

Oxon Fourth



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A Lifelong Source of Spiritual Food

“What is Cursillo?” That’s a question I’m often asked, especially since my former vicar told his congregations that I had been appointed as Lay Director. Do you get asked that as well? It’s not an easy question to answer succinctly. There’s always *“a movement of the Church, providing a method by which Christians ...”* – you know the official description. Or you can translate Cursillo as *“a short course in Christianity”*. I invite you to

pause for a moment and consider what Cursillo means to you.

I’ve been doing just that more and more since being called to direct Anglican Cursillo in Oxford, in order to gain a clear sense of direction, of purpose, of what we should be bringing to our diocese, to our churches, to our environments and to our personal faith.

A short course in Christianity? Certainly, and that’s where so much of the focus was when I first came across Cursillo. I looked forward to a weekend of teaching, reflection, renewal and refreshment of my faith journey. The weekend exceeded all expectations and I embraced my fourth day full of new energy and enthusiasm.

It reminded me of my confirmation. The short course, special service with the bishop and first communion were wonderful, but were just a beginning. If they were to lead on to a lifetime of spiritual growth and sharing God’s love, I would need to keep feeding my body, mind and soul with his spiritual food.

Surely that is the message of Cursillo. Its purpose is to empower us to grow and to enable us to share God’s love. Its message is that the awe inspiring and energising weekend is **just a beginning**. We need to build on it by pursuing a rounded ‘holistic’ approach to life, spending time with God (piety), getting to know God (study) and living for God (action), as part of a community bound together by a common love of Christ and of one another.

By embracing Cursillo’s fourth day practices of Group Reunion, Ultreyas and Spiritual Direction, we can experience helpful spiritual health checks and opportunities for mutual spiritual encouragement. As part of a faithful community with hearts filled with God’s Holy Spirit, kindling in us the fire of his love, we can be channels, witnessing to God’s love in many ways within our local churches and wherever we live our daily lives.

So how do I now see Cursillo? – as **a lifelong source of spiritual food** – for our diocese, for our churches, for our environments and for our personal faith. Like the spiritual food I receive at communion, I need to keep ‘feeding on’ Cursillo if I am not to stand still or go backwards but to keep growing. After all, Christ is still counting on me, long after my Cursillo weekend in 2006, and I still need others to help me count on him – and perhaps others need my help too.

Love and prayers, Peter

ULTREYA!

The Week after Easter....

*'Twas the week after Easter
and all through the house
not a creature was stirring,
not even a mouse.*



The rhyme doesn't really go like that, I know, but it struck me recently how appropriate the adaptation is. The round of post-Easter worship is so keen to 'hype' us up during the Easter season that we easily forget the tone and atmosphere of the 'fourth day' as the biblical story unfolds at the end of the Gospels and in the Book of Acts. The disciples leave Jerusalem for Galilee where Jesus has promised to meet them. And then what? The fact is, we don't know; we must largely surmise. Whatever went on during that period of six or seven weeks it somehow emboldened Peter to return to Jerusalem for the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost) and to begin an eloquent ministry of preaching. How can we account for that?

The most sensible view is that the 'fourth day', meaning the period after the resurrection, was a time for the disciples and other followers to piece together the startling and unexpected workings of God in Jesus of Nazareth; a time for weaving the extraordinary thoughts, words and deeds of their time with Jesus into a coherent case and message.

It is rightly said that the Cursillo movement is more about the Fourth Day than about the weekend itself. The Fourth Day is for the cursillista just what the fourth day was for the disciples: a time to piece together in a new, life-giving and share-able manner what following 'the Way' is about. That weaving-together task is vital if we're to speak of God's work from a point of interior authenticity. But that is surely the centre from which compelling discipleship flows. However living the waters may be, they issue from a silent, reflective source of Fourth Day experience: hidden, meditative, weaving the Scriptures into a mirror of Christ.

May this Eastertide be a Fourth Day season when we all work to piece together all that God did in Jesus, and consider afresh how it can make us resurrection's children.

Charles Miller
Spiritual Director

Action Talk at East Berkshire Ultreya, May 2013

The song 'I the Lord of Sea and Sky' reminds me of little Samuel in the Temple. I am Jewish by birth and when I was little I was sent to Hebrew Classes, a bit like Sunday School. I imagined Samuel as I sat in the synagogue, a rather intimidating, dark Victorian building in London. I had it all sorted out: Samuel slept on the hard marble floor at the front. Eli, the old priest, slept through that little door, in the room where the rabbis got ready before the service. And of course God lived behind the vast screen which hid the organ and the choir. Simple!

I, too, was woken in the night, not as a child, but about two years ago. It started as a dream that remained very vivid after I woke up. I was at one of those huge American evangelistic rallies, in a mega-stadium, a huge audience, a charismatic speaker, all the usual audio-visual mod-cons, fabulous solo singers, a band, and a choir in tiered ranks. Somewhere at the back of the choir I was making my little contribution. Somehow, I found myself in the middle of the vast stage, facing not the audience, but the back wall. Two massive doors swung open and I was looking into the space. And that was how the dream ended, except for a very clear message: *"I've got a job for you to do."*

I'm not usually given to the heavy drum roll, clouds parting and booming voices from on high so I didn't know if this was a message from God or something that my imagination had conjured up. I just smiled and put it down.

This happened at a time when Miriam, my wife, was nearing ordination, and my professional career was at a crossroads. By now, I was a self-employed management consultant. For Miriam, the training and formation were all mapped out whereas there seemed

to be little available to help me to explore how my life would change, or to anticipate the impact of Miriam's ordination on our home life. Conversations with husbands and wives of other ordinands led to formal, structured research, which resulted in a practical book to help others in the same boat. To my astonishment, the doors of the usually impenetrable world of publishing opened, and I was given a contract and the book came out in 2012.

Soon afterwards, I suggested to the Principal of Miriam's old theological college that there might be a case for running a seminar for the spouses of ordinands, because by then my interest had spread not just to husbands of female clergy, but to wives of male clergy also. I led an evening with contributions from several subject-matter-experts, and with the full involvement of the Principal himself, because I am not so arrogant as to believe that I have all the answers myself. It was a well-attended event, and a little to my surprise I was invited back, this time to talk to the ordinands themselves, not just to their spouses. Again, the door opened and stayed open! I was beginning to sense God's hand on all this.

In the meantime, I was invited to join the diocesan team of Work Consultants, a group of people, both ordained and lay, who work with clergy on things like time management, work-life balance and change management; in other words not as a counsellor, for which I am not qualified, nor as a spiritual director. This was something that made full use of my experience over many years in business. Another door had opened, and a pattern was beginning to emerge, with a trickle of unsolicited speaking invitations arriving. Since then I have led further workshops at Cuddesdon, as well as events in Chichester, Carlisle,

Oxford and St Albans dioceses, with further events in the diary.

To help me do my job as a Work Consultant and to prepare for another book I was considering writing, I undertook some study of a branch of psychology called Transactional Analysis, not in order to become a therapist but to understand better what I **don't** know and be better able to recognise and respect the boundaries. I started working my way through the text book, then looked for courses and... guess what? One was scheduled on the one weekend that was free in my diary, so yet another door opened.

If anyone were to ask me what my calling was, I would always have described it as a ministry of encouragement, with the focus on clergy and their families. I don't know how this emerged, but somehow I had instinctively realised that we expect a huge amount from our clergy but give little back, and it felt quite natural for me. For example, If I was phoning the Rectory to talk to the Vicar, and it was his wife who answered the phone, I knew that she quite rightly hated being taken for granted as an answering service. She wasn't "The Vicar's Wife". She was Alison, a mother of two small children, and a GP in training, a person in her own right. So when she answered the phone, I made a point of chatting about things that concerned her, before asking to speak to her

husband. Yes, she may have seen through it, but it was a start.

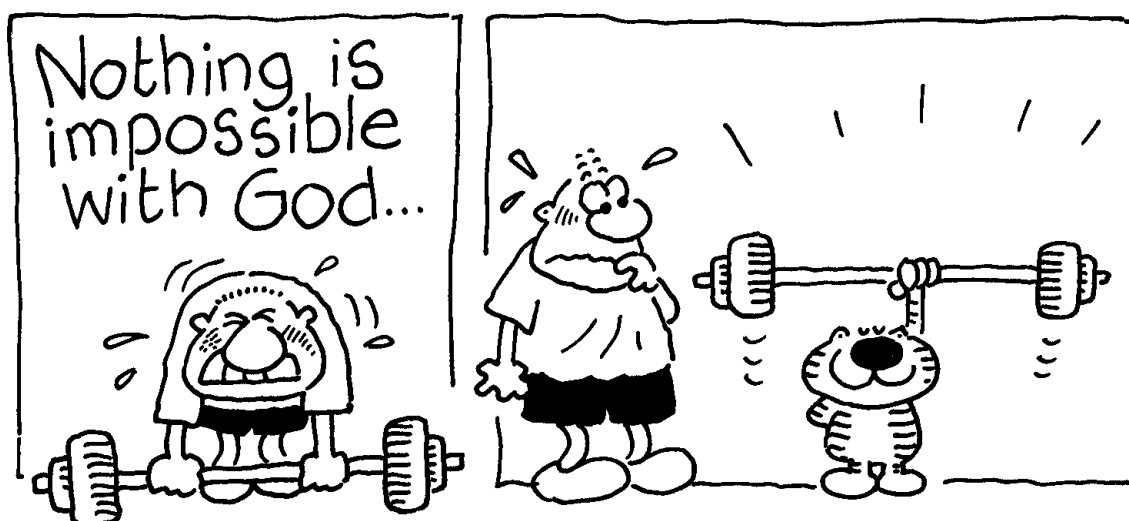
In the meantime, my writing has continued, with an article in Church Times, and a second book, on curacies, well on the way.

A series of doors leading to a balanced portfolio of activities with a common theme. Why do I suggest that this is from God and not of my own doing? Well, we never know for certain, but here are a few clues:

- There was a repeated pattern about it
- It was being confirmed by other people
- It was bearing fruit
- There was a sense of inspiration whenever I was doing this work.
- Conversely, opportunities to do my normal professional work simply haven't felt right.

If I had tried to look into the future five years ago, I would not have envisaged how a rather vague ministry of encouragement would lead in this new direction; nor would I have thought that a somewhat gothic dream would turn into a new career. But it all seems to make sense and it does feel as if it is 'Of God', the apostolic action to which I am now called. So, I heard the words: "*I have a job for you to do*" and responded "*Here I am, Lord*"

Matthew Caminer, Old Windsor



**One vicar's experience of Cursillo
and words of encouragement**

Deepening Discipleship

Sometimes we reach a point in our Christian life when we feel that we have got stuck. We come to church when we can, maybe join a small group, and yet we realise that our own spiritual life is dry, God seems remote, and the personal relationship with God that we all know that we ought to enjoy seems to escape us or to have become a distant memory. We long for a deeper, more authentic spiritual life, but somehow it never seems to emerge. I think that all Christians feel this at one or more times in their Christian life.

A possible solution

As many of you may know, Peter Watsham had recently taken on the role of Lay Director of Oxford Anglican Cursillo. Cursillo, a Spanish word meaning 'short course in Christianity' is "a movement of the Church, providing a method by which Christians are empowered to grow through prayer, study and action and enabled to share God's love with everyone." Initially you go on a weekend (Thursday evening to Sunday afternoon). Peter had been trying to get me to go on one more or less since I came to the Parish, and recently, feeling a bit 'stuck in a spiritual rut' myself, I decided to book myself in ... for a weekend in Sheffield rather than in our Diocese so that if I didn't like it I could be rude about it without upsetting Peter too much!

A time of refreshing

Fortunately I did enjoy the experience. There is time spent in the chapel but the core of the course is a series of very short talks given, for the most part, by ordinary lay people who have done the course before, followed by a longer time to discuss and interact with others. The course I went on was superbly run and totally non-threatening, you could just be yourself – it was great to be able to be amongst other Christians and yet out of 'vicar mode' for a time. All of us who participated (and I was the only vicar) got something different but equally positive from having taken part.

Right for you?

If what you need is a basic grounding then the Alpha Course is more likely to be right for you (we hope to run another one later this year or early next). But for those of you who already have some knowledge of Christianity and the church and who wish to give some time to refresh, energise and keep growing your faith, then Cursillo may be for you. If you would like to find out more about what Cursillo has to offer, please ask me or speak to Peter on 01296 641268. Two Cursillo weekends are held each year in Oxford diocese at Douai Abbey. You can see the dates of future weekends and read more on their website – www.oxfordcursillo.co.uk.

Keith Nicholls



I had read the web site and most of the publications about Cursillo, attended an information Day at Douai Abbey, talked to my Sponsor and attended a Reunion Group. And yet nothing prepared me for the spiritual journey the week end was to provide.

Many strange faces greeted one on arrival at the Abbey but all were so kind and hospitable, we were completely mothered and fathered throughout the weekend. The attention to detail was amazing.

The first thing that struck me on gathering for the first session was the line of figures strung up along the wall and the names of all the people world wide who were praying for us, every hour, during the weekend. This was emphasised over the week end with the packages of cards, good wishes and palanca from other Cursillos around UK and the world.

The idea of 15 Rollos in three days plus discussion groups sounded quite daunting plus rising for a service at 7-30 (I am not a morning person!) However the Rollos were thought provoking and in many cases inspiring. The statements that made the greatest impact were

"What would my diary say about me?"

"Transformation is a life long walk with God"

"Faith is saying yes to God"

"Prayer is bathing in the love of God"

"Sin is nothing more than taking your eye off God"

"Does God motivate us or is it more about discerning God's will"

"Sacraments are tokens of God's love"

However the weekend was not all about discussions and services, we did a lot of hymn singing, craft work and entertainment of the group - it was great fun playing charades from the Old Testament!

The experience of different services and their wide variety of content was interesting and uplifting, though the highlights were the Meditation on Saturday evening and the final service on Sunday including the surprise appearance of one's sponsor.

I am so glad I read the article by Ellen Turtle in the Door, which started me on this journey and through it opened another door for me. Being a Cursillista has given me the opportunity to share my faith journey on a regular basis with my Reunion group, to feel the impact of prayer and to be in communion with like minds around the world.

Thanks for the experience; I am sponsoring Barbara from St Luke's for Oxford 14 and hope this will just be the beginning in our church

Johanna M Raffan
Oxford 13



Dates for your diary

BACC 'Catch the Vison' Weekend

Afternoon of Friday 30 May through to High Leigh, Hoddesden
Sunday 2nd June 2014 (includes BACC
AGM on Saturday 1st June at 2pm)

Ultreya + Bring & Share lunch

Saturday 21 June 2014

11am for 11:30 start

Oxford #14 Welcome from 9:30

The Chapel, Heyford Park

572 Brice Road, Upper Heyford

Bicester OX25 5TE

Diocesan Ultreya & Picnic

Saturday 19 July 2014

11am for 11:30 start

(Secretariat meeting from 9:30am)

Diocesan Church House, Oxford

East Berks Ultreya!

Saturday 16 August 2014

9:30am for 10am start

Chapel of St Mary & St John,

King Edwards Road, North Ascot

SL5 8PD

GB Ultreya!

Saturday 30 August 2014

Canterbury Diocese

Ultreya!

Saturday 13 September 2014

TBC

Ultreya!

Saturday 18 October 2014

TBC

OXFORD #15 Clausura

Sunday 2 November 2014

1:45pm for 2pm start

Douai Abbey, Upper Woolhampton

Reading RG7 5TQ

Diocesan AGM, Ultreya & Lunch

Saturday 22 November 2014

11am for 11:30 start

(Secretariat Meeting from 2pm)

St Helen's Church Centre,

Abingdon-on-Thames

OX14 5FY

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Deadline for next issue:

If there is anything you would like to contribute to the next issue of Oxon Fourth, any thoughts, prayers, study recommendations or action tips that you would like to share please send to barbaramcgarry@gmail.com by the beginning of September 2014