

The Love Letter

Fall 2004

From the Episcopal Cursillo Community of Minnesota

The Convenor's Corner...

I am writing this as my first submission to *The Love Letter* as convenor of the Secretariat. I was elected to this position a couple of months ago and I have since wondered if I have taken on a role that is too big for me.

The first thing I have discovered is that people give so much of themselves and their talents, that the effort is as if Christ is carrying me on his shoulders as in the *Footprints* prayer. The Cursillo movement is a dynamic and current movement in Christianity that will fail to succeed only if we totally neglect its principles.

The vision of the Episcopal Cursillo Community, as stated by the Secretariat, is to actively support the strengthening of adult leadership in the church and other environments.

The three-day weekend is the event by which those attending Cursillo for the first time are presented with the fundamental principles for Christian living (piety, study, and action). All are then strengthened by the subsequent continued renewal of regular gatherings in renewal groups and Ultreyas as the 4th Day Community.

The mission of the Episcopal Cursillo Community of Minnesota is to work for the growth and strengthening of the 4th Day Community. I am committed in the efforts of maintaining the growth and stability of the Episcopal Cursillo in Minnesota. The Secretariat will maintain a positive relationship with the national organization with our financial obligations and technical and theological updates.

Currently we are doing one weekend a year. In 2005 we will do two weekends – one in February at Wilder Forest and a second in June at Shattuck-St. Mary's. We have few active participant volunteers in the northern part of the state and it does not make sense to me for metro and southern people to have a weekend in the north where mostly metro and southern candidates attend. Eventually as things improve in those areas and we get volunteers to participate actively, I envision a separate Secretariat in the north. This of course could also happen in the south. The distances are so great in this state that it only makes sense.

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 4]

Upcoming Events...

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4th Day Ultreyas

Parish Ultreyas: Parishes are encouraged to hold their own Ultreyas on a regular basis. See page 4.

Regional Ultreyas in 2005:

~ **February 20:** Wilder Forest, Marine On St. Croix
(*Ultreya to be combined with Clausura for Cursillo Co-Ed #31*)

— ~~**June 26:** Shattuck St. Mary's School, Faribault
(*Ultreya to be combined with Clausura for Cursillo Co-Ed #32*) (NOTE: Date subject to confirmation by Shattuck St. Mary's Head of School.)~~ **Canceled**

~ **September 2005: Family Celebration Ultreya** being investigated; further information to follow in the next issue of *The Love Letter*.

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Cursillo Co-Ed #31

**Wilder Forest
Marine On St. Croix, MN
February 17–20, 2005**

(*More info on page 3*)

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Cursillo Co-Ed #32

~~**Shattuck-St. Mary's School
Faribault, MN
June 23–26, 2005**~~

(*NOTE: Dates for Cursillo weekend subject to confirmation by Shattuck St. Mary's Head of School*)

Canceled

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Upcoming Secretariat Meetings

Saturdays, 9 AM to Noon
 St. George's Episcopal Church, St. Louis Park
 SW Corner of Minnetonka Blvd. & Hwy 100

November 20, 2004
January 15, 2005

Secretariat Meetings Summary March, June, September 2004

- Treasurer reported purchase of round tables, permanent Agape decorations, payment of National Cursillo pledge, honorarium to St. George's, purchase of 4th Day meditation books and other weekend supplies.
- Communion set from Jim Duff Memorial Fund blessed and used at June Cursillo.
- Committees working on various tasks: Leadership, Communications, Documents/Manuals, 4th Day
- Postcards sent to area churches with ZIP codes of team and sponsors (June) to determine whether it increases weekend event participation.
- Web site being developed for MN Cursillo; future hope to have *The Love Letter* also communicated this way to decrease mailing costs. Software support will be purchased.
- Various locations for future Cursillos being explored; difficult to hold in churches due to space concerns.
- Parish Liaisons: These need to be identified; there has been little response to the note in *The Love Letter* about same.
- Discussion of presence at Diocesan Convention October 29–31 in St. Cloud.
- National Cursillo Convention in Ft. Allen, Texas, Oct. 28-31, will be attended by Rev. Don Nesheim and a lay person.

+ + +

Under Construction. . .

Jerry Harris, from St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Kasson, is working with the Secretariat in setting up a **Minnesota Cursillo Web page**, which will be connected with the Diocese Web page and the National Cursillo Web page. It is the intent of the Secretariat that we bring MN Cursillo into this century by using the World Wide Web. We would also like to start making *The Love Letter* available on this site to save postage.

UPCOMING CURSILLO WEEKEND: FEBRUARY 2005

When: FEBRUARY 17–20, 2005

Where: WILDER FOREST, 14189 Ostlund Trail North, Marine On St. Croix, MN 55047

(For directions, go to www.wilder.org; on home page click on Wilder Forest, then link to map)

Rector: Tim Schmolke, Ascension, Stillwater (tms@polywater.com) H 651-439-8652; W 651-275-8481

Assistant Rectors/Rectora: George Gorbatenko, Ascension, Stillwater; Dale Skov, St. Luke's, Hastings; Cara Knittel, Nativity, Burnsville

Team Rectors/Rectoras:

Palanca: Frank and Linda Whitman, Epiphany, Plymouth

Kitchen: Bob Langenfeld, St. Luke's, Hastings

4th Day: Anita Pfauth, Epiphany, Plymouth

Spiritual Director: Rev. Don Nesheim

Assistant Spiritual Directors: Rev. Joe Hopwood; Rev. Chuck Nelson

Events: *All events open to the 4th Day Community*

- ~ **Agape Dinner:** Park in the main lot; meet in the "Commons" main floor dining area at 6:30 PM to get ready for the Agape serenade. Dress clothes; bring your songbooks. Contact Kitchen Rector Bob Langenfeld (rlangenfeld651@aol.com; 651-437-8053) to volunteer to help Saturday afternoon/evening with the Agape Dinner preparations/serving/clean-up.
- ~ **"Mananitas" Sunday morning serenade:** Meet in the "Commons" dining area at 5:45 AM to prepare.
- ~ **Clausura:** 3 PM in the "Commons" dining area.

Palanca Items:

- ~ Please pray for the team and the candidates.
- ~ You may also want to consider getting a group together to work in your community during the weekend, visiting shut-ins, nursing homes, taking on a project in the name of the weekend.
- ~ Another option might be to consider getting a group of Cursillistas together to come down and provide and serve a meal (such as a salad bar on Saturday noon).
- ~ A Kitchen Agape Team, to allow the Kitchen Team to shower and prepare for the dinner, might be helpful in the afternoon on Saturday, as would a group to help with the second sitting and clean-up after the Agape.
- ~ Of course, help on Sunday before and after the Clausura is always appreciated as the teams are pretty tired by then.
- ~ Monetary donations are always welcome.

Sunday Clean-Up Team: This is a way to be a team member for a short time and to provide a much-needed Palanca. Team #31 is actively seeking 4th Day Community members to commit to being onsite to help clean up after the weekend and load the supply trailer. Contact 4th Day Rectora Anita Pfauth (anitapfauth@hotmail.com; 763-427-0167) or Clean-Up Team Rector Mark Schwantes (mark.schwantes@apidistribution.us; 651-439-1420) to volunteer for this "special" team. No team meeting commitment required.

Other Opportunities to Contribute:

- ~ A **special call** for food, supplies, and monetary donations as costs for holding a weekend have gone up. Please give generously. For specific food donations contact Kitchen Rector Bob Langenfeld (rlangenfeld651@aol.com; 651-437-8053).
- ~ A **donation of some firewood** would be a way to literally *get a fire going* – each building has at least one fireplace. Wood should be well-dried and good for *indoor* fireplace use.
- ~ **Sponsor** someone. Pray about it now. Talk to your priest about who the priest would also like to have you talk with about Cursillo. Fill out the applications. Get them in early!

***Ultreya! Onward!
Christ is Counting on YOU!***

From the Convenor...

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1]

I ask that anyone who wants to help with the growth of the Minnesota Episcopal Cursillo to call me and get involved. With the faith-based efforts of today's society, it is a great way to contribute to the growth of Christianity and to satisfy our needs for evangelism and spirituality.

Communication is one of the most critical aspects when two or more are gathered together. I hope that all communication is treated equally. Gossip and second-hand missives have no place in God's work. If you feel your secretariat is not doing its job, then it is your job to let us know and to pitch in. We must focus on Christ and His resurrection power in our lives, transforming us into the people He would have us be.

Keep the Faith,
Mike Kramer

† † †

Ultreya . . . Onward!

The song *Pass It On* says, "It only takes a spark to keep a fire burning/ And all those around can warm up in its glowing. That's how it is with God's love/ Once you've experienced it. You want to sing/ It's fresh like spring/ You want to pass it on."

Part of passing on the love of God and the Holy Spirit working in our lives is to gather regularly in small groups and in larger groups where we can each share our spiritual journey with others. You are encouraged throughout the Cursillo weekend to take your energized faith back to your parishes, get involved, and gather in fellowship with others regularly. Individual parishes are encouraged to gather their Cursillistas and others together on a regular basis for a parish Ultreya, as well as participate in regional Ultreyas. Keep that spark alive! Keep the fire burning!

Regional Ultreyas

- **February 20, 2005** – Wilder Forest, Marine On St. Croix, at the Clausura, 3 PM.
- **Canceled June 26, 2005** — Shattuck St. Mary's, Faribault, at the Clausura, 3 PM (NOTE: Date is subject to confirmation by Shattuck St. Mary's Head of School.)
- **September 2005** – Family Celebration Ultreya – being investigated; further information to follow in the next issue of *The Love Letter*.

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Seeking Past TEC Candidates for Cursillo

Many of you have sons and daughters or others in your life who were active during their teenage years in **Teens Encounter Christ (TEC)**. Some of those students continued their involvement as they first got out of high school as "adult leaders."

Many of our young people have graduated from high school or college and are in the work world. Many are involved in their parishes just as they were urged to be at TEC.

We would like to see them get involved in Cursillo, and the upcoming weekend in February would be a great opportunity as not only Tim Schmolke (the Rector for the weekend) but also some of the team members have been actively involved in TEC in the past, as parents and as team members.

If a person is age 21 or older, he or she may attend Cursillo. If a couple is engaged or married, one must be 21 or older. Wouldn't it be invigorating if we could involve our young adults in their twenties in Cursillo? Wouldn't it be great for them to become re-involved in the process of "Making a friend, being a friend, and bringing a friend to Christ" as they are active in their communities, their churches, and their world?

It only takes a spark to get a fire going! Seek out those young adults, sponsor them, lead them into this spiritual journey as a young adult. If you or the former TEC person have questions, do not hesitate to contact Tim Schmolke at tms@polywater.com or phone him at H 651-439-8652; W 651-275-8481.

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The 5th Day

If you know of a Cursillista who has entered his or her 5th Day, please call 952-929-2952 or any of the Secretariat members with names to be included in *The Love Letter*. Others in the 4th Day Community may have no other way of knowing that special friends in Christ have entered His kingdom.

Memorials given in memory of Cursillistas may be sent to: The Episcopal Cursillo Community of MN, 5224 Minnetonka Blvd., St. Louis Park, MN 55416

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**WELCOME!
to the New 4th Day Members**

When you came to Cursillo you were told that the weekend was a short course in Christianity that uses a method of creating in the minds and hearts of Christians an awareness of the presence of God in their lives, a desire to live with Him, and to bring Him into the lives of everyone they meet. At the end of the weekend, you were given a cross with the inscription on the back, "Christ Is Counting on You," and the charge to go out into your communities, your parishes and your families and to bring Christ to the world.

**We welcome you into the 4th Day,
and we charge you to continue to
"Make a friend, be a friend, bring a friend to Christ."**

- ~ Stephanie Allen-David – St. John’s in the Wilderness, White Bear Lake
- ~ Carl and Meg Arsenault – Cathedral of Our Merciful Savior, Faribault
- ~ Leslie and Vern Barber – St. Mary’s; Wisconsin
- ~ Beth and Bob Bilyk – Ascension, Stillwater
- ~ Dottie and Richard Bingman – Ascension, Stillwater
- ~ Sheila Faricy – Ascension, Stillwater
- ~ Kath Gilles – Bethel Lutheran
- ~ Al Gramstedt – All Saints, Northfield
- ~ Cindy and David Green – Ascension, Stillwater
- ~ Della Johnson – St. David’s, Minnetonka
- ~ Sandra Keogh – St. Christopher’s, Roseville
- ~ Randy Kerkhoff – Crosswinds, Rochester
- ~ Mary Korbel – St. David’s, Minnetonka
- ~ Louise Lindgren – St. George’s, St. Louis Park
- ~ Christina McCann – Sts. Mary and Martha, Eagan
- ~ Jon and Michelle Michels – Ascension, Stillwater
- ~ David and Linda Monyak – St. John’s in the Wilderness, White Bear Lake
- ~ Neale and Paulette Povey – Ascension, Stillwater
- ~ Denise and John Prentis – Cathedral of Our Merciful Savior, Faribault
- ~ Jerry Primm – Ascension, Stillwater
- ~ Julie Remington – St. Christopher’s, Roseville
- ~ Ethel Smith – St. Martin’s by the Lake, Minnetonka
- ~ Cookie Sweatt – St. Martin’s by the Lake, Minnetonka
- ~ Janet Waller – St. John’s in the Wilderness, White Bear Lake

**Living the 4th Day...
Keeping the Spark Alive!**

Questions to ask yourself:

- ~ **Am I excited to be an apostle?**
Is God really counting on me? (Friday talks: *Ideal, Grace, Laity, Faith, Piety*)
- ~ **What is my purpose for being part of the 4th Day?** (Saturday talks: *Study, Sacraments, Action, Obstacles to a Life of Grace, Leaders*)
- ~ **How do I enact what I have been called to do?** (Sunday talks: *The Study and Evangelization of the Environment, Christian Life/Life in Grace, Christian Community in Action, Group Reunion, Ultreya*)

Minnesota Episcopal Cursillo Secretariat encourages individual parishes to gather their Cursillistas and others together on a regular basis for parish Ultreyas; also to participate in regional Ultreyas, which are open to all Cursillistas and those curious about Cursillo. We gather to share the Spirit through worship, fellowship, food and song. (See Regional Ultreyas schedule, page 4.)

Individual or geographic clusters of churches may have Ultreyas or other activities such as Palanca Parties. Remember how much fun it was to receive Palanca?

Group Reunions offer us the opportunity to share and learn from others; study of our Rule of Life encourages the formation of Servant Communities where we as members of the 4th Day can live out our commitment to Cursillo.

A source for printed materials is:

National Episcopal Cursillo Office
24048 Lenah Road, Aldie, VA 20105-2312
Phone: 703-327-4392 / Fax: 703-327-0481
E-mail: NECOFFICE@aol.com
Web site: www.episcopalcursillo.org.

Subscribe today to: *The 4th Day Magazine*, official publication of the National Episcopal Cursillo.

Photocopy this form and send it with your check or money order (drawn on a U.S. bank) to:
The NEC Office, 24048 Lenah Road, Aldie, VA 20105-2312

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Cursillo Rector's Comments

by Jim Larsen, St. David's Episcopal Church — Co-Ed Cursillo #30, June 2004

From the first time that I was on a Cursillo team, I have always been amazed at how much I learn and grow from all that happens during the weekend. Going into my first team experience, I naively thought the rest of the team and I would be the guides and candidates would do the following and learning. Each team experience has shown me that whatever part of the weekend you are experiencing, you can't help but be awed by how the Spirit is present in all that happens, how much you learn, and how your faith is renewed.

A community in Christ is always greater than the sum of its parts and this weekend was blessed with an incredible team of people who came together and made it very easy from the perspective of the leadership table. I thank God for calling each and every one of them.

In the real world, we so often see or are a part of a dysfunctional team. We expect issues, we expect griping about assigned tasks. Perhaps it is that real-world conditioning that makes the teamwork of a weekend all the more amazing. This team not only did whatever was asked, but so willingly shared their stories, their pain, and their triumphs. The sharing was not only in rollos and not only in the rollo room. It seemed to be everywhere. It is this sharing and giving of themselves that brings a Cursillo from just being a weekend retreat to the experience it is for all involved.

For many years and in many instances, I have felt and seen the Spirit at work. However, on this weekend, it seemed that every time we turned around there was another instance of a "Spirit thing," whether it was better understanding all of God's people by sitting next to someone different from yourself at a team table, or the sights and sounds of the Stations of the Cross and how they moved each of us individually and collectively, or hearing a part of your own story and struggle being spoken by a stranger giving a rollo, or having a veteran member of the Cursillo community show up to see if we needed help right at the moment we found out a team member would not be able to make it, to couples realizing what a gift they were to each other, to someone you did not expect showing up to support you as you prepared for your rollo.

Each time I have been a part of a weekend, I come home thinking "Okay, when I do another weekend, it won't be able to top this one," but each of them has. Each has opened my eyes all the more to the Spirit and the power of the community of Christ. Maybe that trend will continue and the next one will be an even more powerful experience. But right now, I can't imagine coming home with a stronger sense of purpose in how I need to arrange my life, or a stronger faith in God and my brothers and sisters. For that I thank the candidates, the team, the community as a whole, and of course, our loving God who provided it all.

Letting My Soul Catch Up

by Stephanie Allen-Davis, St. John's in the Wilderness — Co-Ed Cursillo #30, June 2004

De Colores Cursillistas!

As I write to you, my head and heart are still full of the songs, stories and lessons of my Cursillo weekend in June! It was a powerful and overwhelming weekend in so many ways. I arrived for my weekend rather reluctant to say goodbye to my husband (who was my sponsor) and with my task list of things that I had left undone at home and work still racing in my mind. I figured I would just try to use the weekend as a nice relaxing time during which I could prioritize my "to-do list," maybe read during breaks and sit in the back to observe the weekend. The letter from Jim Larsen, the weekend rector, indicating that we should leave our watches at home didn't deter me in the least

and I came prepared with my watch, cell phone and palm pilot – because I don't go anywhere without them. So, as you can all imagine, by the time my watch, cell phone and palm pilot had been "put away," I had been assigned a seat at a table (right next to the leaders table no less – yikes!) and the rollos began, my illusions of staying "in control" and disinterested began to crumble!

Though all of the rollos were *very* interesting and deeply moving, I was particularly struck by two rollos at opposite ends of the weekend. The first was on *Piety*. Piety had always held such negative connotations for me. I had inaccurately associated piety with people who piously suggested that other

people might not be as good as them. Not quite as Christian as they were. They had an inner relationship with God that was better than others'. The rollista very carefully defined piety with emotional and personal vulnerability that brought a whole new light to my understanding! It was also a reminder to me that outward bravado may not always be a true reflection of what a person is feeling inside. I was getting drawn in.

The weekend progressed with such profound and captivating discussions that I found myself at the same time not wanting to move on so quickly to the next topic. I was being pushed into very uncomfortable topics, degrees of involvement and an emotional exhaustion for which I was completely unprepared! My hope of a "relaxing" quiet weekend was gone (yes, in favor of something much more important) and prioritizing my work and home task list somehow just didn't seem as important and urgent as it had seemed on Thursday afternoon.

The rollo on *Christian Environment* finally brought home to me the sense of familiarity that had been just on the edge of my consciousness for the whole weekend ... I had been "here" before. Not at Cursillo but in another Christian community with which I taught, learned and prayed.

For several years in my early twenties I was blessed to be part of a team that taught junior and senior high confirmation together at our church. Many of us were educated in religious and theological studies, there were wonderful musicians who played guitar for us, we worshiped together, and after each Wednesday's classes at church we would all go out to our favorite restaurant to continue the discussions that we had begun with the kids in our groups, to share what our weeks had been about, to pray with, support and love one another. For many years after leaving that community I longed for the intriguing discussion on topics of Christian importance and the unconditional love and acceptance that we provided to and for each other.

On the weekend, I realized as we, the candidates, were reminded how important it was to surround ourselves with godly space and relationships that this Cursillo community of "strangers" had, within hours, helped me find my way back to that kind of loving environment. I knew immediately that the 4th Day Community was an environment in which I wanted to stay!

I have begun my study and devotion time again ... time just for myself and time with my husband! I have gone back to the writings by Luther, C.S. Lewis, Max Lucado and Harold Kushner ... and I am loving it! I believe that through my recent study I have learned one of the most important lessons of my weekend experience.

In his book *The Healing Wisdom of the Twenty Third Psalm*, Rabbi Harold Kushner relays a story of a group of travelers who are going on safari in Africa. They hire natives to be their porters and care for their luggage. When the group was three days into their journey the native men said that they would need to stop for a day. "We are not tired," they explained to the travelers, "but, we have walked too far, too fast and now we must rest for a day to allow our souls to catch up." That is one of the benefits my Cursillo weekend "forced" on me! Time to stop the whirlwind of my late-thirties life with my full-time job, husband, two kids and a house that never seems to be clean ... to let my soul catch up.

When I returned to work on the following Monday, my co-workers were quite surprised by my change in attitude toward my Cursillo experience. Not only had I not worked while I was away but I came back filled with excitement that I couldn't wait to share with them! (I believe that a few of them will be attending the February weekend!) It was a nice reminder that even at work I can be and am surrounded by a very Christian environment. I have always been comfortable discussing my faith but now, after my Cursillo weekend, I feel compelled to do so! I see God in all acts of kindness, good fortune and beauty, whether large or small, and I point them out to those around me!

It took very little discussion before my husband and I signed up to be part of the team for the February Cursillo weekend. I hope that you will look back on your Cursillo and be reminded of the feeling of God's love which was present and the sacred space and time that the weekend offered, and that you will consider joining us in February the next time a group of candidates prays for the first time, "Come Holy Spirit, Fill the hearts of your faithful..."

Shalom.

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Themes That Unite the Talks at a Cursillo Weekend

We always say that the Cursillo weekend has fifteen talks, but that there is really only *one talk*, divided into fifteen parts. This one talk can be divided into three main parts.

I. What is fundamental to being a Christian?

Friday – the day we learn what the Christian ideal is. The talks present the importance of having an ideal, accepting God’s free gift of grace, belonging to the Christian community, and living the life of grace through piety.

- #1. *Ideal* – Layperson
- #2. *Grace* – Clergy
- #3. *Laity* or *The Layperson Is the Church in the World* – Layperson
- #4. *Faith* – Clergy
- #5. *Piety* – Layperson

II. How do I live the life of grace?

Saturday – the day we learn how to be formed into Christian leaders. The talks stress the need for study, piety and action, the need for meeting Christ in the sacraments, and how the person who works to grow as a Christian can and should become a Christian leader.

- #6. *Study* – Layperson
- #7. *Sacraments* – Clergy
- #8. *Action* – Layperson
- #9. *Obstacles to a Life of Grace* – Clergy
- #10. *Leaders* – Layperson

III. How do I structure my Christian life?

Sunday – the day we learn a strategy for the renewal of society. The talks present the need to study our environments, work with one another to change these environments and bring them to Christ; with the help of a spiritual director, develop and practice a Rule of Life, share with one another in Group Reunion and Ultreya, work within the Christian community, and persevere with the help of God’s grace.

- #11. *The Study and Evangelization of the Environment* – Layperson
- #12. *Christian Life/Life in Grace* – Clergy
- #13. *Christian Community in Action* – Layperson
- #14. *Group Reunion* – Layperson
- #15. *Ultreya* – Layperson

Basic themes:

1. Talks developing the ideas of **grace**: Grace; Sacraments; Christian Life/Life in Grace
2. Talks on **overcoming difficulties**: Faith (Actual Grace); Obstacles to a Life of Grace; Ultreya (4th Day)
3. Talks related to **piety**: Piety; Leaders; Group Reunion
4. Talks related to **study**: Ideal; Study; The Study and Evangelization of Environment
5. Talks related to **action**: Laity; Christian Community in Action

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(Ed. Note: *Leading up to the talk on Piety on a Cursillo weekend, the speaker first briefly reviews the day, reminding candidates that they have heard about the IDEAL that takes shape in a Christian's life, asking what the individuals value, where their time, talent, monies are spent. The candidates hear about Grace, the invitation for us to come to God, whatever our circumstances. Candidates are reminded that as Laity we are called into community for building up the body of Faith. From the spiritual director the candidates hear that Faith is an ACTION, our RSVP to God's invitation. That brings listeners to PIETY. What follows are excerpts from the talk given by Anita Pfauth at the June 2004 Cursillo. She asked that part of her talk be omitted here, for some things she shared only with the weekenders.*)

Piety. Is anyone uncomfortable? Piety is one of those words that make people squirm. So, what is piety? I checked my American Heritage Dictionary at home and found two definitions: (1) Devotion and reverence, especially to God and family. That's pretty straightforward. (2) A pious act or thought. That's about as clear as mud.

Let's look at the second one, a pious act or thought. Here's where some people get into trouble. Have you ever met what I like to call "Holy Rollers"? Here are five examples:

1. Outdoing our neighbor in "doing good" so that we'll feel "safe." I had a landlady, when I was first married, who told my husband and me that we would go to hell because we didn't "belong" to the right church – meaning hers. It was based on the thought that the *number* of people she brought to "her church" would grant her entrance to the Pearly Gates.
2. Practicing the rites of faith out of a sense of duty or fear of punishment. It's the thought that "I might not get to heaven if I don't say grace at every meal, or my bedtime prayers every night."
3. Wearing a "mask of holiness." Matthew 6:16 tells us, "When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth; they have received their reward in full."
4. Separating ourselves from the world in order that we might stay "pure." Even those in religious orders are called to go out into the world. Think of Mother Teresa, for example, who once said, "I know God promises not to give me more than I can handle. I just wish he didn't trust me so much."
5. Practicing the outward signs of religion that are seen by others. Matthew 6:1 says, "Be careful not to do your 'acts of righteousness' before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven."

I'm guilty as charged, Lord. I grew up in what's known as High Church. The service was CHANTED; bells were rung to tell us when to sit, stand or kneel; we crossed ourselves every other minute; when entering or leaving the pew, we had to genuflect; Christmas, Easter and other High Feast Days HAD to have incense, etc., etc. Don't get me wrong, these things are not bad, and I still love incense at Christmas and Easter. But all this "stuff" is what I thought made me "Christian."

These are examples of "False" piety. So what's genuine piety? PIETY is *living a life of grace in a conscious, growing and shared manner.*

God has invited [you and me] into a relationship with Him. Jesus told the Pharisees that the greatest commandment is to "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind."

I told you that I grew up worshipping the *ceremonial aspects* of "Church." I eventually ended up at another church that had "EXCITEMENT." They had fellowship activities to bring us into relationship with others, and a Prayer Chain that I had never experienced. Contemporary Christian music was sung, along with traditional hymns. Strangers were welcomed and invited to come back. Whatever it was that these people had, whatever it was that made them SPECIAL – I wanted it. (My Ideal)

I became friends with a small group of women from that church and eventually got brave enough to express my feelings. They explained to me that what it boiled down to was knowing, loving, and living Christ (Faith). These ladies invited me to join their prayer group, where every Wednesday we shared our joys, sorrows, concerns, and thanksgivings. As Paul told the Philippians, "Have no anxiety about anything, but *in everything* by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your request be made known to God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

I was learning the three elements necessary to *spiritual* growth: piety, study, and action. We need all three. Practicing piety leads us to want to know more about God – causing us to STUDY. We learn from God to serve others (Action), which will deepen our love and commitment to God (back to Piety). PIETY is *living a life of grace in a conscious, growing and shared manner.*

† † †

On October 15 to 17, I will be entering the Waseca Federal Corrections Institute with a team of twenty to be part of a program called Pathways, modeled after Cursillo. During the weekend, the men will hear about the three-legged stool we hear about in Cursillo – study, piety, and action. In the prison the talk we know as Study is called Discovery, and I would like to share some of that with you. Here is, in essence, what I will say to my brothers who are incarcerated and who are seeking to grow in their faith:

I am a lay person, and the title of this talk is **Discovery: Why Study and Why Read the Bible?** When I started preparing this talk, one of the thoughts that kept repeating itself to me over several days was, Well, that’s kind of a dry topic—Why Study and Why Read the Bible? The answer, though, is pretty straightforward.

The Christian life is an ongoing journey of discovery. It is an ongoing journey of learning and growing and deepening our relationship with Jesus. The knowledge of God’s love for us kindles a life-long commitment to discovering more about the person of Jesus in order to make our pilgrimage into the presence of God’s perfect love. The evidence of God’s love for us is all around, but if we don’t train ourselves to look for it, we may never see or really experience God’s love. Jesus is not lost or hidden. He awaits our invitation to enter into our lives. We discover more about Jesus and about our relationship with him through study.

There are many ways we can study: We can listen to audio and video tapes, we can read books, we can join in conversations with other Christians, we can participate in study group discussions, we can join with others in Bible studies, take part in Share and Prayer Groups, listen to the sermons given by the chaplain, and join in Christian fellowship with others. When we open ourselves to grow in our faith, we are on that journey of discovery.

I could talk about many kinds of study, but today I want to focus on the study of Scripture. We need to read Scripture because it is God’s word for us. The baseline question is: Why do we need to read the Bible?

1. We read the Bible because it is God’s inspired word. In 2 Timothy 3:16-17, “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.”
2. We read the Bible because the Bible is true and essential for today as always. The Bible gives us solace when we are alone, apprehensive, feeling powerless; when we feel hopeless, frustrated, angry, or disappointed; when we are scared, lonely, beaten down by the world. Scripture teaches us about and gives us a path toward strength, courage, direction, hope, grace, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness,

faithfulness, gentleness, generosity, mercy, and self-control. (Galatians 5:19-21)

3. We read the Bible because Jesus said, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.” (Matthew 4:4)
4. We read the Bible because it shows the way we can have a personal relationship with God. Jesus himself said: “And this is eternal life that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.” (John 17:3)
5. We read the Bible because it challenges us to spread the Good News of Salvation. Jesus said to His disciples: “Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to the whole creation. He who believes and is baptized will be saved, but he who does not believe will be condemned.” (Mark 16:15-16)

In short, the Bible is God’s Word for us. As we read, there are many versions of the Bible to choose from. All too often I think we get hung up on what version or translation we are reading, or think we should read. Rather than quibble about which version of the Bible is the best to read, we just need to read, meditate, pray, and reflect on God’s word for us and see how God reveals himself to us. And it makes no difference how well educated we are or how well read we are. God has a message for us at any time, at any stage of our maturing in our faith.

In July, when I was down here on a Wednesday evening, I was able to hear one of the tapes played during the Alpha program, and I was very much struck by a story shared on tape. It seems that there was a man who was sitting and listening to a small child plunk-plunking on the piano. Plink, plonk, plunk. The sounds grew more and more irritating to him. And yet the child continued. Plonk, plunk, plink. As the grinding sounds continued, all of a sudden a man walked over and sat down at the piano with the little girl and started filling in the spaces between the plinking and plonking with a beautiful, lovely, haunting melody. The man who had been so irritated found beauty in this song that the man and child created together. He later found out that the man was the child’s father, Alexander Borodin, a Russian composer who wrote the well-known opera *Prince Igor*. The father in the story filled in the spaces between the plinks and the plonks of his child and it was beautiful because they were in relationship with one another.

And the point of that story, I believe, is essential to this talk. We go on a journey of discovery. We study and we read the Bible because it is the story of God’s relationship with His people. We can see how other people in other ages reacted to God’s word and message for them. It is the story of God’s relationship with us.

In scripture, God shows his involvement in the lives of his people; in scripture, God tells us what he wants of us, how we should react to and treat others. But above all, through Jesus Christ, we learn about the Kingdom of God and how to act here and now as inheritors of God's Kingdom. The message is simple, yet so powerful: God loves us. All of us. No exceptions. God loves you and God loves me. That is God's grace to us. God is continually giving love, and we read the Bible to understand that love in our lives.

Between the first verse of the Bible in Genesis, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," and the last verse in Revelation, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all, Amen" lies the wonderful story of God's RELATIONSHIP with His people, with us. The story of God's relationship to His people as recorded in the Bible is also our story. In that story in Scripture we find our questions, hopes, dreams, defeats, triumphs, and guidance. I would like to share that story with you because it answers the question: Why should I read the Bible?

[At this point, I will trace through the story recorded in the Bible...the story of Creation; of Abraham and Sarah and God's Chosen People; Moses, the Exodus, and the Covenant; the Promised Land; Judges, Kings, and the Prophets; Jesus, the Crucifixion and Resurrection; the gift of the Holy Spirit; the Church.]

In our relationship with God, in our relationship with each other, in worship, in prayer, in the sacraments, God builds us up, nourishes us, strengthens us and makes us whole. God is still active in the world. God is still loving us and leading us in the direction we should go. God is still raising up leaders, prophets, and priests to speak to people about the way of life that is God's way. God is showing us the way of faith, love, hope, gentleness, and peace. God is calling us constantly, and all we have to do is open our eyes and ears and hearts to see and hear and love God.

Like people through the ages whose stories are told in the Bible, we can respond to God or we can turn away. He calls us to relationship with one another, with Him. When we read and study the Bible, alone and together, we come to know our awesome God more fully. When we read the Bible we find Jesus telling parables that illustrate what our reactions should be in many situations. Jesus tells us how we should respond to the good news that our God is one whose loving faithfulness floods down through all of history and pours through our lives as well.

Each one of us here has a story to tell about how God has brought us to this place, how God's loving faithfulness has and does make a difference in each of our lives. The kingdom of God is the fulfillment that God wishes for the world and the fulfillment that God wishes for each one of us. The kingdom of God is right next to you. You can enter into it any time you want.

Why should we read the Bible, study, pray, and meditate on the word? Because the Bible is the key that opens our hearts and lives to enter into relationship with God. We need to read the word of God to grow spiritually. Discovering Christ helps us to live in peace, without fear, in joy, in love, made whole through God's unlimited love. Christ will carry us through all chances, changes and circumstances in life giving us strength and encouragement. When we pray, we talk to God. When we read, God talks to us.

God will play the melody between all the plinks and plonks of our lives. God's word will help us harmonize. God will take all our confusion, brokenness, and strife ... and make something *beautiful* of our life.

Study. Fellowship. Pray. Meditate. Read the Bible. May your journey be Spirit-filled. God loves you, and so do I.

† † †

Five Finger Prayers

1. Your thumb is nearest to you. So begin your prayers by praying for those closest to you. They are the easiest to remember. To pray for our loved ones is, as C.S. Lewis once said, a "sweet duty."
2. The next finger is the pointing finger. Pray for those who teach, instruct and heal. This includes teachers, doctors, and ministers. They need support and wisdom in pointing others in the right direction. Keep them in your prayers.
3. The next finger is the tallest finger. It reminds us of our leaders. Pray for the president, leaders in business and industry, and administrators. These people shape our nation and guide public opinion. They need God's guidance.
4. The fourth finger is our ring finger. Surprising to many is the fact that this is our weakest finger, as any piano teacher will testify. It should remind us to pray for those who are weak, in trouble or in pain. They need your prayers day and night. You cannot pray too much for them.
5. And lastly comes our little finger; the smallest finger of all, which is where we should place ourselves in relation to God and others. As the Bible says, "The least shall be the greatest among you." Your pinkie should remind you to pray for yourself.

By the time you have prayed for the other four groups, your own needs will be put into proper perspective and you will be able to pray for yourself more effectively.

**Minnesota Episcopal Cursillo
Parish Coordinator Update
October 2004**

Please complete and return as requested below. If your parish does not currently have a coordinator, or if that name has changed, please make the appropriate note. Thank you.

Parish _____

Address _____

Rector _____ Church Phone _____

Parish Coordinator Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

of Cursillistas in Parish: _____

Would you be willing to host a regional Ultreya? Yes _____ No, not now _____

Would your church be interested/able to host a Cursillo 3-day weekend?
Yes _____ No, not now _____

Is your church handicapped accessible? Yes _____ No, not now _____

The intent is to update the database in order to communicate with coordinators and parish Cursillistas in a timely manner and to encourage living the 4th Day in community. Your comments/suggestions are welcome:

Please return to:

**Minnesota Episcopal Cursillo Office
5224 Minnetonka Blvd
St. Louis Park, MN 55416**

De Colores!!!!

Candidate Application form

For a copy of the Candidate Application Form go to the Cursillo web site <http://www.mncursillo.org/> and select "Candidate Application". You will get a pdf (Adobe) formatted image of the form. Use the print option to get a copy of the form.

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Minnesota Episcopal Cursillo Team Application

Team Covenant:

As a team member, I enter into a covenant with other team members to provide a grace-filled experience of Jesus Christ for the participating candidates. Therefore, I pledge, to the best of my ability and with God's help, to:

- ♥ Model a Christian lifestyle, using God's word as my guide
- ♥ Maintain a team spirit, and
- ♥ Prayerfully support the leadership of the Rector/Rectora and the Spiritual Directors during the months of preparation and the weekend itself.

I understand that the focus of the Episcopal Cursillo weekends must be on the candidates, so I am willing to set aside my individual personal preferences for the good of the team and for a weekend that gives glory to God.

Name: Rev. Dr. Mr. Mrs. Ms. _____

Address: _____

City: _____ **State:** _____ **ZIP:** _____

Phone: Home: (_____) _____ Work: (_____) _____

E-mail address: _____

Weekend preference (dates and/or locations): _____

Team Preference(s): (may number in order of preference)

- | | | |
|---|---|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Table Leader | <input type="checkbox"/> Rollista | <input type="checkbox"/> Music Team |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Kitchen Team | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 th Day Team | <input type="checkbox"/> Palanca Team |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Spiritual Director | | |

Date/ # of your Cursillo: _____ Episcopal? _____

Previous team experience: _____

Date of most recent team experience: _____

Musical talent: _____

Name/ Location of your church: _____

Other comments: _____

Mail form to: **Minnesota Episcopal Cursillo Office**
5224 Minnetonka Blvd.
St. Louis Park, MN 55416

Note: This form does not guarantee that you will be asked to serve. It simply means that your name and information will be passed on to the weekend team leaders. **Remember, teams are formed 2 to 4 months prior to the weekend. You need to be available for the entire weekend to work on a team.**

If you have not been called for an upcoming weekend after submitting this form, or have had to decline serving on a team when called, please send in a new completed form as earlier forms may not be carried forward from team to team.

Episcopal Cursillo Community of Minnesota
5224 Minnetonka Boulevard
St. Louis Park, MN 55416
Phone: 952-929-2952

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MAILINGS: Please use the form below for name and address changes. Each returned Newsletter costs us an additional 37¢. The Post Office will not forward Third Class mail. If you are away for an extended time, please contact us with your new address and the dates that address is in effect. Or if you wish to discontinue receiving this Newsletter, please let us know. Be sure to call or write when you want to resume. If you prefer to receive Newsletters via e-mail, let us know (and provide your e-mail address on the form below). Thank you.

Name: _____

Old Address: _____

Old Phone #: _____

New Address: _____

New Phone #: _____

E-mail Address: _____

Present Church Membership: _____

Date new info will be effective: _____

Signature: _____

Comments: _____