



Thoughts about being a Cursillo Table Leader

Table leaders have an awesome responsibility and privilege at Cursillo weekends. As table leaders, we have the chance to relate to candidates on an intimate level, to show unconditional love and understanding to brothers and sisters in Christ, to witness the forming of a small Christian community that is Spirit-led, fresh, and

spontaneous. Table leaders have the chance to experience a model and basis for future group reunions.

Jesus is at the center of the group's life in Eucharist and prayer. When friendship and trust are created in this atmosphere, powerful changes can happen in our hearts, minds, and spirits. We are able to see others sincerely and humbly seeking God's call. We are able to learn from the examples of others and be inspired to seek God more diligently ourselves.

As NEC literature stresses, table leaders need to find a balance between being a loving group member and a facilitator who encourages constructive, focused group discussion. Another challenge is finding the balance between allowing natural leadership to emerge from the group and not letting one or two people dominate.

Pray for your group before the weekend, even if you do not know who its members will be. Pray for the attitudes, the atmosphere, the willingness of people to share *and* listen, and for the presence of the Holy Spirit in every thought and word, spoken and unspoken. Pray for your ability to listen to God "on the spot" and to be a Christian "under construction" who has accepted the role of an instrument of the Holy Spirit.

As a table leader, it may be your responsibility to help the lay rector know when to honor table group discussion time, and possibly eliminate some of the weekend's "optional extras."

Practical pointers for table leaders:

- Be yourself.
- Strive for permissive leadership (enabling, participatory, non-directive)
- Encourage people to talk to each other, not to you (include other table members visually as someone speaks)
- Ask open-ended questions like “How do you feel about that,” or “What are some of your thoughts as you hear this?”
- Be open and honest, particularly with feelings. Do not be afraid to say “I don’t know.”
- Use listening checks like “What I understand you to be saying is.... “ or “Do you mean that...?”
- Use summary statements when appropriate, like “It seems like we’ve said 1), 2), 3) ... was there anything I left out?”
- Avoid buzzwords or “Cursillo process statements” about how the weekend is going or how the table is or is not doing. **Do not compare your table to others!**
- Avoid mentioning your Cursillo experiences like, “When I made #88, we....”
- Acknowledge every comment, after giving the others a chance to respond.
- Avoid judgments. You do not have to agree, just summarize.
- Do not worry about closure on every discussion.
- When the conversation goes off track, take a deep breath and ask the Holy Spirit for guidance. Is the side trip helping (e.g., forming community) or hurting (going no where)? If you are going nowhere, redirect the discussion (e.g., “That’s interesting, but I’m wondering – what did you think about...”
- Remember that what is shared in group discussions is confidential.
- Do not expect equal participation by every table member. Honor different personalities and needs and let the Holy Spirit guide you in knowing when someone needs to be “brought out,” or when someone is more comfortable being a listener rather than a speaker. Avoid any temptation to “put someone on the spot” in any way.

Read the section entitled *Decuria Problems* with prayer and caution. Expect and assume the best of people. Use your own God-given common sense, along with the insight and understanding you will receive as an answer to your prayers. Above all, be grateful for the opportunity you have been given, to meet and know new people on their journeys with our Lord.

Let the Holy Spirit guide you...

ECM Resources:

Guidelines for Table Leaders (a must!)