



HOLLY HUDNUT HALLIDAY- Interview on Chicagoland Cursillo Beginnings

I am a member of First Presbyterian Church of Evanston.

The first time I heard about Cursillo I did not go, but after hearing many friends say how much they had enjoyed the weekend, I decided to give it a whirl.

Like Samuel, I finally heard God's call and acted on it.

Every time I have gone thereafter, whether as a participant or a Moderator or a Spiritual Advisor, I have been surprised by God.

And that's the beauty of those 72 hours. Each of us is constantly surprised—whether by the structured events, or the unplanned private time with God.

“Cursillo” translates from the Spanish as “short course,” and it is indeed a short course in Christianity, but I prefer to think of it as a time of spiritual renewal. Each of us was on a pilgrimage—and perhaps that's why the name was later changed. We are, every one of us, pilgrims traveling on the road of faith.

We soon learned of the many facets of a Cursillo weekend. The first time I went, I was surprised by everything! Each day was structured to be rich in meaning and in joy-producing activities. We were given specific table assignments, so we really got to know one another well. Friendships blossomed.

We sang constantly, led joyfully by those filled with the spirit. We heard “rollos,” talks where others shared their faith stories, and I was amazed by what I heard. Our Spiritual Advisors would challenge us further to deepen our thinking about our faith.

The humor there was infectious. We laughed a lot. Skits could reduce us to tears. One time there was what we later called “The Cracked Pot Cursillo,” thusly named when the Moderator pointed out to us that the only way light can enter a vessel is when there are cracks in it. Each of us knew of such a vessel.

The “robes of righteousness” created an early morning surprise—and delight. I was to learn later that these robes were all created by staff for the first Cursillo. Such a tour de force!

The time investment by the staff is immense, and gratitude from all of us for the workers bubbles up with ease. Back in our church's early involvement with the Cursillo movement, the event was open only to Presbyterians, but I am glad to see that since that time the doors have opened wide to any who want to see a deepening of faith in their lives.

I have enjoyed attending renewal events, where we have time for singing, and praying, and of course, shared laughter. It has been easy to recommend this weekend to others. As we celebrate Chicagoland Presbyterian Pilgrimage's 20th birthday in 2020, I join the hymnodist in upholding “strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow”—that hope being that Pilgrimage will continue to thrive and flourish in this new decade.