THE ROLE OF CLERGY IN CURSILLO

Introduction
Cursillo is a “movement of the Church.” Clergy have specific roles in the Cursillo Movement just as lay people have specific roles. The purpose of this booklet is to outline the role of clergy as part of the Cursillo Movement.

Principles of Cursillo
1. Community based and structured
The center of authority in the Cursillo Movement is the community. It is not located exclusively in either the clergy or the laity. As the Book of Common Prayer (p.855) reminds us, “The ministers of the Church are lay persons, bishops, priests, and deacons.” In the Cursillo Movement, just as it is in the wider Church, all must carry out their proper function within the Body of Christ. Only in this way can persons grow in their understanding and commitment to the ministry which our Lord gives to the whole.

2. A Movement of the Church
For years Cursillo was mistakenly described as a lay movement. From the very beginning, Cursillo was understood to be a “movement of the Church.” As a movement of the Church, it involves all orders of ministry in their appropriate roles. Cursillo often awakens and empowers the laity to their ministry of representing Christ and His Church to the world. However, this does not make Cursillo a lay movement.

3. Cursillo does what is normal for the Church
Cursillo must clearly and authentically conform to the norms of the Church if it is to be a viable movement of the Church. Whatever does not conform to the true nature of the Church has no place in Cursillo. On the other hand, whatever clearly defines and enunciates the nature and work of the Church belongs to Cursillo. Cursillo is...
Sacrament oriented, thereby involving all orders of ministry in their appropriate roles.

4. Clergy have an active role in Cursillo
The role of clergy in Cursillo is no different than the role clergy have in the Church. Bishops are responsible for authorizing and overseeing the work of the Movement in their diocese, and there should be a Pastoral Plan for the Cursillo movement in each diocese which guides the Cursillo movement and the clergy. Priests are charged with teaching, preaching and administering the sacraments. Deacons are called to remind the Church of servant ministry. Each ordained order is expected to function appropriately within the Movement challenging Cursillistas to know, understand, and to be faithful to the Cursillo strategy and method. Clergy also help identify individuals with leadership potential for involvement in the Cursillo movement and clergy endorse those from their congregations who may wish to attend a Cursillo weekend. As in all aspects of the Church’s life and ministry, there is an interdependent relationship between laity and clergy and Cursillo is simply an example of how our various vocations support the work of God’s kingdom.

It is important for clergy to make Cursillo a part of their own apostolic work.

**Piety:** Thanksgiving for the gift which Cursillo is to their ministry, and prayer for its extension and support, as well as providing spiritual support to the movement.

**Study:** Getting to know the depths of Cursillo, through its Literature, especially the National Episcopal Cursillo (NEC) Library

**Action:** Interpreting Cursillo for all Cursillistas and living out the Cursillo Method in their own life especially through Group Reunion, Ultreya and serving as Spiritual advisors to the Movement.

As part of the pastoral role of clergy within Cursillo, clergy serve as shepherds who care, guide, feed, and guard the
flock. Clergy are expected to be a friend just as Jesus was open and modeled friendships. One of the essential roles of clergy is to be the one who inspires the efforts of the Body of Christ, arousing it to get on with the work of Cursillo, while at other times it may be necessary to advise caution to keep it on track.

5. Leadership in Cursillo
The Cursillo Movement’s goal is to identify leaders who have the potential to influence their environments and bring the world to Christ. The understanding of leadership is dynamic and functional, as opposed to structural or organizational. The emphasis is on doing. Both clergy and laity are called to leadership roles within their parishes and within Cursillo. Clergy who have identified Cursillo as part of their apostolic work do not need to wait to be chosen to offer their gifts.

Practicalities
1. Clergy roles in the Movement
Clergy can assume a variety of positions in the Cursillo movement. Some will serve as Diocesan Spiritual Advisors, some as Weekend Spiritual Advisors, while others will serve on Steering Committees, Servant Communities, and Secretariats. For a more complete explanation of these leadership roles see the booklets “Secretariat,” “The Clergy Talk Workbook,”, and others in the NEC Library.

2. Diocesan Spiritual Advisor
The Diocesan Spiritual Advisor is normally selected by the Bishop. The Diocesan Spiritual Advisor is the Bishop’s representative and is charged with overseeing the Movement within the Diocese. This includes seeing that Weekends are authentic (see “The Authentic Three-Day Weekend” booklet), and that the Movement focuses on its tasks of building leaders (see “Servant Community” booklet). Clergy serving in this position should be familiar with the NEC Library, have experience working on Weekends, and be attending Ultreyas regularly.
3. The Three-Day Weekend
The Three-Day Weekend is a Cursillo, that is, a short course in Christianity. The Weekend is built on the tripod of piety, study and action. All elements are combined in a natural context and flow. Sacraments, meditations, and prayers constitute the religious center of the Weekend which reflects the piety leg of the tripod. The talks and discussions at the tables open a way for meaningful dialogue and reflection. Study, and the relationships that grow around table groups and within the whole community, help to flesh out the concepts of Group Reunion and Ultreya and lead to Action. However, the role of the Weekend Spiritual Advisor does not end with the Weekend. For a complete outline of the role of the Weekend Spiritual Advisor see the “The Clergy Talk Workbook”.

4. Establishing the Three-Day Team
a. Team selection and formation are appropriate places to exercise pastoral leadership. A strong leadership team of clergy and laity promotes an authentic weekend experience.

b. When a Lay Weekend Rector and Spiritual Advisor have been chosen for a team, the first order of business is for them to begin to group. This is usually done before any other team members are selected.

c. The relationship between Lay Weekend Rector and Spiritual Advisor is of central importance. Normally, the Lay Weekend Rector is responsible for the external provisions of the team formation such as Weekend arrangements, meetings, schedule, and process. The Spiritual Advisor is responsible for the internal development such as message formation and spiritual progress. Trust and cooperation are essential to ensure a smooth working Weekend.

d. As assistants to these positions are chosen, they too should begin to group. As the team is filled out Group Reunion will mark the distinctive spirituality of the team and the Weekend.
5. Grasping the Flow of the Weekend  
   a. The Spiritual Advisors must take time to fully grasp the script and flow of the Weekend. Clergy need to take seriously their theological task, and should review and explore the theological message of the Weekend. 
      (see the Flow Chart)  
   b. In general terms the flow is from “global” issues (grace, faith etc) to specific issues (Group Reunion, Ultreya, Spiritual Direction). For the role of meditations and clergy talks, see the appropriate sections in “The Clergy Talk Workbook.”  
   c. Clergy need to fully understand the overall message, and each of its parts. In this way, clergy can give sound guidance to the Weekend leadership team, as a whole.  

6. Helping the Team to Grow  
   a. The Lay Weekend Rector and Spiritual Advisor should give careful attention to the selection of the team. See the booklets “Apostolic Message and Team Formation” and “The Clergy Talk Workbook”  
   b. Ensure that Group Reunion is a part of each team meeting  
   c. Inspire the team to give of themselves as an offering to God.  
   d. Challenge team members to reflect on their faith. Make use of the time for preparing and presenting talks as an opportunity for exploring and deepening faith.  
   e. A large part of the Spiritual Advisor’s work is helping the team to see the overall integrity of the Weekend, and how that shapes vital Christian witness and living.  
   f. Spiritual Advisors should be sensitive to all forms of Christian spirituality and discipline. However, they must be committed to the simple outline of spirituality
that Cursillo presents. Team formation and Weekends are not the place for distinctive forms of spirituality such as speaking in tongues or various forms of healing ministry. The goal of forming Christian leaders should be the primary focus of all Weekend piety, study and action.

7. Guiding the Three-Day Weekend
   a. The Lay Weekend Rector and Spiritual Advisor must work closely and in a team effort
   b. Clergy should be open to the gifts and ideas of team member and participants in planning and carrying out liturgical services.
   c. Be available for conferring and counseling team members and participants.
   d. Listen to talks on the Weekend and be alert to any essentials that are not covered or emphasized, making sure that they are theologically correct. Be prepared to fill in any gaps.
   e. Time should be taken with the Lay Weekend Rector and team members to gauge the pulse of the Weekend.
   f. Stay open to participants and team member's fears, trials, joys and the Holy Spirit.

8. Following the Weekend
   a. Continue to meet with the Lay Weekend Rector for a period of time in Group Reunion
   b. Evaluate the effectiveness of the Weekend with the Lay Weekend Rector and any assistant lay rectors to include candidate selection, sponsor participation, team formation, and Fourth Day community support
   c. Report evaluations in writing to the Secretariat.
d. Prepare a letter to be sent to participants to encourage them to begin Grouping, attending Ultreyas, offering Palanca and attending the Servant Community. This letter is a reminder that Cursillo is ongoing and not just a Weekend experience. It should recognize the importance of scheduling a Day of Deeper Understanding and strongly encourage attendance. For more information on Ultreyas and Day of Deeper Understanding, please refer to the NEC library materials.

9. Beyond the Three-Day Weekend
Clergy responsibility does not end with the Three-Day Weekend. Clergy are called to empower and equip saints and apostles to bring the world to Christ. The principles that undergird the clergy role apply to Pre-Cursillo and Post-Cursillo as well as the Weekend.

a. Pre-Cursillo
1. Be involved in Group Reunion

2. Within your groups study the settings and consider inviting key people to participate in a Cursillo Weekend.

3. Attend Secretariat meetings. Make suggestions of areas that need to be evangelized.

4. Be available to Cursillistas particularly by helping them to be more intentional about the Cursillo Method.

5. Be a part of the Servant Community by studying the Cursillo Method in depth and finding ways to train leaders and apply the strategy. See the booklet “Servant Community”

b. Post-Cursillo
1. Continue in Group Reunion

2. Help Weekend participants into local communities by encouraging grouping.
Clergy have a key role in Ultreya. See the booklet “Ultreya” for a complete understanding of the role and function of clergy in Ultreya.

Support the Day of Deeper Understanding. See the booklet “Day of Deeper Understanding” for more information.

10. Candidate Selection
   a. As a clergy person you may be called upon to sign an application for a Weekend. Follow the criteria in “The Clergy Talk Workbook”. Recognize that Cursillo is not for everyone. Ask yourself these questions: Can this person actually grow as an apostle? Can I see myself working with this person in apostolic ministry? Share your observations of this person with the team so they have a better understanding of the person.

   b. Prepare the candidate and his or her sponsor to take their responsibilities seriously. The candidate should know what Cursillo is for and what will be expected of the candidate when the Weekend is over. Be open to telling the candidate what happens on the Weekend.

11. Sponsor Development
   a. Many Cursillistas are anxious to invite friends and family to make a Weekend. This is understandable. However, Cursillistas must be clear as to the responsibilities of sponsorship. Be sure they are fully informed.

   b. Clergy should be supportive of a sponsorship training program which highlight the various ways sponsors can carry out their responsibilities. Prayerful discernment is essential to the work of sponsorship.

In closing, it is important to remember that the role of clergy in Cursillo is essentially what it is in the wider Church. Cursillo as a movement of the Church seeks to build Christian leaders for the spread of the gospel. Clergy equip, lead and serve within the Cursillo movement in ways which further the gifts of everyone, in order to bring the gospel message to the world.