There is some controversy as to who, precisely, started the Cursillo movement. While Eduardo Bonnín didn't care who would get credit, he did care that the movement would stay true to the Foundational Charism. In "Historia de Un Carisma" Eduardo states:

"It is not through a desire to be recognized as the lead player, but rather in the service of the truth and to clarify concepts and events, that we (Secretariat of Mallorca) have found it opportune to make available to people interested in the Cursillo Movement, what occurred in the beginning, and in this light to make it clearer, always counting on the grace of God, that we have tried to be faithful to the intention with which the Cursillos were proposed, prayed, reflected, structured, and for which we give thanks!"

I think that this point cannot be emphasized too strongly. The Cursillo weekend format was not quickly thrown together by some Mallorcan men in a haphazard fashion. Reflection, prayer, and the invoking of the Holy Spirit at every step insured that the end result was something that gave glory and honor to God, for the spiritual development of the faithful.

Thus, we can see that it was important for those early Cursillo leaders to stay faithful to the weekend format, the product of such prayer, study, and reflection, as guided by the Holy Spirit. All of us can attest to the power of the spirit at work on those weekends, so that is definitely something worth preserving!

Over the decades since the Cursillo weekends were introduced, there have been changes and additions to the weekend format. These changes, additions to and subtractions from, the format had been done with the best of intentions. If you have been a part of the movement for some time, some of these may sound familiar to you.

Remember Holiness, Formation, and Evangelization? Many of us, back in the 1990s, experienced this change from the original tripod of Piety, Study and Action. We all got new service sheets with the new wording, and tried to get used to the new terms. Over time, and as a result of the effort to return to the foundational charism (or the way that it was done originally), the movement went back to the original Piety, Study and Action. This was more than a little confusing to those of us in the movement—what are those leaders at National up to, anyway?

Some of us who experienced a Cursillo weekend in other dioceses can remember some parts of the three day weekend that are absent from the weekends we have been a part of here in Knoxville. In the Diocese of Palm Beach, where I made my weekend, the outside community was encouraged to join in the kitchen to help with cooking. The team and the candidates were also served by members of the outside community. The Saturday night meal was followed by something called a serenade, where dozens of members of the community came, all dressed up in suits and formal dresses, to sing Christian hymns to the candidates and team. Maybe those of you from other movements can recall additions to the weekends that were held where you are from.

These additions were beautiful in their own right, and were well-intentioned. These from Palm Beach that I mention, looking back, were an unnecessary distraction. At the clausura, candidates shared that these additions were the highlight of their weekend, instead of the highlights being a deepening of their relationship with Christ. This was surely not the desired result!

Thus, it became important for the US Cursillo movement to get back to the basics. There developed a desire to return to the documents of the original Cursillo weekends, so that we might attempt to return to the foundations of the movement. And so began what became the Step by Step workshops.

I, for one, was surprised to learn that the 3 day manuals of the original Mallorcan Cursillo weekends were not translated into English until quite recently! They had translated bits and pieces into English, but not the whole thing! Finally, a thorough translation was undertaken, which culminated in the Step by Step workbook that we now have available to us.

The Step by Step manuals are being scrutinized by all of the diocesan Cursillo movements of the US. They all recognize the importance of getting back to basics, and to renew and restore the movement to the foundational charism as established by Bonin and the other founders from Mallorca.

We understand that some of the diocesan movements in the US are embracing the Step by Step manual in its entirety, changing the way that they organize their Cursillo weekends completely. Our local movement, however, has decided on a different approach. A committee has been meeting for several months now, evaluating the Step by Step format in light of the way that we have been doing things all along. The committee has tried to discern what changes are

important enough for us to make immediately, and which might be deferred for a time. Those changes which the committee has judged to be important will be presented to this school of leaders, over the next few sessions, for your input and recommendations. Ultimately, the secretariat will decide which of these modifications will be implemented.

This review will be an ongoing process. Our local movement will continue to strive to return as much as possible to the foundation of the 3 day weekend as described in the Step by Step workbook. When we apply changes, we will see if they work on the next men's or women's weekend, and adjust them accordingly.

In chapter VI of his *Spiritual Testament*, Eduardo writes: "If we compare the Cursillo Movement to a tree, we are happy to see that it has grown, but it also hurts us to see that in some places, no doubt with the best of intentions, they have taken the tree of the Cursillos for a Christmas tree and have been hanging lights and decorations - their favorite brilliant ideas – and have gradually been spoiling its clear and simple profile."

Author Fr. Frank Salmani points out that "the Founder was led by the Holy Spirit and the Cursillo Movement is God's gift to us - the Church...To tamper with its essence is to interfere with the work of the Spirit. The Spirit gave us this Movement with its method. We have no right to tamper with it. The Cursillo did not invent what is fundamental to being Christian. We are simply carrying on the mission of Christ, which is the mission of the Church."