



The Life of the Founder & the History of Cursillo

Introduction

This rollo is an introduction on the Life of our Founder and the History of Cursillo. The two are connected, as is the Founding Charism of Cursillo. The life of our Founder, the History and the Charism of Cursillo cannot be limited to one rollo, one Cursillo book, one workshop or one encounter. What is hoped for, is that the message each person receives will create a hunger to explore further, to go deeper into the gift of Cursillos in Christianity so as to reach a unity of purpose and understanding of its Foundational Charism.

1917 – Eduardo was born May 4, 1917 in Palma de Mallorca, Spain

Eduardo was the 2nd of 10 children. One of his brothers became a Priest, one sister became a Vowed Religious and Eduardo became the Founder of Cursillos.



Eduardo never married because he devoted his entire life to Cursillo. He was an avid reader so he would rather read the next book than to eat his next meal.

He was provided an intense religious and academic formation. He studied theology for 2 hours daily. He was a restless young man with great sense of leadership. He befriended prisoners and others and made them friends of Christ.

Eduardo Bonnín, Founder of Cursillos



Eduardo Bonnín Aguiló was, as he himself said, an “**Apprentice Christian**”, who dedicated his life to the proclamation of God's love, valuing people, and going beyond friendship, especially with those who were far away from Christ and his Church.

The 3 core beliefs or values (personal tripod) that Eduardo lived by consisted of:

- Jesus Christ
- The Person
- Friendship

Eduardo and His Experience in the Military.

Eduardo served 9 years in the Army (1937-1946). He soon realized that the men in the barracks had no knowledge of doctrine. He considered these men to be “distant” or “faraway” from Christ and his Church.



From what he observed, lived, and learned and his concern for the person and friendship, Eduardo saw an opportunity through this experience of the barracks: the importance of sharing the message that “God loves us” with everyone, especially with the faraway person.

“The underlying original seed of the idea of Cursillo grew out of the conflict that took place in me. The education I received from my family which I always lived collided with the environment at the barracks when I entered military service at the age of 18.”

“Completely different values were lived there, quite opposite to those that had been my light and guidance since my youth. This shock, continuously proven in my life at the barracks, prompted me to ask: do these men feel weighed down by the Law or do they ignore doctrine?”

“I spent all my time at the barracks trying to find out what people were like, and I came to the conclusion that at the center, at the very core, everybody is the same.”

“This intensified my desire to dig deeper into the core of Christianity and my almost instinctive usual urge to read focused on the books whose authors at the time, were at the top of the wave of the Christian world”.

1940 - A letter entitled H.H. Pious XII and Catholic Action which was addressed to the Pastors in Rome, came into Eduardo’s hands. This letter makes reference to the faraway persons. [Pope Pious XII and Catholic Action, February 6, 1940]



“That letter had an unusual effect on me and brought me to the decision that the most important thing to start with was to have at our disposal, as the Pope advised, a ‘detailed study of the environment’. That conclusion led me to examine each of the groups of persons in the world, in my world and in the Church that I knew and frequented.”

1943 – Inspired by Pope Pious’ XII letter, Eduardo wrote the “Study of the Environment” rollo. This was the beginning of all that followed in Cursillo.

From the “Study of the Environment” to the first Historic Cursillo:

“It was a matter of determining and selecting what constitutes the core of the Christian life and spirit, and with the selected ‘index cards’ of all I was reading and the underlined

passages in books, I had to arrange the material collected and sort it out in an attractive, dynamic and direct way so that it could enter into the heart of the listeners, but I could not think of the most effective way to communicate it.”

“I had learned a lot from the Catholic Action Cursillos and, there I found the solution to what had always concerned me, which was how to explain the ideas that I wanted to pass on to others and make them known to people with some chance of effectiveness. I realized then that what had always been my main concern could be solved by gathering people into a closed and isolated environment, and that this was the best way to accomplish what I wanted. I learned that people should be placed in groups; make posters and try to get as many as possible involved. This is some of what I had discovered at the Catholic Action Cursillos.”

“After much prayer and looking for people willing to pray for the idea, much reflection, planning and structuring, collecting and selecting again all the material accumulated on index cards, notes and underlined passages in books, we managed to gather a few candidates. We took the chance of planning a “new” Cursillo which became the first Three-Day Cursillo Weekend.”

“We needed a priest to explain the spiritual rollos to us and to take care of the spiritual direction of the weekend. All the material we had then, relevant to the role of the priest at the Cursillo, came from the schedules of the Cursillos for Pilgrim leaders, which we gave to the priest.”

“I have the joy and I feel the duty to say that this was already a real and complete Cursillos in Christianity, and it facilitated the participant’s triple encounter with themselves, with Christ and with the brothers. The real origin of the Cursillos in Christianity is in Cala Figuera.”

“By the Grace of God, there were six more Cursillos between 1944 and 1948 with similar success. Whenever I was asked who the author of everything in Cursillo was, I categorically said that it was the Holy Spirit, but when they asked me who developed the structure, who collected the anecdotes, who wrote the lay rollos, who devised the Group Reunion and the Ultreya, I said it was me.”

1943 – Eduardo is named President of the Catholic Action Movement on December



21st. Catholic Action was created by Pope Pius XI. These Cursillos that lasted for a week, in a very pious environment, which Eduardo said gave little importance to human interaction and had a boring environment, “The message was a good one, but it was the messengers that seemed to be boring,” adding, “they needed some airing out.” Eduardo eventually attended a Catholic Action Cursillo.

1944 – The First Three-Day Cursillo

The first Cursillo, known as the Cursillo of Cala Figuera, was held on August 19-22, 1944 in a small villa that Eduardo borrowed from a couple. There were:



- 14 candidates
- 1 Rector: Eduardo Bonnín
- 1 Priest: Fr. Juan Julia
- 2 Leaders: Jaime Riutord and Jose Ferragut

“This was the first ‘Three-Day Cursillo’, and although we called it “Cursillo for Pilgrim Leaders”, because we would not have been allowed to hold it under any other name. This Cursillo was not like the Catholic Action

Cursillos that had been held in Mallorca up to then.” [A Catholic Action Cursillo was 7 days long and were usually held during Easter break and Christmas break. These Cursillos had a different purpose from Cursillos in Christianity.]

1945 – The **School of Leaders** is born in November.

1946 – The **second Cursillo in Christianity in Mallorca** is held in September at the Sanctuary of St. Salvador de Felantix.

1946 - Bishop Juan Hervás is appointed auxiliary Bishop of Mallorca.

1947 - Bishop Juan Hervás is named Bishop of Mallorca on December 22.

1947 – Fr. Sebastian Gaya is appointed Diocesan Counselor of the Catholic Youth.

1947 - The **third Cursillo in Christianity in Mallorca** is held on April 16-20 at the Sanctuary of Priests.

1948 - The **fourth Cursillo in Christianity in Mallorca** is held during Holy Week at the Sanctuary of Lluc.

1948 - The Pilgrim’s Guide

- First edition was published in 1948. It was later published in different languages.
- The Apostolic Hour in the Pilgrim’s Guide is a moment of audience with Christ.
- Pilgrims praying with pilgrims.
- The Pilgrim’s Guide is a basic prayer book written with the “faraway” person in mind.

Fr. Sebastián Gayá authored the Pilgrim’s Guide. It was he who gave body and soul to the Guide and the Apostolic Hour.

1948 - The **fifth Cursillo in Christianity in Mallorca** is held in April at the Sanctuary of Priests.

1948 – The **pilgrimage to the Cathedral of St. James in Santiago de Compostela, Spain** took place in August. [This was organized by the Catholic Action Movement.]

1949 - The First Numbered Three Day Cursillo



- The #1 Cursillo was held on January 7-10, 1949, in San Honorato, Mallorca.
- 21 Candidates
- 1 Priest: Fr. Guillermo Payeras
- 1 Rector: Eduardo Bonnín
- 4 Leaders
- Fr. Juan Capó led the meditations of the Retreat phase.

To remember the first numbered Cursillo, a plaque was placed at San Honorato.

The Cursillo in 1949 was the 6th Cursillo that had been celebrated in history. From this Cursillo in 1949, it can be said that the Cursillos “began to gain strength and momentum”, because since then several were celebrated every month. There were 20 Cursillos in 1949. This was one of the reasons that the need for numbering was considered, because referencing the Cursillos began to get confusing.

1949 – In February, **Eduardo and Andrés Rullán visit the 2 prisoners on death row.** Their visit encouraged the 2 prisoners to go to confession before dying the next morning.

1949 – The De Colores Song is Introduced to Cursillo.

One of Eduardo’s ideas was to find songs that were not pious so that in times of rest in the Cursillo, they could sing and encourage the cursillistas. Guillermo Estarellas introduced the song De Colores during a Three Day Cursillo.

An important note about this song is that: “In the original song it said, ‘and that's why I like pretty girls of many bright colors.’ But when the bishop and the priests heard this section about the “girls”, they told us that we had to remove it in spite of being beautiful, the “pretty girls” were replaced by “loves” and thus the priests could then sing it.” (HCC, p. 137).

1949 - Group Reunion Introduced

The increase of Cursillistas in 1949, led Eduardo to reflect deeply so that this influx of large numbers of Cursillistas would not hinder the groups of friendships that Eduardo considered as early as 1944 as an essential element of the Postcursillo.

The Group Reunion emerged in 1949 to enable the continuous triple encounter with self, Christ and others. The Group Reunion fulfilled the “*personal*” dimension of Cursillo.

There was some opposition from clergy because lay people were meeting without the presence of a priest. The priests feared that this method would lead to deprive the importance of the priest and the role of Spiritual Direction.

1952 – The Cursillo Movement Receives a “Special Blessing” from the Hierarchy.



In 1952, another moment occurred that marked the life of Eduardo; the famous blessing of Bishop Juan Hervás. Eduardo describes that moment in this way:

“I publicly asked Bishop Hervás if he would pronounce his approval or disapproval of Cursillo. I said, “If you tell us that we should stop, we will stop; and if you tell us to continue, we will continue.” I asked him three times so that everyone would take note. Then Bishop Hervás stood up and said: *“I bless Cursillos in Christianity not with one hand, but with both.”*”

1952 – Bishop Juan Hervás announces that the appropriate name for the Movement should be “Cursillos in Christianity”.

1953 - The Ultreya [First mention of Ultreya in the Catholic Action Bulletin.]

The weekly [Friendship] Group Reunion [1949] and the Group Reunion at Ultreya [1953] became essential elements of the Postcursillo and an integral part of the Cursillo method.

- Ultreya is a word used by people on pilgrimage to St. James of Compostela. Ultreya! Onward! Almost there!
- The Reunion of the Group Reunions.
- The Ultreya fulfills the “*social*” dimension of Cursillo.
- The Ultreya enables the best of each person to reach as many as possible.

The rise of the Cursillos and the enthusiasm and friendship that Cursillistas lived could not be left alone in the intimate and personal dimension of Group Reunion. The Cursillistas met at the Ultreya to share “everyone with everybody” the wonders that the Lord was doing in their lives.

1953 – Cursillos for Women



- From the beginning, Eduardo felt Cursillo had to be open to the reality of all people, men and women.
- First Women’s Cursillo was held in Columbia in 1953.
- Priests could not be in the pictures with the women who lived Cursillo and could not eat at the same table.

“Since the beginning, Eduardo made a petition for Cursillos for women and suffered denials. To be truthful, there was no discussion and there was a lot of misunderstanding because people from all over would come to us saying that women should live the same as what the men had, but, of course, not together in the same Cursillo.”

1954 – Mallorca celebrates its 100th Cursillo.

1954 – First Diocesan Secretariat Established

- The first Secretariat was setup in Mallorca, the founding Diocese of the Movement.
- Its membership included a priest and lay persons.

1955 – Bishop Juan Hervás transferred.

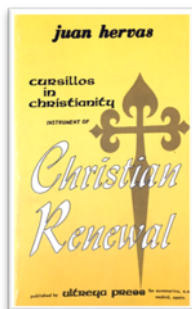
- Bishop Hervás left the Diocese of Mallorca in 1955. He was assigned to Ciudad Real, Spain and was replaced by Bishop Jesús Enciso.

1956 – The Great Desert, A Challenging Event in the Life of Eduardo and Cursillo

- Bishop Jesús Enciso wrote a “Pastoral Letter on Cursillo” which suspended all Cursillo activity. The Bishop did not want Cursillos in his diocese.
- Eduardo was asked: “And now what are you going to do?” To which he replied, “Well, obey, because if the one who has to obey does not obey, the one who commands will believe that if things go wrong, it is not because he commands badly but because he is not obeyed.”

This pastoral letter shook Eduardo, all of the Cursillista family and a good part of the religious climate of Mallorca. At the same time, this trial reinforced and confirmed the transcendence of Eduardo’s beliefs, giving a real and definitive value to the apostolic action, to which he was dedicated by divine election and by his personal commitment.

1957 - Bishop Hervás’ Pastoral Letter



- Bishop Hervás published his Pastoral Letter from Ciudad Real, *Cursillos in Christianity, Instrument of Christian Renewal*.

- This was the reason why Bishop Hervás came to be considered “*Bishop-Founder of the Cursillos*” even though he had never lived a Three Day Cursillo.

- “The most complete treatise on our movement that had been prepared up to that time”. Some say it is the longest Pastoral Letter ever written.

In 1957, there was a good moment for Eduardo Bonnín. While his life was deprived of freedom, in regard to his apostolic activity in the Cursillos, and in some ways his public life, an event in Ciudad Real, where Bishop Juan Hervás had been transferred, propelled the activity of Cursillos to take new flights, although outside of Mallorca. Eduardo traveled several times to the peninsula. The desert became a catalyst.” Bishop Hervás started Cursillos in Ciudad Real and invited Eduardo to assist.

1957 - Cursillo de Cursillos

- Eduardo felt there was a need to find something designed for leaders and potential leaders of the Cursillo Movement.
- The Cursillo de Cursillos was designed by Eduardo and some friends.
- The first Cursillo de Cursillos was held in Madrid, Spain in 1957.

“In Eduardo’s ‘lab of ideas’ [office], we prepared all the initial outlines for the Cursillo de Cursillos. Two versions were written, one to take two days and the other, three days (both with an introductory evening) to suit the available time in each locality.”

1957 – First Cursillo Celebrated in the United States

- Cursillo arrives in the United States!
- The first Men’s Spanish Three Day Cursillo was held in Waco, TX in May 1957.

1958 – The first Women’s Cursillo in Spain was celebrated in Tarragona.

1959 - Structure of Ideas Book

- Eduardo and his friends took advantage of the lack of activity of the Cursillos to study in depth and to reflect.
- It was the right time to put all that was intended with Cursillos in writing in a book titled Structure of Ideas.
- Structure of Ideas had an enthusiastic acceptance.

1960’s – Eduardo Spread Cursillo to the Five Continents

- Eduardo Bonnín was traveling to insist on the Good News that God in Christ loves us and doing so with an attitude of friendship towards all the people he met.
- The seed of Cursillo spread throughout the five continents. Soon after Bishop Hervás had published his Pastoral Letter, dozens of Latin American Bishops were knocking on his door asking that the Movement be established in their Diocese.
- He was in **Germany** in June 1976, April 1997 and October 2001. In **Angola** in July 1973. In **Argentina** in October 1981, November 1991, August 1992, May 1993 and November 1994. He went to **Australia** in September 1991 and September 1998. Cursillos were discussed in **Austria** in December 1971, September 1974 and October 1992. He went to **Bolivia** in April 1998 and to **Brazil** in July and August 1966. He went to **Canada**, in January 1992, July 1992, July 1993, April 1994, April 1995, September 1995, and May 1996; to **Chile**, in August 1988 and ten years later returned in August 1998. In July 1998 he was in **China**. In **Colombia** in August 1968, in **South Korea** in April and May 1972, September 1992 and October 1997, in **Costa Rica** in July 1978 and **Ecuador** in July 1995. He was in **El Salvador** in 1996. He was in **Scotland** in 1995, the **United States** in 1961, the **Philippines** in 1972, etc. [Read the 100 Years: Biography and Mentality book for a complete list.]

1961 – The first English Cursillo in Christianity was held in San Angelo, TX.

1962 - Leaders Manual by Bishop Hervás



- Eduardo gathered all the outlines of Cursillo that he had and sent them to Bishop Juan Hervás at his request.
- Bishop Hervás and his friends published a Leaders Manual in 1962.
- Eduardo considered this another setback for Cursillo because some criteria was changed in some rollos.

“We have always believed that one of the greatest potential benefits of our movement is to assist Christians to go from the level of rules to the level of criterion in their lives. The Leaders Manual was expressly designed to instill just the opposite. The Cursillos themselves in their methodology went from criterion to adherence to rules. Cursillo was

locked in a set of rules that could threaten the basic spirit of the Movement.”

1965 – New Bishop of Mallorca Appointed After Bishop Enciso’s Death

- Bishop Alvarez Lara was appointed Bishop of Mallorca. He knew Cursillos intimately from experience in his former Diocese.
- Bishop Lara established a relationship with Eduardo Bonnín. Both agreed that Eduardo should concentrate on the international development of the Movement.
- This was not an immediate return to Cursillo in the Diocese of Mallorca. There had to be a slow and evolving return to fundamentals and sources and move away from the situation that had been created.

1993 - The last Three Day Cursillo Eduardo served in was No. 358 on September 30, 1993 in Santa Lucia, Mallorca.

1994 – 1st Conversations of Cala Figuera, 50 Years After the First Cursillo in 1944

- The I Conversation was born from Eduardo’s desire to gather Cursillistas from all over the world in a meeting for an exchange of experiences and ideas that could later be placed within reach of all Cursillistas to allow the friendship and admiration grow between all. There were 146 leaders from 15 countries in attendance.
- The II Conversations were held in 2002 (200 leaders from 17 countries)
- The III Conversations were held in 2011 after the death of Eduardo (close to 200 leaders from 18 countries), and
- The IV Conversations were held in 2016 (220 leaders from 18 countries). The IV Conversations counted on the presence of Onofre Arbona, the only living Cursillista from the Cursillo of Cala Figuera in 1944.

February 6, 2008 - The Founder of Cursillos in Christianity Dies

Eduardo Bonnín passed away on February 6, 2008. He was buried in the atrium of the Capuchin Church in Mallorca, Spain. His headstone is engraved with the words he used to describe himself: “*An Apprentice Christian*”.

2009 – First Edition of My Spiritual Testament is Published Without the Step by Step Rector’s Guide.

“I will detail in a separate document, step by step, what the Cursillos in Christianity is and what it consists of (Appendices)”. (Eduardo Bonnín, My Spiritual Testament, 2009)

My Spiritual Testament was the book Eduardo was working on when he passed away. His intent was to include the Step by Step Rector’s Guide and Appendices in this book. The work in progress was later completed by Eduardo’s friends and the Foundation Eduardo Bonnín Aguiló (FEBA) and will be published in the second edition of My Spiritual Testament. The second edition will include a chapter on Precursillo, Step by Step and Postcursillo. No publication date available from Mallorca.

February 5, 2015 – Process for Beatification and Canonization Initiated

The first step in the process for Beatification of Eduardo Bonnín began in Palma de Mallorca, Spain on February 5, 2015. His Cause of Beatification is considered “Nihil Obstat” which means there is nothing that stands in the way. Today, Eduardo is considered a Servant of God.

2019 – Mallorca celebrated its 75th Anniversary of the First Cursillo in Christianity which was held in 1944.

2019 – Step by Step Rector’s Guide Introduced

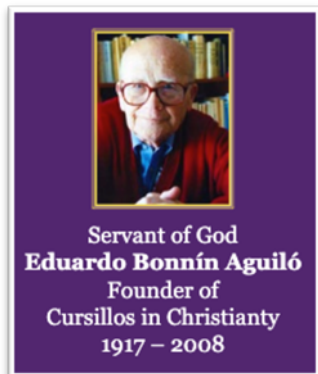
The original Step by Step Rector’s Guide and Three Day Weekend Rollos were written by our Founder, Eduardo Bonnín. These documents have been used by the Cursillo Movement in Mallorca.

Over the years, our National Secretariat has managed to move closer to the Foundational Charism of Cursillo through revisions to the Three Day Cursillo Manual and other Cursillo literature.

The accuracy of these revisions was affected by the lack of access to writings by the Founder, its poor translations into English, and adaptations implemented by Diocesan Movements seeking to make improvements or discarding revisions they did not understand. As a result, members of the National Staff met with the Founder in Palma de Mallorca and discovered that our Movement is to be driven by the Foundational Charism and its criteria versus rules or directives.

The Holy Spirit has drawn us into a deeper relationship and friendship with Mallorca and in an association with the Foundation of Eduardo Bonnín Aguiló, (FEBA). This friendship has increased our access to the writings of our Founder, deepened our understandings of The Foundational Charism and improved our translations.

In Conclusion – Important Quotes from Eduardo Bonnín.



“I sincerely believe that one of the greatest assets that I possess is the knowledge of what the true Cursillos in Christianity consist of, as well as the Movement generated by them. And I know by proven experience that when each piece that makes up the Precursillo, Three-Day Cursillo and Postcursillo fulfil their purpose, it responds with clockwork precision to its aim, which is nothing more than to try to have the Good News of the Gospel reach as many people as possible, and preferably those furthest away (The far away).”

“A categorical responsibility to those who may come after me. At the time of making my will I think that the best thing I can pass on to those who come after me is to leave in writing and in detail what this Movement consists of, what its purpose is, and the aims to be achieved by the Movement which are, to be faithful to the purpose proposed and for which they were developed, designed, prayed for and structured since its beginning in 1944.”

“The Cursillo Movement gives the Cursillistas a true, lively and attractive vision of the living Christ of the Gospel who, once resurrected, renews all things, and that through His grace lived consciously, He turns us into a new person equipped to live in the world valuing what He values”.

“Connected with the divine force at work in the sacraments, the Cursillista gradually discovers that if he contributes his enthusiasm, his dedication and his spirit of charity, living in grace, he realizes that, in spite of all the ups and downs, adventures and misadventures of life, the most important thing in life is life itself. The fact of being alive, will drive the Cursillista to be grateful and come to the realization that *life is beautiful, people are important, and life is worth living*”.