

# The Love Letter

Spring 2005

From the Episcopal Cursillo Community of Minnesota

## The Convenor's Corner...

Dear Friends,

One of our most exciting recent developments is the creation of our website. It has all the information to bring everyone up to date. We will be using electronic mailing for updates and, best of all, to send out *The Love Letter* via the Web. If you would like to receive the newsletter in this manner you can request it at the website [see page 3] and also save us the cost of printing and postage. Please log on and update us with your e-mail and check in often for updates. Be assured that your e-mail address will be used *only* for Cursillo communications.

A disappointing development is that a tentatively scheduled weekend in June had to be cancelled not only because of the date availability, but also because a Rector could not be found within a timeframe acceptable for properly servicing the weekend. This development caused the Secretariat to consider a step back to examine our leadership procedures.

The result of that is the creation of a Leadership Development Seminar to be held for the purpose of communicating the leadership needs to the 4<sup>th</sup> Day community and creating a leadership field of more depth. This seminar is being held on **April 9** at St. David's Episcopal in Minnetonka from 8:30 to 1:00 in the library room. Daycare will be provided and lunch will be served. (*Ed. note: Unfortunately, this will be held before most receive The Love Letter, though other communications about April 9 have been sent out.*)

The second day that the seminar will be held is **April 23** at The Cathedral of Our Merciful Savior in Fairbault, MN. This will be held from 8:30 to 1:00 in the Guild Hall, adjacent to the Cathedral. Daycare will be provided and lunch will be served.

Any 4<sup>th</sup> Day person interested in a continuing experience in Cursillo should plan on attending and learning about the needs of our community. If you want to be on a team, or continue to be on a team, this seminar is very important. Please register on the website or call me at 651-439-7103. We need to know of daycare needs.

One of our community handicaps is the lack of a parish coordinator for each parish. This causes a breakdown of

## Upcoming Events...

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### 4th Day Ultreyas

- ~ **Parish Ultreyas:** Parishes are encouraged to hold their own Ultreyas on a regular basis.
- ~ **Regional Family Celebration Ultreya:** Prospects for this event are being explored for September 2005.

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### Cursillo Co-Ed #32

~ **To Be Announced** ~

*There will be no June Cursillo in Faribault. The Secretariat felt that the date available (June 2-5) conflicts too much with the end of school, and that the time was too short for team preparation. Research for a Fall 2005 date/place continues.*

communication at the parish level. If you would like to perform this service to your Cursillo community, please call me or register on the website. It is work, but we are suffering as a community from the lack of volunteers.

Often we hear people worry about the "weekends not filling up" or "we need more weekenders." Sometimes I wonder if the Episcopal Cursillo movement is fading quietly away.

But then I participate in a weekend like the one at Wilder in February, and I am amazed at the wonder of it all and how marvelous it is for everyone involved. It is like being in another world for a short period of time, a world of community and prayer, of love and laughter, of tears and contemplation. How refreshing it is to wake up from such a weekend and live the following day and weeks in the outside world, secretly rejoicing inwardly and attempting to "pass it on" to our fellow Christians.

We no longer have waiting lists to attend the weekend and I feel sad that this experience cannot be shared more than it is. Cursillo is definitely worth it; I actually don't think we will fade away anytime soon. We just need to improve our communication and commitment.

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## Secretariat Meetings Summary January 15 & March 19, 2005

- ~ Committees continue their work: leadership training; getting our webpage and database up and running; work on parish coordinator list; updating manuals
- ~ Still seeking Secretariat and committee members
- ~ Report on February weekend presented
- ~ Looking for future sites for Cursillo weekends
- ~ Setting up leadership development process and programs
- ~ Forms, information to be put on MN Cursillo website
- ~ St. Mark's Cathedral Bookstore (Sue Travis) will carry some Cursillo items; Secretariat will continue to have song books, crosses, some cups on hand.
- ~ Some websites: [www.singstherooster.com](http://www.singstherooster.com); [www.palancagifts.com](http://www.palancagifts.com); National Episcopal Church links at [www.episcopalchurch.org](http://www.episcopalchurch.org)
- ~ Clarification: Those who have attended TEC may come to Agape and Clausura, but may not work on teams unless they have attended a weekend Cursillo as a candidate
- ~ Review/update/write policy regarding Safe Church, alcohol use
- ~ Discussion of young adult participation and recruitment

### DATES OF IMPORTANCE

**Secretariat meetings** at St. George's, conference room near Rector's office, from 9 to noon on the following dates:

- ~ May 21, 2005
- ~ July 16, 2005
- ~ September 17, 2005
- ~ November 19, 2005
- ~ January 21, 2006

### **Leadership Development Days**

- ~ **April 9, 2005**, 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.  
St. David's Episcopal, Minnetonka
- ~ **April 23, 2005**, 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.  
Cathedral of Our Merciful Savior, Guild House

**FROM THE CONVENOR...** [CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1]

My faith is not as outward as that of some, but I do try to spend time thanking God for the little things that happen to me every day. It is hard to practice a lot of the time. I work in the construction field, where the conditions most of the time are not conducive to contemplation, but I have found if I keep myself open, my experiences with other people become amazingly

smooth when you have a little charity and consideration in your heart. With the events of the world today including school shootings and politicizing the right to life, the war and all the other problems, if we could all only open up our hearts a little more to each other, how amazing things could become.

See you at the Leadership Seminars. Keep the faith.  
Mike Kramer

## Cursillo Website Update

The Episcopal Cursillo Community of MN has created a website to use our resources more efficiently and to provide better and easier communications: [www.mncursillo.org](http://www.mncursillo.org)

The website is organized this way:

- ~ Cursillo ~ What is it? and FAQ
- ~ *The Love Letter* (current and back issues)
- ~ Calendar Events
- ~ Applications & Forms  
(including Name/Address Change form)
- ~ Secretariat
- ~ Other Cursillo Web Links

The Fall 2004 and Spring 2005 issues of *The Love Letter* are installed on the website. *The Love Letter* is available in a Web (.HTML) and an Adobe (.PDF) view. The Web view is organized differently to make it more easily navigated; the PDF view is like a printed copy of *The Love Letter* as it was sent out via U.S. Mail.

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## New Cursillo E-mail Address

The Episcopal Cursillo Community of MN has a new e-mail address: [MnCursillo@Kmtel.com](mailto:MnCursillo@Kmtel.com).

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## Moving...From the Snail to E-Mail

*The Love Letter* will be distributed by e-mail or by U.S. Mail. Currently we have 300+ e-mail addresses vs. 1500 distributed by mail. We need to distribute more by e-mail to reduce printing/mailing costs.

To receive *The Love Letter* via e-mail, go to the Cursillo website at [www.mncursillo.org](http://www.mncursillo.org), click on the link "Name & Address Change" and then select Love Letter Delivery: Email.

(If your e-mail address becomes invalid, your *Love Letter* will be sent by U.S. Mail pending receipt of new e-mail address.)

Use this same webpage to change other personal and mailing address information.

**Please note:** Your e-mail address will be used *only* to alert you when a newsletter or special information is available. It will *not* be provided to any other organization.

## Welcome to the 4<sup>th</sup> Day Christian Community – Cursillo #31, Wilder Forest

At the weekend you heard over and over how important it is to work within your church parishes and community to spread the good word that we serve an awesome God. As you have returned to your communities, the greater 4<sup>th</sup> Day Christian Community welcomes you and asks you to carry out this mission: Make a friend, be a friend, bring a friend to Christ!

- ~ Terri Applequist, St. Matthew's Episcopal, Chatfield
- ~ Martha Blazek, Epiphany Episcopal, Plymouth
- ~ Kim Cihla, St. Luke's, Hastings
- ~ Ed and Betty Clapp, Roseville Lutheran
- ~ Molly Donovan, Ascension, Stillwater
- ~ Bill and Sally Giese, Ascension, Stillwater
- ~ Dawn Lynn Greeney, Ascension, Stillwater
- ~ Dawn Hansen, Ascension, Stillwater
- ~ Jim and Ann Hoey, St. Peter's, Mendota
- ~ Chris and Kate Johnson, St. John's in the Wilderness, White Bear Lake
- ~ Phyllis Jordan, St. Luke's, Hastings
- ~ Deb Lauer, Ascension, Stillwater
- ~ Charlie Melcher, Sts. Martha and Mary, Eagan
- ~ Tom and Stephanie Miller, Ascension, Stillwater
- ~ Mary Lou Oliverius, Sts. Martha and Mary, Eagan
- ~ Barb Rose, St. Mary's, Basswood Grove
- ~ Tom Salen, King of Kings, Woodbury

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## The 5<sup>th</sup> Day

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

St. M. Manette Tisdale  
Bernetta Roberson  
Mary Lou Brackett  
Sandy Keogh  
Glen Goodman

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

## The Gift of Prayer

Rev. Alice Mae Applequist, St. Matthew's Episcopal, Chatfield

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Each of us lives in the real world where things happen, both good and bad. We live in a time where each of us either has experienced cancer or knows of someone who has. It is a time period where many of us know of someone who is seeking employment or medical answers of one kind or another. It is a time where miraculous celebrations of birth and recoveries are seen and known. At any rate, whether the event is joyful or tearful, it is a time where the love, strength, healing, and guidance of God need to be invited in and shared. For me, that meant the beginning of more devoted individual prayer, prayer lines and prayer vigil teams. I live in rural Minnesota. I made my Cursillo in the early 1980s and have served on about 100 Cursillo weekends, some of which have been Episcopalian.

Statistics show that most prayers are said in times of crisis. I think that is something that many of us can understand and relate to easily. About 20 years ago it seemed to me that there was a great deal to pray for and about. Many of the people I loved and cherished as friends and family were in great pain. So, armed with a heart that was ready to give all I had to God, I began to set up specific times each day to pray, meditate, and celebrate the graces of God with both petitions and thanksgivings on behalf of others.

Because of my own life's situation, I had come to know, firsthand, many cancer warriors and victors and realized how important it was for them to know that they were being held in the heart of many and supported by prayers to God. I also realized the healing, strength, and empowerment that is felt by people with cancer or other diseases, both chronic and terminal, when they are included in praying for others.

Armed with this knowledge, I started four prayer lines and two 24/7 prayer vigil teams. At that time, one of the prayer lines and one of the prayer vigil teams devoted itself entirely to the people with cancer and to their families and friends. Those who were on the prayer lines and vigil teams were all people who knew cancer firsthand. Each of the prayer members was encouraged to reach out and ask others to pray and/or to start their own prayer lines and/or vigil teams. Through the years, I know many have done that. "Thanks be to God!"

In this early beginning time, I admit that I had no idea of how far the prayers would be shared. All I knew was that prayer not only invited God into the healing process but also opened the door for healing for many who had felt the doors and windows to God had been closed. The peace that I felt when I prayed then and

when I pray now is not something I can measure. But I can tell you this: it lifts me up and gives me the patience to wait and to have things done as God wills in God's time.

Many of the people that I met came to receive treatment in medical institutions like Mayo, Gunderson Clinic, University Hospital, and Johns Hopkins. Soon, prayers that started out being said in a little rural community in southern Minnesota were suddenly prayers being shared not only in 48 states of our United States but also in seven other countries. What had started out as in-person prayers and prayer lines shared by passing prayer lists by hand or over the phone now became prayers shared by fax and e-mails.

In the beginning, I could say that I definitely prayed for each person, whether they were on the prayer lines or prayer vigil lists, because I was actively taking shifts on all. However, the number of prayer lines and vigil teams has become too numerous for me to pray for each person in the ways I did before. The number of prayer vigil teams and prayer lines now are made up of approximately 600 people.

I am able to facilitate 15 prayer vigil teams and 54 prayer lines in adding names and events and updates as they are shared with me. I have been able to gather 24 people who do not wish to be on a prayer vigil team full-time but who are willing to "sub" for a shift when one of the members becomes ill or is unable to take their shift because of another commitment.

There are prayer lines and vigil teams that devote themselves totally to those with cancer and to their significant caregivers. There are prayer lines for those seeking employment or vocational changes. There are prayer lines that do only prayers of thanksgiving for healing, births, birthdays, baptisms, anniversaries of baptisms, safe travels, the beauty of a new day and of God's creation and numerous other things.

There are prayer lines for those needing healing in various forms as well as prayer lines for those who are seeking medical consultations or treatments. And, of course, there are two prayer lines that do a hodge-podge of petitions and thanksgiving for various things that don't fit into some of the other categories.

In addition, I have been able to gather 8 to 12 people who will hold the Minnesota TEC (Teens Encounter Christ) teams and candidates in prayer vigil from their first meetings to one month after their TEC weekend. A different group of 8 to 12 members have remained faithful in taking shifts on the prayer vigil line to hold

both team and candidates in prayer for each of our Cursillo weekends in Minnesota. The members on those teams are made up of either past TEC members or members of the 4<sup>th</sup> Day community. Every once in a while a member moves and becomes active in Cursillo in their new diocese. Then we have attempted to hold them in prayer when they have contacted us and told us that they had been called to serve on a weekend in their new community.

I believe that prayer is the one gift that is given to each of us. It can be shared by all people in all sorts of lifestyles. It does not demand that the person have great energy or health nor does it require that a person have financial wealth or security. It demands only that you take a moment in time to be in conversation with God

and to speak the words of your heart silently or aloud for yourself or on behalf of your brother or sister in Christ.

I believe that when one is in that conversation mode of prayer that the relationship to the Holy Spirit is opened up and the miracles of God's grace are shared by the Father with His/Her children. I also believe that it is then that the community of faith (the family of God) begins to feel and share the open door of healing and unconditional love that God promised to all who come with open-hearts...and open-arms.

Peace be with you, and "Ultreya!"

Remember...Christ is Counting on You!

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## Healing and Wholeness — A Journey With God

The Rev. Joanie Delamater, St. John's in the Wilderness, White Bear Lake

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As a young child, my favorite bible verse was Matthew 7:7: "Ask and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you."

I have believed that this is true and my life experience strengthens this belief.

I also believe that when we pray for others as well as ourselves, God listens.

My prayers have evolved from wanting things as a child to wanting a child as a young adult to requesting healing in body, mind and spirit so that I can be the person God created. It is a daily journey of letting go and letting God.

I think this is true for all of us, but we are not always aware of what we no longer need, nor are we sure of how to allow God to be in control. Our culture supports the "me-mine" attitude and being in control. Both are false philosophies. We live in the world, but we are not of the world. There are many mysteries that cannot be explained. Miracles do happen. Prayers do get answered. We can die to our old selves and rise to our new selves in and through Christ, "with God's help" as the baptismal covenant says.

I also believe that God sends people into our lives to companion us on our journey. They are often here to teach us about letting go and letting God. As a child I knew that when I prayed for someone and put my hands on their shoulders, or held their hand (I have learned about boundary issues), God worked through me. I was not in control of what the results were, but God could help others let go. My hands would get hot, and I would intuitively know where to place my hands to facilitate the healing.

Throughout college and graduate school, God presented me with opportunities to listen to others who sought support and reconciliation and were aware of their need to let go. It is sharing our stories and God's story that we belong and come to believe as John's gospel proclaims.

As a teacher, I journeyed with children and parents in their learning and becoming. What an honor! In turn, I was encouraged to grow and change too.

I found a supportive community at St. Christopher's in Roseville where my husband Jim and I could learn and grow, worship, and walk with others on their journey toward God and community. It was while we were there that we attended Cursillo in May 1981. Little did we know then the impact and power of prayer and the Christian community in action! In July that year, Jim broke his neck at White Bear Lake. With two phone calls, the hospital was full of loving and caring Christians, many 4<sup>th</sup> Day Cursillistas, who kept a prayerful vigil with us, claiming healing and wholeness for Jim. Many of you know the story of how he was paralyzed and then, 10 days later, walked out of the hospital, leaving a wake of witness to many of God's power to heal and transform.

We became involved with Cursillo as team members and sponsors, wanting to give back and to continue the love we had received. This journey took me through all aspects of leadership in Cursillo, a road paved with healing and reconciliation. I continued to grow in my gift of healing, being affirmed by so many miracles, great and small. I was party to physical, emotional and spiritual healings, of transformations in relationships, forgiveness and reconciliation, discernment, and a peaceful dying process.

Now I continue my ministry of healing as a priest of this church, as a practitioner of healing touch and a member of the Cursillo community. I try to be open to the many possibilities to grow into wholeness that the Spirit brings me. I invite each of you to pray for the discernment of your gifts, knowing that God will use you to spread the gospel and bring others to Christ if

you are open. I encourage each of you to connect with or build a community of faithful who will encourage you and hold you up in prayer. Renewal groups are an important part of this process, as are church families and other groups on ministry.

Joy in the journey!

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## A Meditative Journey

Linda Storlie, Episcopal Church of the Nativity, Burnsville

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During a Cursillo weekend we listen to many rollos given by lay people and by clergy and we talk about different aspects of apostleship. Journey now in quiet reflection regarding what your life as a Christian is about. In thinking of the messages of the talks, pause along the way, sing or hum the song<sup>1</sup> as the words of song speak the message also.

**Ideal:** As human beings, we need an ideal, a pattern for life. The ideal we embrace shapes our life. In our life we look at the Christian ideal.

Song: *Come to the Water*, p.171: "Come to the water, stand by my side/I know you are thirsty, you won't be denied..."

**Grace:** God has a habit of loving us. He always has and He always will. His is a loving faithfulness. Grace is the free gift of God.

Song: *Amazing Grace*, p.10: "It's grace that brought me safe thus far/And grace will lead me home."

**Laity:** We are called to represent Christ and His church, and use the gifts given to us to carry on Christ's work.

Song: *This Little Light of Mine*, p.174: "This little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine, let it shine, let it shine."

Song: *In His Name*, p.47: "You and I can climb every mountain/Cross every stream and drink from every fountain/In His Name, In His Name."

**Faith:** Faith is a gift from the God of love. Faith can't be proven, but we hold it in our hearts. We can trust in a long line of God's people through the ages who testify that ours is a faithful God. God in Christ works in us. We become the story, the story becomes us.

Song: *Apple of My Eye*, p.196: "Because you're the apple of my eye, I've set you in a high place/Safe where I can feel your heart and draw you close to me. You are my inheritance, you are all that I desire, and I've fashioned you to be with me forever."

Song: *Surely the Presence*, p.25: "Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place. I can feel His mighty power and His grace. I can hear the brush of

angels' wings; I see glory on each face. Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place."

**Piety:** Piety is living life in grace, fully and unreservedly, loving and obeying our Heavenly Father. It involves a life of prayer and a desire to bring Christ to others, and bring others closer to Him. Piety is dedicating our lives to Christ.

Song: *Spirit Song*, p.170: "O let the Son of God enfold you/With His spirit and His love/Let Him fill your heart and satisfy your soul. O let Him have the things that hold you/And His spirit, like a dove/Will descend upon your life and make you whole."

**Study:** We cannot love what we don't know, and we cannot know without study. We need to study to discover what it means to us to be Christians. We study to inform, enhance, and maintain a close relationship with God.

Song: *Thy Word*, p.190: "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet/And a light unto my path."

Song: *Open Our Eyes*, p.19: "Open our eyes, Lord. We want to see Jesus. To reach out and touch Him – and say that we love Him. Open our ears, Lord – and help us to listen. Open our eyes, Lord. We want to see Jesus."

**Sacraments:** A sacrament is an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace. Sacraments are special encounters with our Risen Lord, the means by which Christ is with us here and now. Sacraments communicate His saving presence to us; they bring us to God.

Song: *Sanctuary*, p.95: "Lord prepare me, to be a sanctuary, pure and holy, tried and true. With thanksgiving, I'll be a living sanctuary for you."

**Action:** Your daily life is your temple, so make a friend, be a friend, bring a friend to Christ.

Song: *We Are the Family of God*, p.65: "We are the family of God...and He's brought us together to be one in Him that we might bring light to the world. Go make disciples of all men, tell them that my way is true/ Show them by your own example, that they might be one in Him too."

**Obstacles to a Life in Grace:** In living the life of grace there are real and present difficulties that we need to recognize and accept. We sometimes fall off the grace wagon and just need to pick ourselves up again, turn to Christ and start over. The counsel and spiritual support of our clergy can help us. We ask God to show us how to be in His presence and how to be rejoined in His presence along the narrow ridge of faith.

Song: *Spirit of the Living God*, p.87: “Spirit of the Living God/Fall afresh on me. Melt me, Mold me, Fill me, Use me. Spirit of the Living God/Fall Afresh on me.”

**Leaders:** Jesus calls us to be leaders in our environment. We are called to fill His house unto the fullest. Being a leader takes work. It takes faith, humility, hope and charity. A Christian leader is committed to action, to changing the world for Christ. Christ is the perfect model of a leader.

Song: *Fill My House*, p.98: “Fill my house unto the fullest, take my bread, and drink my wine. The love I bear is held from no one. All I have and all I do I give to you. Join with me, as one in Christ-love. May our hearts all beat as one. May we give ourselves completely. All I have and all I do I give to you.”

**Environment:** All around us are environments that we need to look at again in light of our relationship with God. We need to live and work and act effectively in those environments to change them and bring others to Christ. Sometimes people have to be given God, and we can make our joy in Christ evident to others.

Song: *Jesus My Lord*, p.14: “Have you seen Jesus my Lord/He’s here in plain view. Take a look, open your eyes/He’ll show it to you ... Have you ever looked at the family, with the Lord there in your midst? Seen the face of Christ on each other? Then I say you’ve seen Jesus my Lord.”

**The Christian Life in Grace:** Life in Christ can’t be explained – it must be experienced. Cursillo is only one instrument to help us to examine our life in Christ. The real world is where we are to love and serve the Lord. Throughout our lives, Christ will be there.

Song: *Those Who See Light*, p.167: “Those who see light/Can walk in the dark. Those who see love can see God. Those who see good in each person they meet; Those who look after their neighbor in need; Those

who believe God’s now living in them will see God’s return.”

Song: *Be Not Afraid*, p.187: “Be not afraid, I go before you always, come follow me, and I will give you rest.”

**The Christian Community in Action:** When we go forth into our communities, we will be able to transform our world because the redemptive love of Christ supports us. With Christ in our hearts, there is much to celebrate in God’s great world.

Song: *Here I Am Lord*, p.209: “Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord? I have heard You calling in the night. I will go, Lord. If you lead me, I will hold Your people in my heart.”

**Group Reunion:** As we live in our 4<sup>th</sup> Day communities, we can draw strength from other Christians through regular contact. We are to love our neighbor as our self, and ask God to help us. We know that God is not yet finished with us.

Song: *Sing a New Song*, p.204: “Sing a new song unto the Lord/Let your song be sung from the mountains high. Sing a new song unto the Lord/Singing alleluia.”

**Ultreya:** Take Christ with you to change your environment. You are a child of God. You are the person God wants to use. Spend time with your spiritual family – your brothers and sisters in Christ, and with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Today is your 4<sup>th</sup> Day. Onward! Get on your way! Ultreya! Ultreya!

Song: *Shine, Jesus, Shine*, p.89: “Shine, Jesus, shine, fill this land with the Father’s glory... Blaze, Spirit, blaze, set our hearts on fire....”

The Cursillo weekend rejuvenates our spiritual lives. The three days end, but our life in Christ continues to grow as we commit our lives to our Lord wherever we are.

Song: *Our God Reigns*, p.25: “How lovely on the mountains are the feet of Him/Who brings good news, good news/Announcing peace, proclaiming news of happiness, Our God Reigns, our God reigns.”

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<sup>1</sup>Page #s for song titles refer to the blue-green Cursillo songbook: *Songs*, published by Songs & Creations, Inc., San Anselmo, CA, © 1972, 1992.

**Thank you** to those who contributed to Christmas for Cursillo!  
Your continuing prayers, involvement and financial support  
allow us to continue to hold weekends.

## Called by God

Tim Schmolke, Ascension Episcopal Church, Stillwater – Rector, Coed Cursillo # 31, February 2005

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I awoke early the Friday morning of our Cursillo weekend at Wilder Forest. As I walked from my quarters to the sleeping lodges to wake everyone up, I marveled at the hooting of the owls announcing the end of their “night shift” and the beginning of the day. It sounded like a dozen or more hooting away, as if to say “Greetings” to God’s new day. From the owls Friday morning to the snowfall on Sunday, we were reminded of the beauty of God’s creation and how wonderful it is to be called to be a part of it.

We are all called to be a part of God’s creation in many different ways. It may be the call of God we hear in the beauty of the forest, calling us to be faithful stewards of God’s creation. It may be the call of God we hear in the talks of the Cursillo weekend, calling us to examine our lives and be the person God wants us to be. It may be the call of God in the voice of others who are in pain and are suffering, calling us to be God’s instrument of healing, strength and joy. Whatever the call may be, we must be prepared to recognize and answer that call.

Our God is a patient and persistent God, and God will continue to call us and continue to wait to hear from us. This is not like a business, where if you turn down a promotion or transfer, you may not get asked again. This is not like invitations to parties, where if you constantly turn them down, you stop getting invited. Nor like repeatedly turning down offers to serve on the church Vestry, where you don’t get asked again ... wait, never mind that last one ... but remember that God will wait and will ask again ... and again ... and again, until we recognize that God is calling us because God knows we are the ones with the talents required for the particular task God has in mind.

When I was called to be the Rector for Coed Cursillo #31, it started out with my friend Mike Kramer asking if I would be interested in doing the job. I felt honored to be asked and excited about the prospect of a Cursillo weekend at a new location, Wilder Forest. My wife Julie and I talked a lot about it and prayed about it, as it is a large commitment, and the entire family is affected by it.

The formation of the team was an exciting process in itself, with the calling of old and new friends. As I recognized that it was not Mike Kramer’s initial request, but God’s call to me to lead this team, I was amazed and humbled by the talented, gifted people God sent to help. This was not going to be *my* Cursillo weekend, but God’s and the candidates’ weekend, and we all were simply brought together by God to pool our talents and serve the candidates.

Wilder Forest was a wonderful site for a Cursillo weekend, with beautiful buildings in a beautiful wilderness setting. We truly enjoyed God’s touch in our surroundings. However, the site does not make the weekend, for it is the people who make a difference.

I shared with a number of people how the thing that impressed me the most when I first went through Cursillo was the number of people working to support the weekend, a number that continued to grow as more team members were introduced, culminating in the wonderful crowd at the Clausura. I was again humbled by all these people giving of their time and talents for me. I did not know what I had done to deserve this, but was excited about being a part of this community.

For this is what Cursillo is all about: the building of the Christian community. I confess to not seeing this for quite a while, as I have worked a large number of Cursillo and other similar three-day weekends since I first went through Cursillo. It was so much fun to share God’s love in this way. Even as I prepared for Coed Cursillo #31, I was looking forward to the fun of another weekend. At the same time, I gained a deeper understanding of the three-day weekend as the springboard for launching into the 4<sup>th</sup> Day. By focusing on the weekend and looking forward to working another team, we lose sight of the “bigger picture,” God’s call to us to be the instruments of God’s love throughout the world. It is this work for which Cursillo prepares us, and this work which should become the focus of our lives.

Many people have seen this much sooner than I, and I applaud them for it. They are focused on their Christian life outside of three-day weekends while still following the Cursillo guides of piety, study and action, and they set a wonderful Christian example for the rest of us. But they are too few and far between. We must all rise up to the next level in our lives with participation in reunion groups and attendance at Ultreyas, while continuing to bring Christ to others in our daily lives. This is a tremendous challenge to me personally, because I fondly remember a lot of fun, moving, rewarding weekends, culminating in being Rector at Wilder Forest. As I mentioned at the Clausura, “Every Rector/Rectora has used the line about how wonderful it would be if we could stay here forever, but I got to say it and mean it sincerely at Wilder Forest!”

But we must come down from our mountaintop experiences and continue the work God has for us. We must work to follow the Cursillo method to keep up our spiritual strength for the tasks ahead. This is my challenge to all – do not look forward to the next three-

day weekend opportunity. Don't worry, God will call you when there is need of *your* talents, and next time it may not be for a Cursillo weekend. Be prepared, keep up your spiritual strength, recognize the calling, and go

out to do God's work. God has trust in you and your abilities; after all, they are "God-given." God is counting on you, and so are all the rest of us. Ultreya! God's peace.

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## Evangelization of the Environment — Rollo #11

Given by Jessica Ulrich, Cursillo #31, Wilder Forest, February 2005

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*Editor's Note: Cursillo is meant to strengthen us as Christians to return to our parishes to serve as leaven there and in our environments. The message in this edited rollo strongly affirms what Cursillo is all about.*

Look around you – what has your environment been this weekend? Your first thoughts may be: cold, snowy or wintery, beautiful, serene, cozy. However, when I speak of the environment, I don't mean the physical surroundings here at Wilder Forest. The environment I speak of consists of the various people and situations we each come into contact with and the sum of the ideas and circumstances brought about by people around us. Having said that, your thoughts may change to those friends at your table, the leadership here in the Rollo room, everyone in the kitchen, those who have been praying for you this weekend, etc. What an environment we have been a part of!

Now, think of the environment(s) you have been away from this weekend. These are probably numerous and are generally places in which we are known and respected by others. The environments I can think of are work, family, friends, church, book studies, education, health club, kids' play groups, sports teams, music organizations, online chat groups. How are these environments different from the one we are a part of this weekend? How do they feel? The environment we have been in this weekend may not have felt comfortable to begin with – but isn't it comfortable now? It's been my experience that when I meet other Christians, the bond we have with Christ makes things comfy all the more quickly. That bond can make the newest friend seem like someone you've been close to your entire life!

Sadly, not all of our friends, families, co-workers, and weight-lifting partners know Christ, do they? There are some we don't have that "instant bond" with – yet.

Brothers and sisters, like many individuals in the Bible, we each have a call from God. We each have the power to effect change in our environments. It is not of our own power, however. Some of you may be thinking, "No sweat!" (You may feel like Isaiah – "Send me!" – or Abraham, who left his homeland to go where he had never been, no questions asked.) On the other hand, some of you may be thinking, "You lookin' at me?" Like Moses. Could Moses have spoken to the Pharaoh and all of the Israelites without God's help? How about

Jeremiah? His response to God was, "But I am too young – who will listen to me?" So you may say, "You lookin' at me?" Yep. I'm lookin' at you. But more than that, I'm looking at the Holy Spirit that is in you. None of us can do it without the Holy Spirit.

Wishing to encourage her young son's progress on the piano, a mother took the small boy to a Paderewski concert. After they were seated, the mother spotted a friend in the audience and walked down the aisle to greet her. Seizing the opportunity to explore the wonders of the concert hall, the little boy rose and eventually explored his way through a door marked "No Admittance." When the house lights dimmed and the concert was about to begin, the mother returned to her seat and discovered that her son was missing. Suddenly, the curtains parted and spotlights focused on the impressive Steinway on the stage. In horror, the mother saw her little boy sitting at the keyboard, innocently picking out "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star." At that moment, the great piano master made his entrance, quickly moved to the piano, and whispered in the boy's ear, "Don't quit. Keep playing." Then leaning over, Paderewski reached down with his left hand and began filling in a bass part. Soon his right arm reached around to the other side of the child and he added a running obligato. Together, the old master and the young novice transformed a frightening situation into a wonderfully creative experience. The audience was mesmerized.

That's the way it is with God. What we can accomplish on our own is hardly noteworthy. We try our best, but the results aren't exactly graceful, flowing music. But with the hand of the Master, our life's work truly can be beautiful. My point? God doesn't call the equipped – he equips the called. He transforms you and me.

This transformation occurs on three levels: (1) in ourselves, (2) in others, and (3) in the total environment. It is important that we examine each step as we talk about evangelization and our environments.

**Transforming ourselves** (2 Corinthians 3:18: *But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.*)

There are four main areas involved in self-transformation:

- **In our will:** We decide and are determined to accomplish something... something for God, within ourselves and for others. (Col. 3:23: *Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men.*) Our will becomes transformed by the Lord of our lives. The second area where our self-transformation occurs is...
- **On our knees:** Through prayer, we draw on God's power (Luke 11:9-10: *So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, it will be opened.*) We must bathe all that we do in prayer – it is essential. Thirdly, we are transformed...
- **In our minds:** (Romans 12:2: *And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.*) We need to pray for the Holy Spirit to renew, re-educate, and redirect our minds to be truly transformed. Through working in Youth Ministry, I was reminded of how frequently teens were pulled by peer pressure. Even though we are adults, we can still be affected by it. It is imperative that we focus and guard our minds on what is true and right. Finally, the self-transformation happens...
- **In our hearts:** As Christians, we are to be loving and caring in every situation. We are to show the kind of love that attracts us to Christ, which, in turn, attracts others to Him. We are to build the bonds of friendship and interest with others, and that will inevitably include sharing our love for Christ. You and I can be transformed through those times of encouraging each other.

So, that's transforming ourselves. How about **transformation in others?** If you observe others in various environments, you will notice that many different types of relationships exist:

- **Those who are committed to the Christian walk.** They daily strive to live a life of grace. They are working on transforming their own life, but may not always be committed to transforming the world around them or their environments.
- **Those who try to live as a Christian at times.** They may believe but only practice that faith under certain conditions: when they are with other Christians (comfortable), when they are afraid or in danger (God as Emergency Kit), when things appear to be hopeless ("as a last resort"), when it is helpful for their reputation (if it helps to name-drop), or when they feel it's time to make a deal (God, help me with this, and I will give away all of my material possessions – I promise!).

- **Those who are Christians by affiliations.** They've always been one (well, most of the time). An illustration I've always liked that parallels this is: If you spend all of your time in the garage, it doesn't make you a car!
- **Those who aren't Christians.** They don't know God or maybe they live their lives without any reference to God. It could be very possible that no one they trust has ever taken the time to witness to them.
- **Those who have deliberately rejected Christianity.** They may not believe in God at all; they may be scornful at Christians; they may argue against Christians; they may simply be apathetic and indifferent.

It's important that we identify what types of relationships exist in the numerous environments of which we are a part. Now, what do we do once we know this?

- **Win their hearts:** So they will be open to receiving the knowledge of Christ. In order for this to happen, we must be loving and understanding. You've heard the call: Make a friend, be a friend, bring a friend to Christ. That first step – make a friend – is so important. Do not skip it. I have a long history with an organization called Young Life. In all of my training with this incredible mission, I have heard this phrase time and time again, "We must earn the right to be heard." If we do this, we can befriend and walk alongside those we are in contact with.
- **Win their minds:** Help others to understand who Christ is and what it is to live the Christian life. Mentor them. Think about those people who have inspired and mentored you. Do likewise. Know and believe that every person has a hunger for God. One of my favorite Christian bands, *Plumb*, had a song several years ago that can be heard in the movie *Bruce Almighty*. The chorus goes: "There's a God-shaped hole in all of us, and a desperate soul is searching. There's a God-shaped hole in all of us, and that's a void only He can fill."
- **Win their will:** Communicate the Christian ideal of grace; present to them the call to follow Christ. Their heart is being prepared by Christ himself. We are to trust our guidance by God as to when we extend an invitation to follow Christ.

These three steps with others – winning their hearts, minds, and will – can take a great deal of time. It is most likely not going to happen overnight, and there will be times you just don't know if you got through to others or not.

I believe that, though we are small, we can make great ripples in this world. You may never know how far that ripple effect will go, but chances are, it will go great

distances. I am reminded of 2 Corinthians 4:7: *But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves.*

The third level of transformation occurs **in the environment:**

- Realize that we have to work with more than individuals. We are all part of a greater whole. Individuals live in situations and in groups, so we also have to work within the given situation and group as we work with the individual.
- We need to permeate and penetrate these environments. In a sense, we must be God-germs (a good infection)! We need to work from within to bring others to union with Christ.
- Fully become part of the environment in order to bring it to Christ. Another Young Life term is “contact work.” Part of my ministry was contact work, or hanging out with youth on their turf. I went to the junior high every day and saw them at lunch, or after school. I was asked to help with viola sectionals during the orchestra rehearsals. I became part of their daily environment. Was I comfortable? Not always! Paul writes in 1 Cor. 9:20-23: *To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law though not being myself under the Law, so that I might win those who are under the Law; <sup>21</sup>to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, so that I might win those who are without law. <sup>22</sup>To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some. <sup>23</sup>I do all things for the sake of the gospel, so that I may become a fellow partaker of it.*

Was Paul comfortable – not always! We are to step out of our comfort zones and into the environments of those we are trying to reach. I stumbled across a writing, “Dandelions,” by a Catholic priest. Father Pat puts things this way:

“No matter how carefully I try to pull one up, I never get the whole thing. The root stays deep in the ground, threatening to grow up and blossom again. But despite their bad reputation, dandelions are pretty little flowers with their yellow strands all tucked neatly into the center. And truly they are the most beautiful of all flowers when presented clutched in a child’s dirty little hand. No one gets yelled at for picking them. Perhaps they grow only to be used and enjoyed by children. Dandelions are ignored or attacked, never nurtured or cared for, and yet they always bloom profusely. They demand no pampering or special attention to yield their bright blossoms; they pop up in fields, in

lawns, and between cracks in the sidewalk, even in the best neighborhoods. Can you imagine trying to grow them in a garden? They’d sneak through the boundaries and pop their sunny yellow faces up in the surrounding lawn. They would never stay put!

Christians should be more like dandelions. Our sunny yellow faces should be a reminder that simple faith has deep roots that are impossible to dislodge. Our vast number would show the world that even though we are not fancy or pampered we are evident everywhere, even in the best neighborhoods.

We should be as easily accessible as a dandelion. Jesus is. We need to get out of our gardens and jump across the boundaries that keep us where people expect to find us. We need to show our sunny yellow faces in all the spots that need a little brightening up – the crack in the sidewalk or the lawn of a country club.”

- We must work as a team – with other Christians – to transform the environments in our lives. Perhaps others can help offer palanca, and prayers. We can come together to transform.

The second verse I memorized in VBS when I was young (after John 3:16, of course) was Matthew 28:19-20, The Great Commission: *Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup>teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.*

As a Youth Director, I shared this verse with a simple way to think about it: BLT (Believe, Love/Live, Tell). We have been called to this – to share the message of Christ with others: next door, in the inner city, on reservations, in other countries. This is *not* an option, but a command – to *all* who believe. And as we obey, we have comfort in the knowledge that God is with us.

The congregation I served had as a mission statement: “A community growing disciples for Christ.” A song we often sang was a strong reminder of that statement:

Go make disciples, baptizing them, teaching them.  
Go make disciples, for I am with you ’til the  
end of time.  
Go be the salt of the earth.  
Go be the light for the world.  
Go be a city on a hill  
So all can see that you’re serving me.  
Go, make disciples!

As we leave this weekend, we enter our mission field.

Go!

† † †

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