

Cursillo: Not a Retreat, but a Renewal

By Kathleen Munroe

“made” my Cursillo, as we say, 28 years ago, in October 1986. That means I went to NY Cursillo #28, a three day renewal weekend—not a retreat by any means! As a conservative cradle Episcopalian, I was a bit afraid that I was about to be sucked into a cult, but my rector had gone, as had some good friends in the parish, and all highly recommended it. I felt that my spiritual life needed a boost, so I was willing to give it a try.

It was an exciting, emotional, and fun filled weekend, that sent me home a changed person. Cursillo is often described as “an encounter with Christ,” and it certainly was for me. It had taken the words of the teachings and given them flesh. I found I heard the Gospel in a whole new way, as if it was being spoken just to me. I felt that I was ready and able to take on the promises made for me in baptism and by me in confirmation. I had been involved in parish life before this, but now I saw it as the lay ministry it truly was, and not just nice, social, volunteer work.

One of the main goals of Cursillo is to create and strengthen Christian leaders in their churches, families and workplaces. It is a weekend of teaching, prayer, fellowship and love, that sends us out empowered to “do the work we have been given to do.” We are supported by the power of the Holy Spirit, which is so actively at work within the Cursillo movement. And we are supported in our ministry by the tools given to us on Cursillo, by group reunion and *Ultreya*—times of meeting with brothers and sisters in Christ to share our journey, our goals, and our joys and sorrows. This networking keeps us focused and feeds us!

About five years after I went, my husband George decided that I was the one having all the fun and it had something to do with “that Cursillo weekend.” He was finally interested! George made *bis* Cursillo on NY#45, and for the next 22 years we worked together for the Lord with renewed purpose, both for Cursillo and in our parish, and in the world. Cursillo also strengthened our marriage and our faith life together.

George’s lay ministry became Teens Encounter Christ (TEC), a youth movement

in the diocese; he was an adult chaperone for the national Episcopal Youth Event; we both became active in a midnight run ministry in our parish, and have remained so for over 20 years. In my own parish, St. Mary’s Mohegan Lake, I have been a lay Eucharistic minister, altar guild director, vestry member and warden, among other things. I have served on NY Episcopal Cursillo Secretariat, which is the governing board of Cursillo, for almost 20 years, because I truly believe in and support the

ministry it offers. Both George and I ran Cursillo weekends, and have served on many teams, hoping to share with others the wonderful loving experience we had. I currently manage a prayer request site for all NY Cursillistas.

Undoubtedly the best gift of all from Cursillo is the many hundreds of friends we have made all over the diocese, people we never would have met any other way. This was particularly evident to me in the love poured out by the many friends from all reaches of our diocese who attended George’s funeral last year.

When I hear Cursillo spoken of as a secret society, or hear of churches that don’t want it in their parish, I am saddened that those parishes and their people are losing out on the gifts

Cursillo can bring to a parish family. Although I have always been a joiner, Cursillo gave me a sense of ministry, and the spirit and the strength to carry it out. Cursillo showed me that I can work for the Lord in many ways, and that everything we do should be to the glory of the Lord. Cursillo gave me a desire to study and read, to learn, and share my gifts; and the assurance that I will always be part of a Christian community. *De Colores!*

Munroe is a member of St. Mary’s Church, Mohegan Lake.



For information about Cursillo visit www.nycursilloepiscopal.com