**CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION**

*(40 Minutes)*

**ORIENTATION.**

**Everything has been proclaimed from the very first moment of the Cursillo – the saving message of God – besides being personal, is and should be communal (Acts 2:42-47); we are Christians and, as such, community. This is the function of this talk within the context of the Weekend; the communal realization of our Christian being, within the strategy of the Cursillo Movement.**

**We are trying to show, through living experience, that we neither make the pilgrimage alone, nor should we. “God did not create man for life in isolation, but for the formation of social unity. So also it has pleased God to make men holy and save the, not merely as individuals, but by making them into a single people, a people which acknowledges him in truth and serves him in holiness. So, from the beginning of salvation history he has chosen men not just as individuals but as members of a certain community *(On Evangelization in the Modern World, no. 13, p. 8).* Without a community spirit there is no Christian life.**

**We want to prepare the cursillistas to go as Christians into the human groups (environments) they are part of that these may grow in truth, justice and charity. There is a wide variety of communities, both ecclesial and environmental, awaiting our Christian revitalization.**

**In order to leaven a living community we need: generosity in seeking the Kingdom of God and its justice, blind faith in the guidance of the Holy Spirit, charity to work as a team, and a sense of responsibility and initiative (*The Fundamental Ideas of the Cursillo Movement, no. 426-429, pp. 161-163).***

**The most important point to be made in the talk is that it is always the group which leavens the environment (*On the Evangelization in the Modern World, no.21, p. 13)* for it is the group which makes Christ present, “Where there are two or more gathered in my name, there I am in the midst of them.” (Mt. 18:20). The primary concern of the Cursillistas, in any environment, should be to form a group, whether it be with fellow cursillistas, fellow Catholics or fellow Christians, and seek the ways in which they may love and share their Christian life more intensely so that their life will attract others to follow Christ, by doing so, they will transform the environment as a whole.**

**Other key points to be made are:**

1. **In and through the group, the laity make the Church present in the world.**
2. **The Cursillo method provides a way to form and sustain such groups.**
3. **The group is based on becoming friends in Christ.**
4. **(And most important) the group can exist only as long as it reaches out to the world. A group closed in upon itself will soon wither and die. “They make up a community which is in its turn evangelizing” (*On Evangelization in the Modern World, no. 13, p. 8).***

**GENERAL COMMENTS.**

**“Christianity in Action” explains the third and final step in the Cursillo strategy of “providing a backbone for Christian life (see Commentary in “Environment” talk). If this talk is given as it should be, the cursillistas will be most receptive to the ideas presented in the “The Total Security” talk, and indeed it will provide the key to living out their mission as laity in the church.**

**Because of the Second Vatican Council, the word “renewal” is usually used by many to refer to a program of renewal in the Church. The Cursillo literature, however, uses the phrase “Christian Renewal” in a broader sense to refer to a renewal of all society “from its foundations.” Involved is such a renewal, of course, has to be a renewal of the Church and of the life of the Church. But the primary target of the Cursillo Movement is a renewal of all society in a Christian way.**

**The transformation must be Christian transformation. If the source of the transformation is to be the life of grace, the transformation must be based on a connection with Christ, a union of Christ in the Church. This does not mean that the Church as an institution will be renewing society. Rather, according to Bishop Juan Hervas, it means that Christians (members of the Church) working together in society will penetrate society with a Christian life (a life with and in Christ). The key lies in the role and function of the laity as living, conscious, active and effective members of the mystical Body of Christ, who will at the same time be integral elements in the world in which they live, within which they will carry out human material activity which at the same time ought to be spiritual and Christian.**

**An analysis of the situation in the world today revealed to the founders of the movement *the need for something more than a conversation of individuals.* When the founders looked around, they found that there four possible approaches to the apostolate. The first approach was that of “saving souls,” the “one-to-one” approach of working with individuals in some way to bring them to accept Christ. The second approach is that forming specific “organization” to achieve certain goals. The third approach was to directly transform the existing structures (environments).**

**The founders saw inadequacies in each of these approaches. The first approach by itself tends to be haphazard and individualistic, not effectively dealing with the effect of the environment on the individual. The second approach tends to become “particularistic” focusing exclusively on the on the one goal, becoming moralistic, overly organizational and missing the primary focus of living Christianity. The third approach was deemed inappropriate since the existing structures (environments) were made up of people. It became clear that was impossible to directly transform the existing structures. For this reason, the founders decided the best approach was that of “providing a backbone for Christian life.” This approach does not exclude the first two, but puts them in a wider context. It focuses on the life rather than the organization, a life that is communal – a Christian life. The “environmental transformation” is to be achieved by introducing a new life into the environment, a fully Christian life that will transform persons and through them, the whole environment.**

**The three steps in “providing a backbone” can be phrased as:**

1. **To find leaders (those with an influence on the environment) and begin the process of ongoing conversion.**
2. **To find their place with something definite to do.**
3. **To link them together to work effectively as apostles and to grow together in Christian life and apostolic dedication (Environmental, Group Reunion).**

**The first step is explained in the first two days of the Cursillo. A person must first of all be fully Christian, dedicating their life to living grace and working to bring others to live it. One must also be forms as a Christian in order to exert influence in the environment in a Christian way. The “Leaders” talk sums up the requirements of what one must be in order to function well in the process of “providing a backbone for Christian life.”**

**The second objective, finding one’s place in the mission of the Church, is explained primarily in the “Environment” talk. Each person must return to the situation from which they came and exert a new influence on it, a Christian influence. They are asked to transform that situation, not to take on something new.**

**The third objective is the linking together of those who are being formed as Christian leaders so that they may work together more effectively. This does not mean to work together in an organizational way, but to “be together” to encourage, support and help one another (Environmental Group Reunion).**

**The Cursillo Movement believes that there is something more effective than merely having apostolic organizations. The strategy aims at forming Christian communities in action, apostolic Christian communities. This is the message of the first three sections of the outline. By “Christian Community” it means groups of persons who live together and share together their Christian life. Part of living and sharing Christian life means sharing apostolic life and working together as apostles. A Christian Community has an apostolic direction and focus (involved in this is some kind of coordination and leadership). The goal is to have some kind of unified effect on society.**

**One of the apostolic actions of the participant will try to transform the “apostolic” organizations they are in into Christian Communities in action to radiate Christian life. These are their environments too. But this does not mean that apostolic actions are limited to “apostolic” organizations; quite the contrary, there must be an effort to transform all environments to Christ, especially the secular ones.**

**The Cursillo Movement’s main means of linking people to provide a backbone for Christian life is the post-Cursillo, Group Reunion, Environmental Group Reunion, and Ultreya: A way to come together and share Christian living together as an apostolic Christian community.**

**The Cursillo Movement has a definite and specific place in the work of forming Christian life. “There must be, in every environment, a handful of determined, enthusiastic, dedicated people who group themselves around Jesus Christ with the aim of spreading the Christian ideal and translating it into works.” The cursillistas should be among these people.**

**There are two key points to be made in this talk. The first, describes a Christian community as a living organism, and the second is the place and mission of the Christian community in the world, namely the developing and sustaining of Christian communities within the various environments that make up society.**

**An environment is more than just a gathering of people; it has tone or atmosphere of its own. The atmosphere reflects not only the people within, but the purpose of the grouping causes a certain spirit to be there. This is easily seen in the atmosphere at work or at a sports event. Each reflects the tone of the purpose of the gathering.**

**So too the Christian community must reflect the attitudes of the Christian. If the community does not reflect the self-giving, the joy, the spirit of Christ, it is not a Christian community (section 4).**

**The second point is discussed in Section 6. Most Christian communities in our world lie hidden from the eyes of most people. They do not cause any changes in our society because they are not part of the fabric of the world that most people see. Section 6 points out a new role for the Christian community – that of being formed and lived in the normal, everyday environments of humanity, not just existing but lived, calling all persons to true personal freedom of self by its self – giving and spirit. It is God calling all persons to reach for their purpose for creation. It is Christ living among the ordinary people of our world. It is the beginning of the transformation of the world.**

**This is the vision of the Cursillo Movement.**

**ATMOSPHERE.**

**At this point on the Cursillo there will be a broad spectrum of thought among the participants in regard to the living out of their new found ideal. Most will be enthusiastic and anxious to get home and share with their families and friends the treasure they have discovered in the Weekend. However, a few of the thoughtful ones will be troubles by the specter of living out the life of grace in an un-Christian world. The “Christian Life” talk (later in the day) will show them a source of strength in deepening their union with God, but the problem remains that virtually all of them will be thinking of themselves as Christian individuals.**

**The “Christianity in Action” talk must bridge a very wide gap. It must transport the cursillistas from thinking of themselves as individuals to seeing themselves as part of a small, closely knit group living out their Christian life intensely as part of a larger evangelizing community, the Church in the world. “The Total Security” talk can only have its desired effect if they can come to see themselves in this light.**

**METHOD OF WRITING THE TALK.**

**It is imperative that the person writing and presenting this talk be a living witness to its content, namely – that he/she has lived or is presently living the experience of being part of an Environmental Group Reunion that is transforming an environment. This witness will be easy to share and will enable the speaker to properly and authentically present every aspect of the talk. If the speaker has not lived the experience of a group transforming an environment, they will have serious difficulty understanding the outline and will be unable to present the talk through a “living” witness. The result is a badly presented and much less effective impact on the candidates. We must remember that “either silently or aloud – but always forcefully- we are being asked: Do you really believe what you are proclaiming? Do you live what you believe? Do you really preach what you live?**

**In every aspect of the Weekend, and especially in the “The Total Security” talk, we must be authentic witnesses. To do otherwise is to present a false witness that makes all that we say and of suspect, and defeats the purpose and the intent of the entire message of the Weekend.**

**The only witness pertinent to this talk is the story of an environment being transformed, preferably by a group. The story should begin in Section 2 by relating what the environment was like initially, how it reflected the way of the world. In part a 4A-3, the speaker can show how the relationships at the present time differ from what they had been, and then go on to show how the small Christian Community became the agent of change in the environment by relating its development to B of Section 6. Section 6 then contains the story of how the group worked with others and the environment as a whole to transform it into a community and make it more Christian.**

**The witness is the basis for the conclusion of the talk.**

**The biggest hurdle the talk must overcome is the natural opposition of our society toward community. We have been taught since childhood, by every means possible, that we must be self-reliant, able to stand on our own two feet, etc., etc. But fulfillment as a person and, as a Christian, can come only within community. It is only within a true community that we can feel the love of others, the acceptance necessary to be truly free.**

**And it is only in community that the love of Gad (grace) can be brought to bear fully, for “When two or more people are gathered in my name, I am there with you.”**

**The witness presented as an example in the Expanded Outline was part of a national mailing in the Fall/Winter in 1997.**

**CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION**

*OUTLINE*

1. **INTRODUCTION.**
2. **Why are you here?**
3. **God called, yes.**
4. **But it is through the response of a Christian community that you are here – team, Cursillo communities, Palanca.**
5. **What motivates this community to reach out to share God’s love?**
6. **We have found Grace (the love of God).**
7. **We have lived the Eucharist.**
8. **We have found friendship with each other.**
9. **We feel a sense of mission.**
10. **Wouldn’t it be great if the world were like this weekend?**
11. **Our families, parishes, work, neighborhoods – all of our environments.**
12. **All of humanity would be able to live in freedom and self-fulfillment.**
13. **Christ would be present to all and in all.**
14. **Our mission is to reorient our environments toward the goal of Christ, which is to be a Christian community.**
15. **We cannot fulfill this mission alone. It is only through small Christian communities, environmental groups, that we will change our environments.**
16. **Thus we have this talk dealing with the necessity and reality of developing Christian community within our environments.**
17. **NECESSITY OF COMMUNITY.**
18. **Our society teaches us that to be successful we must stand alone.**
19. **But loneliness is the greatest fear of humanity.**
20. **In isolation people cannot be fully human. Our experiences of life confirm this. People inevitably form into groups, associations, communities, organizations. (Give examples.) Some are temporary, some long-lived. They have a variety of purposes, but all prove our need for sharing and living our life with others.**
21. **Society is made up of groups:**
22. **National, regional, local, personal;**
23. **Families;**
24. **Work groupings;**
25. **Social;**
26. **Recreational;**
27. **Cultural;**
28. **Political.**
29. **People need people. This is basic of humanity. (Illustrate further by local, national and international movements and groups.)**
30. **The world needs community – fellowship. People dread loneliness.**
31. **Most groups, environments, communities, lack what is basic to their needs. They are not living communities, let alone Christian communities.**
32. **CHRISTIANITY IS BASED ON COMMUNITY.**
33. **THIS IS God’s plan (*Christifideles Laici, no. 32, pp 79-81; Constitution of the Church, no. 9).***
34. **Thus, to enter into God’s plan, Christians must form communities where the mission of Christianity forms a common bond *(Apostolate of the Laity, nos. 18 – 20).***
35. **The Word of God confirms this: (Mt. 18:20).**
36. **A Christian community may be known by its nature and purpose *(On Evangelization in the Modern World, no. 13, p.8; no. 23, pp14-15*).**
37. ***Nature:* a nucleus of Christians**

* **Are united with Christ;**
* **Are guided by the Holy Spirit;**
* **They share with one another their hopes and works for Christ for the evangelization of the world.**

1. ***Purpose:* Christian communities strive**

* **to be for the world what the spirit is to the body;**
* **to communicate the God News of salvation to everybody;**
* **to discover Christ in the world, and to help the world discover Christ.**

1. **Example of Jesus and the twelve and their purpose of that community.**
2. **PROCESS OF DEVELOPING CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY WITHIN OUR ENVIRONMENTS.**
3. **The way to create a Christian community among the baptized within an environment is to:**
4. **Encourage other people;**
5. **Live and share their anxieties, problems and joys, coming to understanding;**
6. **Friendships are formed.**
7. **Friendship is the heart of giving ourselves to another.**

* **The level of the relationships among the member of the groups marks the level of the Christian community within.**
* **Much of what is lacking is a deeper sense of self-giving among the members.**

1. **Our friendship is founded not only on our respect and love for each other, but on the mutual love of Christ we share.**
2. **True friendship is the key to Christian community, for in true friendship, enmities cannot exist.**
3. **In the Eucharist, one with Christ, one with the Church and its mission to be the world *(On Evangelization in the Modern World, no. 15, pp. 8-10; Apostolate of the Laity ,no. 8).***
4. **In the world, transformation into community occurs by:**
5. **Working with fellow Christians, who, by nature of their baptism are called to be witnesses of Christ (*Apostolate of the Laity, no. 1).***
6. **Forming some of them into a Christian group which recognizes the role of the Church in the world (and Environmental Group Reunion).**
7. **A saturation of the total with a sense of the Gospel; not necessarily conversion, but a living of the Christian ideal which is valid in its own right *(On Evangelization in the Modern World ,no. 21, p. 13).***
8. **THE CURSILLO METHOD – A MEANS TO FORM.DEVELOP CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IN THE ENVIRONMENTS.**

**If we are to transform the world to accept and follow the Christian ideal we need to:**

1. **Establish in each environment, a small Christian community (and Environmental Group Reunion) *(On Evangelization in the Modern World, no. 21 p. 13).***
2. **The Cursillo Method provides a way to initiate, form and sustain small groups of Christians.**
3. **The method is the same as used on this weekend, namely a process of:**
4. **Knowing one another *(On Evangelization in the Modern World, no. 46, p. 27).***
5. **Sharing friendship, living the Eucharist together.**
6. **Add to the joy of Grace, as in this weekend:**

* **Our idealism – believing that a great thing, the best, is possible.**
* **Our self-surrender. Giving ourselves completely to each situation we find ourselves in and to others in it.**
* **Our spirit of charity. A willingness to sacrifice our selfishness for the welfare of others (1 Cor. 13).**

**These elements enable a Christian community to be formed, and to develop. Proof of the possibility lies with the results of this weekend.**

1. **The following is needed to achieve this goal:**
2. **Generosity: “Seek the Kingdom of God and his justice.”**
3. **Faith in the strength of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 6:18; Mt. 10:20).**
4. **Humility and love to work in a team (Mt. 18:20).**
5. **A sense of responsibility (Mt. 10:16).**
6. **Initiative and dedication.**
7. **CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IS APOSTOLIC.**
8. **Christian community is not turned in on itself.**
9. **We follow the lead of Christ, who sent put his disciples “two by two” (Mk. 6:7).**
10. **We are following the lead of the first Christians who knew the value of community (Acts 2:46-47; 4:31, 32).**
11. **We cannot go back to those days, so we must create our communities here and now.**

**(Testimony as to the possibilities of Christian communities acting in the world as necessarily not our own, but diocesan community examples.)**

1. **Our community forms a living witness that speaks of Christ (2 Cor. 2:17).**
2. **The Christian community can exist only as long as its love reaches out to all of mankind (Gal. 3:28; 1 Cor. 9:22; EN 61).**
3. **Christian Community is for the Evangelization of the world.**
4. **What is the ultimate goal got Christians in the world.**
5. **These Christian can, by joining forces, transform all environments into Christ.**
6. **To create from a Christian community, and because of a Christian community, a Christian society.**
7. **The Christian laity are the salt, light and leaven of the world *(Apostolate of the Laity, nos. 2, 6)*.**
8. **We are called to bring the Good News for the freedom to humanity.**
9. **We must stir up other groups of Christians who can influence others and upset the world’s criteria of judgment and models of life which are in contrast with the Gospel in the major areas of life:**
10. **Social**
11. **Economic**
12. **Political**
13. **Religious**
14. **Health**
15. **Education, etc. (*Apostolate of the Laity, nos. 7, 10 –13).***

**To bring justice to these (Isaiah 42).**

1. **The presence of any group such as this in any community will radically effect the whole environment with the Spirit of the Gospel *(On Evangelization in the Modern World, no. 41, pp. 23-24).***
2. **CONCLUSION.**
3. **The pains of the world are real. The work God has given us is real. When our prayer is confident, when our community is real, when we have given our all, then:**
4. **All persons will give to God that which we have experienced (1 Thes. 1:5-8; *On the Evangelization in the Modern World, no. 24, p. 15).***
5. **Environments will take on the Spirit of Christ, from our own families to the most degrading of structures and forces *(On Evangelization in the Modern World, no. 71, p.47; Constitution of the Church, nos. 11, 35).***
6. **The world will be gathered into Christ (Col. 1:15-20).**
7. **The Church will be the power of Christ, a people of God, body of Christ, Light of the people.**
8. **Christ will rejoice when the entire world is open to his love (cf. Lk. 15:7, Jn. 15:11).**
9. **All of this is not just optimism, but is a result of a concept of triumphant Christianity: Christ will overcome all. Humanity, despite all we see, searches desperately for God. Will we reveal the true God to them, or only a caricature?**

# Christianity in Action

# (Wo) men’s Cursillo #

# Name

# Our Lady of Perpetual Help Retreat Ctr.

# Venice, Florida

# Date

Christianity in Action

Please turn to page 5 in the Pilgrim’s Guide and join me in the prayer to the Holy Spirit.

1. **INTRODUCTION.**

**Why are you here?**

**Since Thursday evening, I’m sure that many of you, at one time or another have asked yourself this question…”Why am I here? When you arrived on Thursday evening, you may have believed that his weekend would be a good opportunity for you to get away from your everyday activities. Maybe you thought you were here because your sponsor just wouldn’t stop trying or a spouse, friend or family member had been to a Cursillo and you wanted to experience for yourself what they had found. All of these are valid reasons; however, there are two additional reasons as to why you are here this weekend.**

**The first is that God called you by name to be here to become a true apostle for Him in the world and you answered yes. In addition, it was through the response of the Christian communities that you are here; the team, your sponsor, and the entire Cursillo community, all sacrificing and praying for you. Their Palanca has brought you to this walk with Christ and your brothers and sisters.**

**In order for this Weekend to take place, first a small Christian community was formed. This small Christian community was the team. We came together about\_\_\_\_\_months ago to begin the formation of this small Christian community. We shared prayer, praying individually, and as a community, for each other, for the team and for those who would attend the Weekend. We shared study of the Scripture and of life itself. We shared and planned our apostolic action, which includes this weekend.**

**What motivates this community to reach out to share God’s love?**

**Why did we do this? Because as a community, we want to reach out and share**

**the love of God we have found. We have lived the Eucharist together. We found friendship through sharing God’s love and we feel a sense of mission and purpose, which is to affect those around us and eventually attract others to Christ.**

**Wouldn’t it be great if the whole world were like this weekend?**

**If we found the same attitude and feelings in our families, parishes, workplaces, neighborhoods and in all our environments, we would find a far different world than we left – one where all humanity would be able to live in freedom and self-fulfillment. Christ would be more fully alive to all of us and would be in all of us. Well, we know that when we go home tonight, this will not be the case. The only thing that will be changed will be us. Yes, we have changed and with this change, Christ is depending on us to make some changes as well.**

**Our mission is to re-orient our environments toward the goal of Christ, which is to be a Christian community.**

**He has called us to a mission to begin a change in our environments, whatever they are and wherever they may be and re-orient them toward the goal of Christ, which is to be Christian communities. He has called us to work at this change regardless of the time it takes or the risks involved. Christ is counting on us to make these changes for Him, and as impossible as it may seem, it becomes possible with Him.**

**Furthermore, we are not asked to fulfill this mission alone. It is through small Christian communities that we will change these environments. That is the reason for the “Christianity in Action” talk. This talk will help us to see the necessity and reality of developing and sustaining Christian communities.**

1. **NECESSITY OF COMMUNITY.**

**A. Our society teaches us that to be successful, we must stand-alone. But in reality, loneliness is the greatest fear of each and every one of us. For example, I think of the elderly, who because of circumstances beyond their control are compelled to be alone but who seek companionship at every turn because they are afraid to be alone. (or like example)**

**In isolation, we cannot be fully human. Our experiences confirm this. Because we are social beings, community is essential to our human life. We, therefore, inevitably form into small groups – some temporary and some long-lived. Loneliness reminds me of one log left on a fire, slowly burning out, it light and heat slowly diminishing because no one is stoking the embers. We, just like the log, cannot survive without someone caring and helping, poking and giving us strength. Just add two or three logs to a fire and watch its light increase and fill the room, and feel the heat intensify. Alone, a log can do little, but with others it can be *very* powerful and *awesome.* So it is with us. We need others to grow, to give us strength, and to help us increase and intensify.**

**Society is made up of groups.**

**Various groups gather together periodically for a specific purpose. The purpose of the group influences the atmosphere of the group. This is the environment that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_spoke of this morning. Each is made up of people who need other people to grow. Many of these groups and or organizations we can easily recognize. We are probably all citizens of the U.S. We are wives, mothers, daughters, sisters, and aunts. We may be a member of a golf league, bowling league, union or a member of a particular party or a professional organization. We are all part of some group of people. Our society is made up of these groups and many, many more. People need people, it is a basic need of humanity like the words in Barbara Streisand’s song – people who need people are the luckiest people in the world. For example, if people want to change the world’s views on a subject, a community is needed to exchange ideas and to receive and give support. For example, Amnesty International is an organization formed to investigate human rights violations throughout the world and to correct them if possible.**

**Our world needs a sense of community and fellowship in order to avoid the feeling of loneliness.**

**However, most groups, environments, and communities lack what is basic to their needs. They are not living communities, let alone Christian communities. These groups are usually “goal” oriented. These goals may be power, money, social status, or recreational. For instance, you may be part of a particular church group or committee which meets on a regular basis for a specific purpose, but even Church groups might never become a Christian community because the meeting is centered on a specific goal, like raising money for a school and the outcome overshadows the purpose of the Christian community.**

**PLACE WITNESS HERE.**

***Example Witness: In my own profession, the legal profession, the practice, the practice of law is at best a compromising situation for most attorneys. The pressures to succeed, to win, are unbearable at times and some client’s demands are unreasonable. Anything and everything must be done to win. The “fraternity” of lawyers has experienced tremendous erosion in trust and respect for other attorneys, judges, and the judicial system as a whole. All in all, the legal profession is suffering from some very serious illnesses, but there are many good and honest attorneys mixed in with the others. As a result of its ailments, or Bar Association in Rhode Island, and its communities, and the many law offices that make it up are not living communities and most certainly are not Christian communities.***

1. **CHRISTIANITY IS BASED ON COMMUNITY.**
2. **As in all aspects of life which are based on community, so too is Christianity based on community.**

**It is God’s plan. The Pastoral Constitution on the Church, one of the documents of Vatican II states, “God did not create man for life in isolation, but for the formation of social unity. So from the beginning of salvation history He has chosen people not just as individuals but also as members of a certain “community.”**

1. **The word of God confirms this in Matthew’s gospel where Jesus says, “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them (Matt.18:20). If Christianity is not lived in community, it simply is not lived.**
2. **Therefore to enter into God’s plan it is necessary for Christians to form Christian communities where the mission of Christianity forms a common bond. Small communities with Christ at their center to strengthen and encourage one another.**
3. **How can we recognize a Christian community? A Christian community is known by its nature and its purpose.**
4. **It is the nature of a true Christian community to be one with God, a nucleus of Christians who are united with Christ and guided by the Holy Spirit sharing together their hopes and works for Christ for the evangelization of the world.**
5. **Its purpose is to strive to be for the world what the spirit is to the body – to communicate the good news of salvation to everyone, to discover Christ in the world, and to help the world discover Christ.**

**For example, Jesus began forming community among twelve ordinary men. He encouraged the apostles to go out together and He sent them out two by two. Now Jesus could have sent them out alone and they would have been able to cover twice as much ground, but Jesus wanted them in community with one another to support and encourage each other. Their purpose was to spread the Good News of Jesus. With deep faith and trust in God, the disciples established weak, vulnerable communities, struggling to be the carriers of God’s love and forgiveness in the world. That’s what the apostles were, that’s what the Church is and that’s what we must be about. We have the same responsibilities as the original apostles with the same source of strength and guidance, namely Christ, the Holy Spirit and each other.**

1. **PROCESS OF DEVELOPING CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY WITHIN OUR ENVIRONMENTS.**

**Our goal is the creation and formation of Christian communities, but how do we do it?**

1. **The process in forming and developing Christian communities among the baptized is accomplished in these steps:**

**First, we must encounter other people – we must be friendly to the people in our environment. Even if they are our adversaries or have different opinions and life styles, we must make a conscious effort to do so.**

**Secondly, we must live and share their anxieties, problems and joys and come to an understanding of which they really are. Sharing is the key to understanding and friendship.**

**Thirdly, friendships are formed; friendship is the heart of giving ourselves to another. The level of the relationship among the members of a group marks the level of Christian community within. Usually what is lacking is a deep sense of self-giving among the members. Our friendship is founded, not only on our respect and love of each other, but on the mutual love of Christ we share. True friendship is the key to Christian community, for in true friendship difference of opinions may exist but hostility cannot exist. Friends in the Eucharist, one with Christ, one with the Church and its mission to the world.**

**PLACE WITNESS HERE**

***EXAMPLE WITNESS: Several years ago I was involved in a legal matter which could have been very nasty. My adversary, an attorney about my age, was wrapped up in the success and victory at any cost syndrome. We had many discussions and I was able to identify him as a leader within the legal profession. We became acquaintances during the progress of this trial. On one accession, we had to go to court for a particular phase of the case and I asked him to ride with me. As I said earlier, I had to be friendly even with an adversary. While riding along he explained how he was dissatisfied with practicing law, tires of the compromises and he asked me how I handled it. I listened to him and shared with him. I used this question as an opening and told him I had felt the same way he in the recent but since then I had developed a relationship with God and through him I was able to deal will all that came each day. I explained that my priorities were very different now and that my work as his apostle was most important. My family was important and being available to others in time of joy and sorrow was important, no longer were money, power and success the important things in my life. Quite a turnaround for me. We became quite friendly and spent a lot of time together.***

***As time went on his desire to have some of what he saw I had, as he said, grew each day. We established a true friendship because we both wanted Christ in our lives. We shared many things not just the practice of law. Eventually, I invited him to live a Cursillo Weekend. He attended an information night and finally the Cursillo Weekend itself. Together we formed a group with several other men and this group continues to this day, although I have sensed moved on***

1. **Once we have established Christian communities among those we are close to or who we have become close to, we have to form the same Christian communities in the world.**

**This transformation of the world into Christian communities occurs in three ways:**

**First – Working with fellow Christian who, because of their baptism, are called to be witnesses of Christ. The decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, which is part of the Vatican II documents, states that, “the lay person derives her apostolate from its Christian vocation and the Church cannot be without it.”**

**The second step is to form some of these witnesses into a Christian group, which recognizes the role of the Church in the world.**

**Third – The last step is a saturation of the entire community with a sense of the Gospel, not necessarily a conversion, but a living of the Christian ideal, which is valid in its own right – namely walking the talk.**

***PLACE WITNESS HERE.***

***EXAMPLE WITNESS: Now with Paul I had a nucleus to work with to begin a change in the legal profession as a whole and in Paul’s office as well. Paul and I became allies, along with another lawyer and two judges, to begin a plan that I had for several years for the legal profession as a whole, a Catholic lawyers association which would be a net full of lawyers to be evangelized and to become evangelizers themselves. This relationship between a very small number of lawyers became what relationships should be, loving, self giving, and caring, without any sense or need for competition. This relationship is much different than most lawyer-to-lawyer relationships that I or the others had in the past.***

**Pope Paul VI, in his apostolic exhortation on the *Evangelization in the Modern World,* tells us that a Christian Community’s silent witness to others outside the community inspires others to ask, “Why are these people like this? Why do they live in such a manner? What or who inspires them? He says that such a silent witness is already a silent proclamation of the good news and a very powerful and effective witness. He calls it the initial act of evangelization, the first time a non-Christian or a fallen away Christian will sense Christ in the world.**

1. **THE CURSILLO METHOD AS A MEANS TO DEVELOP CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES IN OUR ENVIRONMENT.**
2. **If we are to transform the world to accept and follow the Christian ideal, we must establish in each environment small Christian communities that will change the environment – we must become a handful of Christians in each environment, who first learns to be a community. The environment will still be true to its purpose, but now it will serve the people within instead of the people serving the forces without.**
3. **The Cursillo method provides a way to develop, form, and sustain small groups of**

**Christian evangelizers. In fact, this is the entire purpose of the Cursillo. Let’s now look at the Cursillo’s method, of forming and sustaining Christian communities. The process has 3 major steps:**

1. **Getting to know each other;**
2. **Sharing;**
3. **The Grace of God.**

**As we go through each one, think about this Cursillo Weekend and how each step was used and Christian community was developed.**

1. **Getting to know one another. We came here on Thursday evening many of us strangers, nervous and wondering why we were here. Since then, we have come to know others by giving of ourselves and we’ve become friends.**
2. **Sharing formed those friendships. We have shared prayers, anxieties, fears, joys and laughter – even some tears. Our growing friendship is centered in Christ by our mutual love for Him.**
3. **This was accomplished by the grace of God.**

**By taking part in the Eucharist, and being open to the Spirit, we again strengthened these friendships. Our weekend here has shown us the Cursillo, as a method, can form a Christian community with the grace of the Lord. In addition to the joy of grace we add three elements, the same three elements that\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_spoke of on Thursday night in the “Introduction” talk:**

**a. Our idealism;**

**b. Our self surrender;**

**c. Our spirit of charity.**

**First, our idealism – believing that a great thing, the best is possible.**

**Second, our self-surrender – giving ourselves completely to each situation we find ourselves in and to others in it.**

**Third, our spirit of charity – a willingness to sacrifice our selfishness for the welfare of others. These elements enable a Christian community to be formed.**

**We have seen Christian community formed this weekend and therefore, know that it is possible, if we are willing to put Christ first, others second, and ourselves third as we all did this weekend.**

1. **There are five ingredients that are part of the total Community, as well as**

**the individual, that are necessary to achieve the goal of forming Christian community:**

**(1)The first being generosity or self-giving. True friendship is generosity of ourselves to others. At one time, the Apostles became concerned about having enough food and clothing for themselves and Christ responded, “Seek first the Kingdom of God and His justice and the rest will be given to you.”**

**(2)The second is faith in the strength of the Holy Spirit. Without prayers and Palanca, the work of God cannot happen. Matthew’s Gospel 10:20 tells us about the strength of the Holy Spirit when Jesus says, “for yourself, you will not be speaking: The Holy Spirit of your fathers will be speaking for you.” And so it will be with us.**

**(3)Third, humility and love are required to work in a team – to trust in the Lord. As I trust someone, I give myself humbly, and with love, and work with that person to achieve God’s goals.**

**(4)Fourth, responsibility. Each of us must assume responsibility for carrying out our mission in establishing the Kingdom of God in our world.**

**(5)Fifth, we must have a spirit of initiative and dedication to the gospel. We must see our mission within the various environments and change the environments into Christian communities.**

1. **CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IS APOSTOLIC.**
2. **The Christian community is not turned in on itself. We follow the lead of Christ who sent out His disciples two by two. We are following the lead of the first Christians who knew the value of community. We cannot go back to those days, but it is necessary that we create our own communities here and now. This is the challenge that awaits us tomorrow morning. We have to create small Christian communities in the environments that God has chosen for us to be part of in our normal daily lives. Our world needs the example of Christians who live this life we are presenting. The Christian life, with which we have been challenged, answers society’s deepest needs.**

**This community forms a living witness that speaks of Christ to our world. This Christian community, however, cannot exist within itself. Our life of grace only becomes complete when we work to draw others into sharing this life. This is the test of whether or not a community is a Christian community. No matter how much love is shown between members, no matter how great the witness of God’s action in their lives, if there is no reaching out to all of mankind it may be community, but it is not Christian community.**

1. **The purpose of the Christian community is the Evangelization of the world. We may ask ourselves, what is the ultimate goal for Christian communities in the world? These communities can, by joining forces, transform all environments into Christ. They can create from the Christian community and because of a Christian community, a Christian society.**

**The Christian laity are the salt, light and leaven of the world, called to bring the Good News of freedom to humanity. We must stir up other groups of Christians who can influence others and upset the world’s criteria of judgment and models of life which are in contrast with the gospel, in the major areas of life – namely, social, political, economics, religious, health and education. The presence of a Christian community such as this in any community will radically effect the whole environment with the spirit of the gospel.**

***PLACE WITNESS HERE.***

***EXAMPLE WITNESS:***

***Remember the plan if spoke about earlier to start a Catholic Lawyers Association, well our first attempt to form it and receive approval from the diocese was rejected by the Diocesan Chancery Office. But we continued to pray and offer sacrifice (Palanca) for the success of this plan. We continued to meet on a regular basis and reached out to other lawyers and friends. Approximately three years later I received a call from a friend of mine, a priest, who said the Chancery Office was interested in a Catholic lawyers association.***

***I called my friends and we jumped at the opportunity. With the backing of the bishop and the assistance of several lawyers and judges, we founded the Rhode Island Catholic Lawyers Association. The membership was small but energetic. We planned a Red Mass, a Mass of the Holy Spirit at the beginning of the court session in early October. The Mass was attended by a few lawyers and judges praying for guidance in our work as lawyers and judges, but it was a successful step in our apostolic plan.***

***We then established a core group, a small Christian community (a Group Reunion), which met every Wednesday to plan the activities of the Association (retreats, prayer service, and penitential services for our members). These retreats and prayer services helped us to grow as a community.***

***We also came together to share our Piety, Study and Action as it related to our attempts to evangelize the leaders within the association and outside of it as well.***

***One of the leaders that we planned to reach out to was a man named John. He joined the Catholic Lawyers Association and its core group almost from the very beginning because he said he was searching for more in his life. Unfortunately he left the core group suddenly. John is a good man, who was struggling with the practice of law and the way he practiced it. He was struggling with his faith and with his family relationships, especially with his wife. After John left the core group I stayed in contact with him on a regular basis. Our core group continued to offer Palanca for John. We all attempted to continue to encourage his participation, but he eventually stopped attending all functions. John and I became friends through this sequence of events.***

***One day John called my office in a panic. We talked for several hours and many more times in the following months. The core group, our small Christian community, continued to offer prayer and Palanca for John, and on several occasions he received phone calls from members. My wife also helped in this process by inviting John and his wife to our home. We were able to openly witness to our lie together and its struggles. We were also able to reveal to how it all became once Christ was the center of our lives. Time passed and John’s problems were beginning to be resolved. The steps taken to reach out to John were the result of much prayer, Palanca and support from the core group and my wife.***

***Eventually I invited John to live a Cursillo Weekend and he said yes. He has helped others in his law office and family to grow closer to Christ. He started a sharing group at his office, but has since moved to another location. He returned to participate in the activities of the Catholic Lawyers Association with a new-found commitment and enthusiasm for the work of Christ.***

***I met another man, names Joe, at a Christian businessmen’s luncheon. We struck up a friendship after the luncheon. Joe was suffering the same illness that others who practice law suffer from, the reality of practicing law in our society. He was also struggling with his faith. He was in the same place that I was in not so long ago.***

***Over the period of the next two years we spent a lot of time together and eventually came to understand each other better. With the prayer, Palanca and assistance of the core group, we encouraged Joe to participate in the Catholic Lawyers Association. Joe became interested in the role that such an association could play in assisting lawyers who were struggling with their faith and the practice of law. He continued his contact with the Catholic Lawyers Association and participated in planning of several activities. He became a member of the core group. Joe developed a stronger relationship with God and realized that he has an obligation to reach out to others. Joe lived a Cursillo Weekend and it gave him the tools to accomplish the task he knew he was called to undertake. He has since had a very positive effect on his family, friends and clients. He participates in a small sharing group held in his law office and is trying to be what God has called him to be, a bearer of the Good News.***

**These are but a few of the examples of what a Christian community can do when it plans its work and has enthusiastic and joyful Christians to perform the work.**

1. **CONCLUSION.**

**The pains of the world are real. The work God has given us is just as real. When our prayer is confident, when our community is real, when we have given our all, then all people will give to God that which each of us experienced because of His great gift and our openness to share that. Our effort and progress will be rewarded as our environments take on the spirit of Christ, from our families to all those other places that we felt were impossible to reach.**

**The world will be gathered into Christ and we, the Church, will be the power of Christ. A people of God, body of Christ and light of the people. Christ will rejoice when the entire world is open to His love.**

**All of this is not just optimism, but the result of a concept of triumphant Christianity. Christ will overcome all. Humanity, despite all we see, searches desperately for God. Will we accept the challenge and reveal the true God to them, or only a caricature?**