Good afternoon everyone! I am both honored and humbled to be here with you today at Via de Cristo’s National Gathering, and to reflect on the past, present, and future of VdC and Fourth Day movements in spirituality. I’d like to offer my sincere thanks to Bob Franks, who initiated the invitation for me to speak, as well as to Ed Broestl, with whom I have corresponded over these past few months. Thank you so much for this wonderful opportunity to be here with you today.

When I received the invitation to speak last year I was happy to have the opportunity to be back at Augustana College, this wonderful institution where I taught for ten years, from 2002-2012. So in many ways being with you today here in Wallenburg Hall is like coming home. The focus of my talk today is to historically contextualize the good works and fruits of Via de Cristo with the broader history of the Cursillo movement---Catholic, Protestant, and non-denominational Christian alike. In addition to this history, I hope to also offer an affirmation to those who gather here at Augie near the mighty Mississippi to
persevere on your own personal journeys with Christ and to continue to work as a community to augment each other's spiritual health. What has struck me as a scholar and as a participant in the broader fourth-day movement is that good things happen when people band together in an intentional way to further the love of Christ.

For the next thirty minutes or so, I would like to focus on how Via de Cristo’s good work furthers the vision of the great Eduardo Bonnín Aguilo, the primary architect of the Cursillo movement. Just as important as it was in 1944---the birth year of Cursillo---to work on piety, study and action in a world plagued by war and violence---so too is it essential to work on honing our piety today. We need, more than ever, to bloom where we are planted in a world threatened by global climate change, war, and religious intolerance. While there are indeed many roadblocks today to spiritual health and community, Bonnín’s vision for Christian action is as pertinent today as it was in 1944. Bonnín’s remedy for spiritual and communal malaise: a three-part system of piety, study, and action, offers a path towards increased spiritual health, solidified community, and hope.

*Mallorca, 1930s and 40s*

Now let’s take a trip on the wayback machine and imagine ourselves in the 1930s and 40s. These were rough years, years of turmoil. The second half of the
1930s and the 40s were years marked by war, decolonization, and independence movements. The Spanish Civil War (July 1936-April 1939), Nazi Germany/Third Reich/ National Socialist German Worker’s Party (1933-1945) and World War II (1939-1945), headlined these decades. Violence, struggle, and new political identities were an intrinsic part of a new global reality that was created quite literally from the blood, sweat, and sufferings of hundreds of thousands of men, women, and children. Global shifts in power and political realities most certainly made an impact on local economies where people were making sense of the new world orders. In the midst of global restructurings, violence, and disorder came about new order. When we focus our attention on the mid-1940s on tiny island of Mallorca, Spain, a group of fourteen men took a stand against the reign of fascism, inter-Spanish violence, and a state-controlled Church that had marked their lands since the early 1930s.

The stand that these men took was not a public one—it was hidden and subversive. Tucked away in a small hilltop casa in the tiny coastal town of Cala Figuera, and over the course of three hot days in August 1944, fourteen young men between the ages of 14-27 made an intensive weekend retreat in Christian spirituality. The three-day weekend event was called a “Cursillo”—Spanish for “short” or “little” course. During the 72- hour Cursillo event, these young men, soldiers who had grown up in the shadow of the Spanish Civil war (1936-39) and
who had lived through the repressive fascist rule of the Spanish Falangism and the Spanish Catholic Church, focused on cultivating a deeper piety in a retreat-like setting. While the language of “retreat” wasn’t used at the time by these men, what they helped to usher in, unbeknownst to them, was what would become a global Christian retreat movement—and one that would have a tremendous impact on U.S. Catholic and Protestant cultures in the postwar decades of the 1960s and 70s.

But back to Mallorca, 1944 for a bit longer. There on the island’s east coast, these fourteen young men were sheltered from the hustle and bustle of the capital city of Palma and out of the shadow of the massive Gothic cathedral la Seu. What did this first weekend Cursillo consist of? In a small adobe house that sat on a hill overlooking the cerulean blue Mediterranean waters, these young men listened to fifteen rollos, “little talks”-- ten given by laymen and five given by the army priest Father Juan Julió. These talks emphasized the theological triptych of “piety-study-and action” of Eduardo Bonnín Aguiló, the lay Mallorquín Catholic and primary architect of the weekend. All fifteen rollos were meant to spur the young soldiers to be what Bonnín called “apostles of the streets” and to be the new face of the Church in Mallorca and beyond. What Bonnín crafted and envisioned was a lay-centered, weekend in Christian spirituality that would prompt men and women (starting in the 50s) to not only transform themselves but the cultures and communities in which they lived. As I write in my recently published book The
Cursillo Movement in America: Catholics, Protestants, and Fourth Day

Spirituality, the Cala Figuera Cursillo was “quietly radical.” By offering a blend of centuries-old Spanish Catholic devotionalism and a newer evangelizing kind of piety with a focus on self-improvement, Bonnín’s intensive weekends offered the individual Catholic layman a rare opportunity to have an experience that was unmediated by the state, in sharp contrast to the state-controlled week-long Catholic Action Cursillos. Little did this small group know as they listened to the rollos, participated in post-rollo small group discussions, made posters displaying their piety, and ate comida típica de Mallorca---stewed meat, vegetables, chips, fried eggs and sabrosada/ sausage---that they were pioneers in what would become a global movement in Christian spirituality in the 1960s and 70s.

Bonnín had an agenda—he wanted graduates of the weekend course, cursillistas, to evangelize and to reach, as he coined it, “reach the faraway.” These faraway were men who were damaged from the war, and from the culture of fear and suspicion that enshrouded the island and mainland Spain. Bonnín’s weekend was modelled loosely after the week-long Church-supported Catholic Action retreats for young men but his were different. They marked a decisive break from the clerically-driven, top-down ultramontane-style1930s Catholic Action cursillos, but did so quietly and in a clandestine way. His weekends in the mid-1940s and early 50s were held in tucked away places and the post-weekend ultreyas
gatherings were held at café’s in the public plazas late at night. The men who gathered over café o vino---coffee or wine---blended in with others who were taking in the night. Their conviviality blended in with other revelers’.

Bonnín’s Cursillo weekend and the post-weekend “fourth day”---translated by cursillistas as being “the rest of your life” after the 3 days of cursillo---was an early parachurch movement, to borrow and apply the sociologist of religion Robert Wuthnow’s characterization of post-1960s American Christian lay-led groups to an earlier time. Yet as much as Bonnín’s 1940s and 50s Cursillo weekends resembled parachurch movements, a major difference was that their ties were not as strongly bound to particular church congregation as were the later American Christian movements to which Wuthnow refers. Bonnín’s weekends were grassroots, held in out of the way locations, away from the ever-present gaze of the institutional Fascist Falangist Spanish Catholic Church and its towering gothic cathedrals. And significantly, these little courses came to be called Cursillos de Cristianidad---Cursillos in Christianity—NOT Cursillos de Católicismo—Cursillos in Catholicism. **This part is key to offshoots of Catholic Cursillos such as Via de Cristo. **Bonnín, who witnessed first-hand the demoralizing effects of an ultramontane, falangist Church on laypersons’ morale and spirituality, did everything he could to downplay Catholic triumphalism. He was an early pioneer
in **Christian grassroots piety**---for he initiated a weekend that did emphasize Catholic devotionalism—as well as **ecumenical Christian spirituality**.

Bonnín’s Cursillos were intensive weekend retreats where male-centered grassroots piety was nurtured and where *Amistad*/friendship was encouraged in a wartime climate where suspicion, fear and mistrust abounded. Bonnín, an avid reader, was deeply influenced by philosophers, novelists, and Catholic theologians of the time. One of his only luxuries, in fact, was a well-stocked home library, a marker of his family’s wealth and privilege. He was influenced by the writings of Popes, including Pope Pius X, whose aim was “to restore all things in Christ” as well as his successor, Pius XI, who encouraged Catholic Christians to put their faith in action and called on the laity to reinvigorate their Church.³ Bonnín was well versed in Catholic social teachings and Catholic spirituality, and his experience as a young ethnographer in the barracks prompted him to read widely in psychology, philosophy, and newer writings in Christian spirituality to help him make sense of the spiritual malaise he saw among men.⁴

The United States---in the desert city of Waco, Texas---would become the fifth location outside of Mallorca to host the weekend Cursillos. Colombia was the second host city in 1953, Catalonia and Segovia third in 1954, Rome fourth in 1955, the U.S. fifth in 1957, and Mexico sixth in 1958. Continuity with the Cala Figuera weekend marked these global firsts and emphasized lay empowerment,
grassroots piety, synergies with clergy, and faith in action. And it was Spanish soldiers---Air Force pilots-- who introduced Cursillos to the United States as well as other global locales, including Portugal, Austria, Germany, France, Spanish Guinea, and Mexico. It is no coincidence that that the early weekends emphasized masculinist and military language. Bernardo Vadell, one of the two pilots (with Augustín Palomino) who introduced the first U.S. Cursillo at St. Francis of Assisi Church in the Diocese of Austin May 27-30, 1957, helped introduce the language of “stabbing” men with the truth and doing so when the men were “brown”/”ready” for the truths. The truths centered on men being ready to reconceptualize their Catholic piety and to think of their faith in a new way and willing to live out their faith as mid-20th century apostles for Christ.

In the United States, cursillos would sweep across the country, moving from West to East, starting with the inaugural 1957 Waco, Texas weekend. U.S. Cursillo weekends were first popularized among Southwestern and Western Spanish-speaking Mexican-descent communities. The weekend quickly moved to Midwestern and East Coast English-speaking, white non-Hispanic communities with Western and Southwestern men and women who relocated to these places. And priests who went to observe western weekends took them home to their parishes and dioceses and sparked the movement at closer to home. Cursillos went “viral” before the age of the internet—and did so the old fashioned way. Orally this
included word of mouth, telephone calls, and neighborhood chats. And as far as print culture and dissemination of information goes, postings in parish, diocesan, and church newsletters and bulletins advertised the weekend Cursillo.

So where do Protestants figure into the history of Cursillos? What about Lutherans? And what role does the Midwest play in the bigger picture? The Diocese of Peoria, Illinois offers is a compelling case study for Catholics and Protestants working together in postwar America and challenges the Catholics-as-separate thesis. It was in these Central Illinois suburban parishes that mostly white non-Hispanic Catholics worked closely with white non-Hispanic Protestant men and women, inviting them to take part in a Catholic Cursillo weekend and then travelling with them back to states like Tennessee (Nashville) where Protestant weekends such as the Methodist Walk to Emmaus was formed. The Diocese of Peoria was like an ecumenical laboratory of sorts—where Catholic and Protestant Christians worked together for common goals of improved spirituality. Via de Cristo itself was birthed out of this rich Midwestern spiritual ecumenicism mixed with Mallorquín spirituality.

Since the early 1960s, the majority of fourth-dayer cursillistas have chosen to downplay denominational and theological differences in favor of commonalities and what links them. As believers in Christ, they believe that communion is necessary to feed their bodies and souls, and they seek out experiences such as
intercommunion that will help put them in touch with the divine---even when those situations officially break from the Church hierarchy’s position. The late twentieth-century rise of evangelical Protestant Christianity and churches signaled a desire on the part of hundreds of thousands of American Christians to emphasize experience over particular theologies. Theology matters to contemporary U.S. Christians, but it is a kind of theology that is shaped by the cursillistas themselves---a kind of experiential theology that trumps official Church theology.

The first wave of U.S. Protestant cursillistas in the late 1960s identified themselves denominationally but were part of the late twentieth-century liturgical renewals and reforms that made it possible for them at that time to focus on the possibility and reality of a universal Christian experience. Thus, the Roman Catholic Vatican II Council, rise of Protestant evangelicalism, and mainline Protestant denominational reforms came together in a dynamic way to open the door for U.S. Christians to experiment in new ways. It is rare indeed in American religious history to find Catholics and Protestants working together in to promote an experience of Christian spirituality.

Encountering Eduardo

When Via de Cristo’s very own Robert “Bob” and Rhoda Franks travelled to Mallorca in April 1998 on an Elderhostel trip, the highlight of their journey was
not one of the many enjoyable Elderhostel activities but a hastily arranged meeting with Eduardo Bonnín, a man Bob describes in his journal entry “A Visit With Eduardo Bonnin” as having a “kind and gentle voice and smile” which “added much to our welcome.” *GESTURE TO BOB AND RHODA*

When Bob recalls his and Rhoda’s visit to Eduardo’s apartment, he specifically mentions Bonnín’s support for Protestant versions of the Catholic Cursillo: “He showed us a newspaper from Peoria, Illinois where he visited on April of 1997 for a Walk to Emmaus anniversary.” During one of our conversations over coffee and pastries at Cool Beanz coffeehouse here in Rock Island, Bob conveyed that “Eduardo,” as he and Rhoda called him, was “very supportive” of the denominationally rooted, interdenominational Via de Cristo. Eduardo, recalls Bob, was “happy to hear” that Lutherans “had their own cursillo” and “that other Christians could experience it.”

The Franks, lifelong Lutherans, say that Catholic cursillos were and are attractive to Protestants precisely because of the charisms---gifts of grace---that individual Christians experience during the weekend retreat:

As Bob put it to me once:

“Protestants saw what Catholics were doing after making their cursillos. They saw their awakenings. They saw that cursillistas were not just going to church and giving money in the basket, they saw that they were transformed."
What happened was that the Cursillo methodology helped their faith communities encounter Christ. One of the major things with Cursillo is that the person learns that he is truly an image, a likeness of God. The person has the freedom to choose his faith.”

It was precisely a profound encounter with God, spiritual renewal, and the promise of a new community that propelled U.S. Protestants not only to make a Catholic Cursillo, but to develop their own offshoots of the three-day weekend. The five major Catholic Cursillo-derived Fourth-Day movements that have sprung up in the United States before spreading internationally: Tres Dias, Via de Cristo, Walk to Emmaus, Kairos Prison Ministry International, and National Episcopal Cursillo, are based directly on the Cursillo purpose and tri-fold methodology of Piety, Study, and Action; and their movements’ manuals and handbooks were written with a deep knowledge of and admiration for Eduardo Bonnín’s vision. The fifteen rollos, short talks, are in the same spirit and purpose as the original Mallorquín Catholic Cursillo weekend and veteran cursillistas in all the five offshoots adhere closely to Cursillo’s Leader’s Guide and various literature.

Bonnín’s vision and presence is very much alive today with the current leaders of the Fourth-Day movements, who talk about him in reverent tones and with sincere admiration. Each January, the leaders of the five “in covenant” cursillo “Fourth Day” weekends meet for a weekend of good food, wine, and
conversation and share their successes, challenges, and hopes with each other. For Tracy Schmidlin, a third-generation German American Lutheran, and former President of Via de Cristo from 2009 to 2011, Bonnín has a special place in her heart as he ushered in a wave of revitalized Christian spirituality that continues today. Schmidlin, at a 2010 Via de Cristo Ultreya, publicly praised Bonnín as “the founder of Catholic cursillo who we all owe a debt of gratitude to. He helped to revive his church and the course he developed has helped thousands of Christians experience Christ. We are part of that legacy.” And Tracy’s husband Paul also admires Bonnín as a man who ushered in a new wave of Christian renewal. Tracy and Paul honor Bonnín because he understood that Christians need to have an experience of the heart, an experience that fills them with emotion and that puts them in touch with Christ.

**Via de Cristo: Lutheran and Ecumenical**

Like its sister Fourth Day organizations Tres Dias and Walk to Emmaus, Lutheran Cursillo was inspired by and is deeply rooted in Catholic cursillos. The Lutheran Cursillo movement was affiliated with the Lutheran National Secretariat, NLS, which was formed in 1981. Thirty two Lutheran men, women, and pastors gathered for the inaugural NLS meeting and 14 local Lutheran Secretariats from across the United States were represented over the weekend. Significantly, as we have seen with the other interdenominational movements, the majority of Lutheran
cursillos changed their official name from Lutheran cursillos to Via de Cristo only after the leaders were specifically asked by then-Executive Director of Cursillos Gerry Hughes, to change its name if it continued to be ecumenical. According to the minutes of NLS of April 4-6, 1982, “Gerry Hughes, Exec. Director of the Roman Catholic National Cursillo Center in Dallas, Texas, presented us with an overview of their position on non-denominational versus denominational Cursillos and what is required to be authorized by them to use the name Cursillo.” The National Secretariat’s position was that movements could use the name “cursillo” only when they were denominationally specific. The National Catholic Secretariat’s reasoning has been that movements like Lutheran Cursillo and Walk to Emmaus could not maintain ecumenicism and stay true to the origins of the Cursillo de Cristianidad movement. Notes from the February 4-6, 1982 weekend detail:

“The Catholic Movement is requiring that all candidates be Catholic, and all team members and Spiritual leaders also be Catholic. They are asking the Lutheran Movement to do the same or change our name. Jerry (sic) (Hughes) supplied copies of the Episcopal Articles of Operation, stating we must have Articles of Operation that we refer to the Lutheran Movement for the base doctrine.”
Via de Cristo’s archived records from 1981-1985 reveal men and women who were deeply committed to Catholic Cursillo de Cristianidad’s purpose and methods, but wanted to maintain ecumenism and to open the weekend experience to any Christian man or woman, not just Lutherans. In light of Hughes’ ultimatum, Lutheran Secretariats had to decide which direction to take: remain ecumenical or maintain denominational exclusivity. Perusing the records of 1981-1985 reveals that while this was a liberating time for many Lutherans who saw a split from Catholic cursillos to be healthy for the movement, some experienced a difficult split from their Lutheran brethren as they decided to go the Catholic route of denominational specificity. While the majority of the Lutheran Secretariats voted to branch off of Catholic cursillos in order to maintain ecumenism, some groups, such as the North Carolina East group voted in 1981 to stay with Roman Catholic cursillos and maintain a denominationally specific focus. These groups were allowed to continue using the title Lutheran Cursillo as they were in accordance with the National Catholic Secretariat.

When we examine the minutes and notes from the Lutheran Secretariats from 1981-85 we find that Lutheran cursillistas entertained merging with the interdenominational Methodist Walk to Emmaus Movement, merging with a then-existing Lutheran Kogudus movement, retaining the Cursillo name without licensing, or changing the name of the movement. The name “Via de Cristo” was
unanimously accepted as the name for the Lutheran movement at the February 6-8 1986 NLS meeting at St. Michael’s Lutheran Church at Ottawa Lake, Michigan. The name bested a long list of names that had been proposed, including Arnion (lamb, in Greek), Christlich (“Christ-like,” in German), Christlich leben, Unterricht, De Colores, Open Door, Pilgrimage, Another Look, Sola Gratia (“grace alone,” in Latin), and Christ Encounter. Those involved with the newly named Via de Cristo believed that the movement’s strength rested in its “ecumenical flavor” and that like the Catholic Cursillo which was its parent, Via de Cristo and other “cursillo-type weekends” were keys that, once turned by the Holy Spirit, “opened people’s hearts.” The men and women who founded the NLS Via de Cristo were intent on maintaining the essence of the weekend experience and aide from their pro-ecumenical stance, were conscientiously close to the original Catholic Cursillos. An earlier vote to change the “Fourth Day” to “Pilgrimage” was reversed, as the founders expressed a desire to keep the weekend encounter as close to the original Catholic Cursillo de Cristianidad as possible. As the historical records indicate, the founders and early leaders of Via de Cristo emphasized Hervás, not Bonnín, as the movement’s founder, indicating the National Catholic Secretariat’s influence. The current National Catholic Secretariat acknowledges Bonnín as the originator of the movement and Hervás as an important early
supporter, and this interpretation has influenced recent Via leaders, all acknowledge Bonnín, not Hervás as the movement’s founder.

Via de Cristo experienced impressive growth within its first ten years of existence. In the NLS March 1991 newsletter, President Wayne Ford expressed his enthusiasm for the movement:

“We’ve come a long way, baby! We have grown from 30 delegates to 56 and from 14 member secretariats to 25. But more importantly, over 30,000 Christians throughout the United States have attended a Lutheran Via de Cristo/Cursillo.”

As with its sister movement Tres Dias, those involved in Via de Cristo today value their roots which lie in Catholic cursillo and maintain that a viable Fourth Day movement models itself on the 72-hour experience that Eduardo Bonnín and his friends crafted in 1944. Today’s leaders use the language of “integrity” and “authenticity” to describe the importance of maintaining the link to Catholic Cursillos de Cristianidad as developed in Mallorca. As part of a history that links them to Bonnín’s weekend Cursillo, an immigrant to the United States, Via de Cristo cursillistas carry “green cards” with them in wallets and purses to show that they are dedicated to the piety, study and action that are hallmarks of the Fourth Day movements but also that they are mindful of their roots and that “we are all immigrants.” Significantly, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, with
whom Via de Cristo’s organizing body, the National Lutheran Secretariat (NLS) is affiliated, maintains a pro-immigrant stance which includes outreach to Spanish-speaking migrants from Latin America in the past few decades.

While the NLS, as with the other organizations that are affiliated with the Fourth Day movements, wants individual communities to express themselves during the courses in ways that reflect the surrounding culture and region, they do not tolerate deviation from what they all call “the essentials” which includes the seventy-two hour venue, fifteen rollos and topics, and the overarching venue of piety, study, and action---all of which were part of the original Cursillos de Cristianidad in Mallorca. Via de Cristo 2009-2011 President Tracy Schmidlin calls the many add-ons to a course “adiaphora,” saying that the nonessentials such as elaborate skits, role-playing, and the abundance of gifts and food needs to be pared down to get back to “what is really important: study, piety, and action as outlined by Eduardo Bonnín.” As part of her role as Via’s President, Tracy visited Via communities across the country and advises them on how to get back to the essentials and pare down their courses. She admitted that this is difficult, as the cursillistas “love to make their courses elaborate. That’s just what we do in America, we think that bigger is better.” Thom Neal, the 2009-2010 National Episcopal Cursillo President, agrees with Schmidlin and asserts that there are “way too many add-ons in the courses. We need to examine this and make some
changes, because it can be overwhelming for the candidates to have everything thrown at them.”

Fourth Day movements’ Presidents monitor the adiaphora of weekend retreats and the overall health of their Fourth-Day communities. I was invited to attend a Via de Cristo Ultreya, a reunion of reunion groups, in Orlando, Florida in late January 2010. At that time, the Heart of Florida community was experiencing serious tensions as the president of its Secretariat wanted to make substantive changes to the community’s weekends which included shortening the weekend to two days (as the earlier Nebraska community had done). Moreover, the Heart of Florida community had failed to hold regular Via de Cristo weekends for two years and was on the National Lutheran Secretariat’s “watch list.” Schmidlin and Steve Gielda, Via de Cristo’s Vice President of Outreach, spent the afternoon with approximately sixty men and women who were part of Heart of Florida, to help them “get back on track.” Notably, the President of the Heart of Florida community was absent. The Heart of Florida Via members I spoke with all said that this individual had “issues with the National Via de Cristo telling him how to run things,” according to one Heart of Florida member.

All of the Heart of Florida men and women at this event expressed their hope that their community would rebound and regain the vibrancy of its early
years, but as one woman told me, “it is ultimately up to the Holy Spirit. If this community is meant to continue and grow then it will.” Her sentiments were echoed by the other cursillistas with whom I spoke; all of them emphasized that if “it is meant to happen it will because the Holy Spirit is behind it all. We are mere instruments.” While the Fourth Day leaders all cite the Holy Spirit as guiding their movements, they also believe that some human-centered guidance is necessary to sustain the overall health of their movement. They do their best to help make their movements positive places for spiritual growth and Christian fellowship, and they work to keep their organization “authentic” and “in covenant.” Via de Cristo’s leaders have always worked hard to maintain a balance of the Spirit’s lead and human’s work.

Since its founding, the Cursillo weekend has emphasized strengthening individual piety in community. Being a cursillista, a graduate of the Cursillo weekend, and living one’s fourth day meant---and means today---becoming a better person, wife, husband, mother, father, and practicing Christian—Catholic or Protestant. Taken together, the Spanish speaking and English-speaking Catholic Cursillo movements, along with the many Protestant offshoots (“in covenant” and non in-covenant) had become one of the most, if not *the* most, significant Christian renewal movements in U.S. religious history. The weekends were—and remain today-- places for an emerging lay-centric and grassroots Catholic spirituality as
well as a broader-based Christian spirituality. In the American religious landscape of the late 1950s/early 60s, Spanish and Mexican-descent Catholics out West and in the Southwest introduced a global weekend in spirituality that refashioned what Christianity ought to look like---a lived Christianity.

**Conclusion:**

The history of the U.S. Cursillo movement illuminates shared values and beliefs among Protestants and Catholics. The history of Cursillos is a story of success: When men and women committed to being better people, transforming their churches and communities, and sharing God’s love come together good things happen. What has drawn Catholics and Protestants to Cursillos from the 1940s to the present is Eduardo Bonnín’s theological triptych of “piety, study, and action.” Bonnín’s focus on lay spirituality; the collaborative spirit of laity and clergy working together; and the transformative language and action of “blooming where we are planted”/“we are the church” was fresh and appealing to men and women who wanted something MORE.

Cursillo weekends spread like wildfire in postwar America because Catholics and Protestants alike were ready to embrace change. They were inspired and empowered by global uprisings, restructurings, and redistributions of power. While lay-led Cursillo weekends did not seek to overturn churches, they did seek
to transform church culture by empowering laypersons and clergy alike in ways that were not seen prior to the 1930s. Laity and clergy worked together toward a common goal during cursillo weekends and new roles were crafted during the three days. The rapid spread of U.S. as well as global Cursillo weekends---Catholic and Protestant alike---was facilitated by postwar local, national, and global realities that facilitated new possibilities for lived religion. And these new possibilities included the lay-driven, grassroots Christianity of Via de Cristo.

On this day of July 23, 2015, we gather to reflect on the history of Cursillos and our own place in that history. I encourage each of you over the next several days to ponder what your personal role is in furthering this dynamic community of believers and how you can continue to bloom where you are planted. In an age where the media tends to focus on negative news, I encourage you to continue to spread the good news of VdC weekends and to be active agents of the kind of peace, positivity, and spirituality Bonnín envisioned back in 1944. De Colores!
Notes

1 The 1940s were marked by independence movements: 1944 Iceland declared independence from Denmark; 1945 Indonesia declared independence from the Netherlands; Independent Lebanon and Syria were created out of the French Mandate; British India became secular and independent Union of India and Pakistan became a predominantly Muslim entity; 1948 State of Israel created; 1948 British rule in Burma ended; 1948 People’s Republic of China is officially created.

2 *The Cursillo Movement in America*, 44.

3 *The Cursillo Movement in America*, 40.

4 Referring to p.37 of *The Cursillo Movement in America*. Hugo Rahner, Karl Rahner, the Maritains, Abraham Maslow, Leon Bloy, Erich Fromm, Jacques Leclerc….

5 *The Cursillo Movement in America*, 59.