

## Weekend Experience Sets

# Cursillistas on Path for Living

The Cursillo movement—in Spanish and in English—has been described as an “intense short course in Christian life, Christian values and Christian evangelization.”

At its heart are the Cursillo weekends, held from Thursday evenings to Sunday afternoons, with separate weekends for men and for women. These weekends, led mainly by laypersons, seek to give participants, called *cursillistas*, the tools they need to make their Catholic Christian faith a vital part of their daily lives and to develop skills to share that faith with others.

A series of interconnected talks about Christianity and the follow-up discussions that they generate are a main component of the Cursillo weekends, which strive to provide a framework in which *cursillistas* can build upon their holiness, spiritual formation and evangelization. The weekend includes Mass and an opportunity for confession.

Those in the movement say that the weekend is just a starting point. In fact, an unofficial motto might be “Once a *cursillista*, always a *cursillista*,” in that the Cursillo experience begins with a weekend but continues for the rest of one’s life.

As a woman who recently completed a weekend said, “I discovered that faith is not just a gift, but a journey.”

As *cursillistas* grow spiritually, many are able to participate as members of the teams that present the weekends; a total of 18 to 20 people, including a spiritual director who is a priest, deacon or religious, volunteer to make sure the structured program comes off well.

Founded in Majorca, Spain, in the 1940s, the first U.S. Cursillo was held in Waco, Texas, in 1957 and it quickly spread throughout the country. The first weekend in New York was held in 1960 in Spanish; an English language weekend followed in 1961.

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Since then, tens of thousands of New Yorkers have participated in Cursillo weekends in the archdiocese, which is blessed to have a vibrant Spanish-speaking movement based at St. Joseph’s Cursillo Center in the Bronx with Brother Mario Alvarez, O.A.R., as administrator, as well as an active English-speaking movement led by lay director Jim Santos from a base in Middletown.

Father Fidel Hernandez, O.A.R., is the director of the Spanish-speaking movement, and Father Hugh Grace is priest advisor of the English movement.

The English weekends, of which eight are held each year in the archdiocese, take place at Mount St. Francis Retreat Center in Peekskill, with one for men scheduled for Oct. 22-25 and for women Nov. 19-22, and at Mount Alvernia in Wappingers Falls, where a men’s retreat will be held Oct. 29-Nov. 1 and a women’s retreat Nov. 19-22.

Both retreat centers are near Metro-North train stations, and transporta-

**ON RETREAT**—Participants in the men’s retreat in March at Mount Alvernia, Wappingers Falls, gather for a group photo.

tion from the station can be arranged. The Spanish weekends are held at St. Joseph’s Cursillo Center in the Kingsbridge section of the Bronx. There also are Korean weekends held in the metropolitan New York-New Jersey area.

Further information on weekends is available on the Web Site: NYCursillo.org. Information in English: Dutchess, Orange, Sullivan, Ulster counties, call Terrance Fisher (845) 297-4711; Southern Manhattan and Staten Island, call Regina Torello (718) 981-4994; Northern Manhattan, the Bronx, Westchester, Putnam, Rockland, call Sue Gallagher (914) 941-4686. Information in Spanish, call St. Joseph’s Cursillo Center (718) 796-4340.