

WHERE IT ALL BEGAN

MALLORCA SPAIN

Shown here is the outside of the monastery buildings and gardens where the Cursillo was founded in the 1940's.



CURSILLO: SHORT COURSE, LONG COMMITMENT



Eduardo Bonnín, the founder of the Cursillos, pictured in the room where the first Cursillo was held.

Eduardo Bonnín has devoted his life to a movement dedicated to spreading the Christian message of love through one-to-one relationships.

Eduardo Bonnín is short, frail and 70 years old. His steps are now slow, his English halting as he steps up to speak to some of his Catholic, Anglican, and Lutheran followers in Ottawa. Yet through Cursillo, the Christian renewal movement he founded 52 years ago, this man's ideas have touched an estimated three million people around the world. And it was easy to see why when he began to speak. Bonnín believes what he teaches, and lives it out. "We must love one another. If we do not catch this way, there will be wars," he said. And there were more clear, simple ideas that he says are the core of a movement meant to spread the Christian way of life through one-on-one relationships.

"Newspapers, radio, television don't give the solution to life. Christ gives the solution."

"You can't say to someone, 'You must go to church.' You say, 'You must be friends of mine.' When the bridge is built, then you can speak of Christ." These ideas and others are part of the three-day weekend retreats that are the heart of Cursillo, a Spanish word meaning "short course". An encounter with yourself, with Christ and with your neighbor" that touches the heart and the emotion as well as the mind.

Cursillo is still spreading throughout the world. The concepts work just as well in Taiwan as in Africa, says Bonnín. The retreats still use the same talks on the fundamentals of Christianity that Bonnín and six others worked out for the first Cursillo retreat on the Spanish Island of Majorca. And although Bonnín says he could never have anticipated the movement would spread so far, he said they had hopes. Even at the first retreat, "We said we would never stop until we gave a Cursillo on the moon."

Bonnín says that all he did was study the works of theologians such as Yves Congar and psychologists such as Carl Rogers, then synthesized these ideas into short talks. "The Holy Spirit did it. I don't make nothing," he says.

One of the key concepts of Cursillo is "be Christian and form community where we are." That's how Bonnín has spent his whole life.

Except for nine years of military service, he always worked in the family almond business on Majorca. But he never married, and spent his vacations giving Cursillo retreats, and his weeknights visiting prisoners and befriending others.

There are many stories about Bonnín and his concern for others. Of the prisoner he's visited for 20 years, but never—yet—tried to convert. Of the two hardened murderers he visited the night before their executions, and who went to the gallows with a smile because they had believed Bonnín's conversation-starter: "You are lucky. You will see Christ tomorrow."

*Photos from ULTREYA
Taken from the Lutheran Cursillo of South California (LCSC) Fourth Day Cronicles June, 1996-
After an Article in the Ottawa Citizen (1 June 1996)*