

Iglesia actualidad

70th anniversary of the very first Cursillo in Christianity

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IGLESIA EN ESPAÑA



8th January 2019 – In 1948, a massive pilgrimage of young people from the Catholic Action to Santiago de Compostela was held. It was an initiative promoted by their then president, Manuel Aparici, with the enthusiastic support of Pope Pius XII himself, aiming at having 100,000 young Spaniards go on a pilgrimage to the tomb of the apostle James to show that they wanted to make their lives a continuous journey of holiness towards God: "To Santiago Saints!" was the motto of the pilgrimage.

Cursillos de Cristiandad has its roots in the preparation of that pilgrimage to Santiago by the young people of the Catholic Action of Mallorca, and over the years it has turned up to be an experience of "first proclamation of the Gospel", widely

spread around the world, which allows people, who live in different situations and circumstances, to discover and experience the love of God in Christ.

The founders of the Movement (a group in which the layman Eduardo Bonnín, the priest Sebastián Gayá, and the Bishop of Mallorca, Juan Hervás, stand out), developed in the milieu of the young people of Catholic Action, and in the framework of the preparation of the pilgrimage, what we could call today a new way of evangelizing – especially those far away from God and the Church – which was later called "Cursillos de Cristiandad".

They carried out an intense task of study, reflection and experimentation. They took elements from the different Cursillos already existing in the Catholic Action to prepare the young pilgrims (Cursillos for Advanced Pilgrims and for Pilgrims Leaders), and assembled them in a new proposal that reached everyone, and allowed anyone to know and live the essentials of being Christian in all its intensity and fullness.

Thus, from 7th to 10th January 1949, at the Monastery of San Honorato in Mallorca, the one considered as the first Cursillo of Christianity in history was celebrated, certainly allowing those first 21 participants to experience an encounter with God that overturned their lives.

The Cursillo Movement has been growing since then, and today Cursillos de Cristiandad is an ecclesial movement of worldwide diffusion, canonically recognized by the Holy See, and included in the Directory of Movements and Associations of the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life. There are many Bishops from around the world who welcome and support the work of the Cursillo Movement as an evangelization instrument in their dioceses. In addition, since its inception, it has received the recognition and appreciation of the successive Roman Pontiffs, from Paul VI to Pope Francis, who in a meeting in Rome addressed encouraging words to the representatives of the Movement in Europe: "I thank you for what you do in the Church, which is so good: help to find Jesus, help to understand that live in the grace of God is good."

During these 70 years, more than 250,000 people have met Christ through the nearly 10,500 Cursillos that have been held in Spain since its inception. Today the movement is present in 57 Dioceses of that country, in each of which the members of the schools of leaders work tirelessly to bring the love of God to those who have not known it, by means of their own witness.

Few people could imagine that the pilgrimage, which took more than a decade to prepare, would cause so many lives to change thanks to the Holy Spirit who has inspired not only Cursillos but other current realities of the Church. Those young

people who opened a new way to make a pilgrimage to Santiago also opened paths of grace that, after 70 years, continue, as their motto says, filling the world with Colours.

Press office