

# The 4<sup>th</sup> Day Journey

Erie Diocesan Cursillo Newsletter

June Newsletter 2021

## 2021 Cursillo Dates

The Dates for Cursillo in 2021 are:

**All Dates for 2021 have been canceled.** Please see Deacon Tom's Comments in this Newsletter. We are looking forward to 2022. We hope to come back stronger than ever despite all the challenges we have faced. Please keep praying!

## Office Hours

Currently office hours are extremely varied. Email is probably the best way to reach the office for now.

[Office@eriecursillo.org](mailto:Office@eriecursillo.org). If you do call, please be patient we will respond as soon as possible. We thank you for your understanding.

## A Few words from our Spiritual Director:



It is amazing to think six months have passed in my journey as Cursillo Spiritual Director. I can honestly say that I have not had two days the same and the Holy Spirit definitely guides all that I do.

I often look over at the pictures of Fr. Dan and Fr. Tex on the office wall and imagine them enjoying watching me deal with the many things I encounter for the first time, as well as during times when I am discerning making decisions for the good of the movement. I know that they, as well as all of us, understand that as long as the Holy Spirit is in control, all will be well.

**As we begin the month of June celebrating the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ (Corpus Christi), I would like to begin this message with a *Corpus Christi Prayer from the New Saint Joseph Sunday Missal*.**

*Let us pray*

*for the willingness to make present in our world the love of Christ shown to us in the Eucharist, Lord Jesus Christ, we worship you living among us in the sacrament of your body and blood.*

*May we offer to our Father in heaven a solemn pledge of undivided love.*

*May we offer to our brothers and sisters a life poured out in loving service of that kingdom where you live with the Father and the Holy Spirit one God for ever and ever. Amen*

Deacon Ralph DeCecco, in a letter to the inmates at SCI Albion, shared these words of meditation. I believe his thoughts are valuable for all of us. He said "*What should this Solemnity mean to us, both in adverse and in favorable times? More ink has been spilled on this subject than anything I care to think about, both positive and negative. However, in the time that we are in and the circumstances we find ourselves we can ask the same question the disciples asked Jesus "Where do you want us to go and prepare for you to eat the Passover?" Where does Jesus want 'us' to 'go'? And what does He want 'us' to do to 'prepare'?"*

I hope my comments may provide help in addressing these questions as they relate to our beloved Erie Cursillo as we continue to move the fences and deal with changes.

Father Ron Rolheiser shared some thoughts that seem appropriate for our current situation as well.

There's a story told of a young Jewish boy named Mortakai who refused to go to school. When he was six years old, his mother took him to school, but he cried and protested all the way and, immediately after she left, ran back home. She brought him back to school and this scenario played itself out for several days. He refused to stay in school. His parents tried to reason with him, arguing that he, like all children, must now go to school. To no avail. His parents then tried the age-old trick of applying an appropriate combination of bribes and threats. This too had no effect.

Finally, in desperation they went to their Rabbi and explained the situation to him. For his part, the Rabbi simply said: "If the boy won't listen to words, bring him to me." They brought him into the Rabbi's study. The Rabbi said not a word. He simply picked up the boy and held him to his heart for a long time. Then, still without a word, he set him down. What words couldn't accomplish, a silent embrace did. Mortakai not only began willingly to go to school, but he also went on to become a great scholar and a Rabbi.

What that parable wonderfully expresses is how the Eucharist works. In it, God physically embraces us. Indeed, that is what all sacraments are, God's physical embrace. Words, as we know, have a relative power. In critical situations they often fail us. When this happens, we have still another language, the language of ritual. The most ancient and primal ritual of all is the ritual of physical embrace. It can say and do what words cannot.

Jesus acted on this.

For most of his ministry, he used words. Through words, he tried to bring us God's consolation, challenge, and strength. His words, like all words, had a certain power. Indeed, his words stirred hearts, healed people, and affected conversions. But at a time, powerful though they were, they too became inadequate. Something more was needed. So, on the night before his death, having exhausted what he could do with words, Jesus went beyond them. He gave us the Eucharist, his physical embrace, his kiss, a ritual within which he holds us to his heart.

G K Chesterton once wrote: "There comes a time, usually late in the afternoon, when the little child tires of playing policeman and robbers. It's then that he begins to torment the cat!" Mothers, with young children, are only too familiar with this late afternoon hour and its particular dynamic. There comes an hour, usually just before supper, when a child's energy is low, when it is tired and whining, and when the mother has exhausted both her patience and her repertoire of warnings: "Leave that alone! Don't do that!" The child, tense and miserable, is clinging to her leg. At that point, she knows what to do. She picks up the child. Touch, not word, is what's needed. In her arms, the child grows calm and tension leaves its body.

That's an image for the Eucharist. We are that tense, over-wrought child, perennially tormenting the cat. There comes a point, even with God, when words aren't enough. God has to pick us up, like a mother her child. Physical embrace is what's needed. God knows that. It's why Jesus gave us the Eucharist.

We are blessed to finally move to a more normal pastoral life of sharing the celebration of the Eucharist. It was wonderful to see more glowing faces at the May Ultreya and I look forward to even greater attendance at our June and August Ultreyas that will be celebrated at All Saints in Waterford. It is also exciting to see the increase in activities in our other counties within the diocese as each in their own way opens the doors to gathering as God's people through varied activities. I want to extend a huge thanks to all of you who share in the organizing and participate in all that is starting to unfold.

As a powerful movement of people, who after encountering a Cursillo weekend, are trying to feel renewed and refreshed through connections with God and our Cursillo brothers and sisters, I would like to reiterate the information and announcements I shared in my report at the May Ultreya.

1. I would like everyone to congratulate Janet on her new job at the Diocese. She is leaving her position of Office manager for Cursillo. She has been invaluable to me and has done much for all of us during her tenure in the office. Please keep her in your prayers and join me in wishing her well. Lucky for me she has agreed to train our new administrative assistant once one has been selected. The Diocese website will soon have a link for the application process and job description. You can also contact me with questions or if you are interested. The executive officers and I hope to fill the position as soon as possible.
2. The Stewardship appeal brochure, known as \$55,000 in our 58<sup>th</sup> year, should now be in your hands. The trifold does include an envelope that serves two purposes: First, to forward a donation to the office, AND more importantly to request any updates to your contact information. I encourage you to update your data so we have the best possible ability to communicate with you all.
3. The Appeal also brings a new dimension this year as we have contracted with WESHARE, an online giving organization. Anyone with an active email address has probably already seen the message that enables you to sign in as an active participant from either one time donations or recurring donations from checking accounts, or credit cards. Pat Espin has included links to the site on our web page under donations. The second link provides an opportunity for you to make quick and easy memorial donations. If you have any questions, please feel free to email the office, me, or call the office on any Tuesday or Thursday between 10:00 and 1:00. More information will follow in the mail and by email from the WESHARE organization to assist you with logging in and participating. Eventually you will receive a post card from WESHARE introducing the program and presenting information on how to use it.
4. I would like to share the following message that was sent out to team leaders for upcoming Cursillos and the executive officers.

*Hello all.*

*I am sending this message prior to making a public announcement at Ultreya that **we are now cancelling the October and November Cursillo weekends in 2021.***

*After serious consideration, prayer, and discussion among the members of our COVID Task Force Committee, and objections/pushback regarding our stance on proof of vaccination to make or participate in the weekends, I have decided with the committee support, that the risk of conducting the weekend exceeds the benefits.*

*In a movement such as Cursillo our responsibilities include following best practices, procedures, and teachings of our Catholic church. This includes CDC guidelines and caring for our brothers and sisters in Christ. Much time has been spent in planning to prepare the weekends. A special thanks goes to Jerry Bukowski for the time he spent with me in the office adjusting food preparation, serving plans, and all the behind-the-scenes things that are involved. The Covid Task Force Committee also deserves a huge thanks for their evening meeting time, opinions, honesty, and love for the movement.*

*A significant concern of liability was discussed as far as what our responsibility would be if someone gets COVID from the weekend. Another concern arose with the possibility of someone*

*at the weekend failing a regular temperature screening or getting sick and the impact of that situation on the rest of the weekend and contact traced team and candidates.*

*Planning for visitors at sign-in, serenades, Holy Hour, break in and closing proved to be very limiting and would reduce the impact of some important and needed components of the Cursillo experience.*

*Our planning efforts will now be directed to 2022 with many issues still remaining on the table as items to be resolved. The pandemic situation will still drive much of what we will need to do. My focus has now shifted to those of us within the movement and developing plans for activities to keep us more engaged and a recharging of our zeal for our 4<sup>th</sup> days. Information will be presented at the May Ultreya and will be further detailed in the upcoming newsletters.*

*In the meantime, please leave all personal feelings as dust kicked off your sandals and pray that we will adapt and adjust to the needs of all of us and the benefits of safe weekends for those yet to be known as our Cursillo brothers and sisters.*

***I have spoken with both Rectors and am asking them to contact the people on their team lists to make them aware of the situation. I assured both Criss and Jeff that they will be the first leaders to work in 2022 along with their current assistant rectors and chief stewards.***

*I will also answer any concerns or questions that people have if you would like to direct them to me.*

*Be Blessed,  
Deacon Tom*

This was not an easy decision, but understand it was made with much prayer and discernment.

For those of you who do not know, A COVID Task Force committee has been meeting bi-weekly for the past few months trying to design a safe Cursillo experience in the face of many pandemic challenges. Our planning had to be done with the real time situation in the forefront and the hopes of relaxing restrictions if things changed in the fall. I want to assure you that this team was selected based on their involvement in the movement and their love for what Cursillo has done for them and will do for many yet to come. The committee includes past presidents and/or couples that span 30 years of involvement in the movement, active participants in weekend activities, Fr. John and a person with expertise in planning methods to deal with COVID restrictions, with great success, in a school district setting.

The committee recommended that COVID vaccinations be required for candidates, team members, and any participants or visitors. The executive committee unanimously endorsed that recommendation.

I can tell you that requirement brought varied opinions both supportive and objectional.

***However, mandating that participants receive a Covid-19 vaccine is the most reasonable way to simultaneously realize respect for the sanctity of human life, express love of neighbor, promote the common good and allow the grace of God to flow to God's people safely.***

To make a long story short, we did not feel we could provide a guaranteed safe environment in our role as Christian brothers and sisters.

This decision also impacts our president, Rick Skladanowski.

The COVID situation has placed him among a small group of past presidents that served multiple terms BUT has also caused him to be the first Cursillo President to spend all his time and effort

outside of the weekends, wishing he would have had the chance to be a President at a Cursillo weekend or two.

The officers will be moving up in November, so this is also a great opportunity to show our appreciation to Rick for all he has done and does that many never see.

***With all that being said, I want to share our plans for the future.***

1. We are focusing our planning on Cursillo weekends in 2022. I can't share much because I don't have much to share at this point.
2. We are also focusing our efforts inward, to engage and unite all of us that have been sitting on the sidelines, watching, waiting, and praying that we could be together.

I met with Jay Chandley and his active GR, known as the marketing team, and have charged them with the responsibility to coordinate and assist in the implementation of a program we will call:

### **ONE HALF HOUR OF HOPE FOR OUR FOURTH DAY JOURNEY**

***A program to engage current Cursillistas in hopes of:***

- ***reigniting personal zeal for living the fourth day***
- ***reigniting zeal for the movement***
- ***revisiting the talks and reflections from the Cursillo weekend***
- ***sharing in common prayer***
- ***developing a renewed sense of recruitment for the movement***
- ***remembering that we can't control the world around us but we can control how we react to it***

### **Program Information**

- The program will include 30-minute video talks or presentations directly related to Cursillo weekends.
- Talks begin with Prayer before Cursillo Talks and end with a prayer shared by the presenter.
- The program will provide talks and/or reflections Monday through Friday each week of July.
- The kickoff event Holy Hour Topic will be done by me and the Prodigal Son/Daughter will be the topic.
- The culminating activity is yet to be determined.
- All speakers will be approved by Spiritual Director through Email requests to me or Jay.
- Weekend Spiritual Directors will be invited to participate and share.
- All talks must be previewed and approved by the Spiritual Director.
- All Cursillo weekend talks are available electronically for anyone interested in sharing a talk from a weekend.
- The Office will be available for recording or approved locations can be scheduled by requested i.e. beach, front porch, church, etc.
- An iPad or other digital recording equipment can be used as well as the opportunity to share your reflections via Zoom as Jay is doing with his presentations Talking with Cursillistas Keeping in touch in tough times.
- Talks will be saved as MP4 files and will be shared on YouTube, the Cursillo Web Page, and/or Cursillo Group Facebook Page for all to review whenever and as often as you like.

- Topics can include weekend Spiritual Director reflections, Lay person talks, Music, other related topics presented by volunteers i.e. Forgiveness, Dealing with Challenges, caring for our brothers and sisters, Dealing with COVID, Grief management, weekday readings, etc.
- Presenters are welcome from any of the County Cursillo Groups.
- All talks need to be limited to 30 minutes must be typed, submitted, AND reviewed by the marketing team and me for approval.
- Recording of presentations will occur during June.

If you have any questions, please feel free to use my contact information found on the web page.

I will answer all requests and comments as soon as I possibly can and as honestly as I can.

Finally, The Secretariat will be meeting on Saturday, June 26 @ 9:00 by Zoom.

**\*\*\* NOTE: Secretariat has been cancelled and will be rescheduled for another date.**

Secretariat members need to watch your e-mails for the Zoom invite, agenda, and other important information that will be sent prior to the meeting.

Our new and complete proposed bylaws and policies will be ready to present for your review prior to ratification by the Executive Board.

We would like to plan a Cursillo picnic on August 21, at Our Lady of Mercy. We have not confirmed a committee or chairperson at this point and details are still unknown. The preliminary plan is for us to provide the food and beverages to avoid the need for anyone to bring any food. Social distancing will be suggested as well as masks for un-vaccinated individuals. Watch your email, Facebook, or the web site for details as plans unfold.

Please know you are all in mine and Pam's daily prayers as we continue to work at the rebirth of the movement and the ability to resume scheduling weekend.

Remember to continue your recruitment efforts even through this down time. It is important to note that numbers of applicants will directly impact the number and frequency of Cursillo weekends.

Be Blessed and De Colores,

Deacon Tom

## Ultreyas

County	Location
Erie County	There is no July Ultreya. Please look for our on-line program that runs all month long.  August 6, 2021, 7 p.m. at All Saints Parish, Waterford, PA (these will all be open to in person attendance while also being streamed unless new information is sent out)
Crawford County	None at this time
Elk/Cameron County	None at this time
Mercer County	None at this time

## Prayer Department

If you know of someone who has passed away, someone who is ill or serving in the military, please notify the office so their names can be placed on the prayer list.

### *Our recently deceased:*

Our deepest sympathy and prayers go out to the loved ones and friends of Cam Cianci, Frances Clark, Toni Nisbet, Roy Johnson, Earl Brieger, Janet Sedelmyers Dad, Mary Good's Mom, Betty Dietrich, Mary Grace De George, Fr. Veltri's brother, Jackie Krukowski's Dad, Fr. Nowak's Mom, Mike Dougan's Mom, Kim Lytle's brother, Arlene Barlekoff, Sandy Bukowski Reid, Elizabeth Becker, Greg Morelli's Mom and all those of whom we are unaware.



### *Our sick and recovering*

Best wishes for a quick recovery for Roseanne Blair, Mary Esser's son, Fr. Prez, Larry Bargielski, Jim Hamilton and all those of whom we are unaware of their illness.

### *Our troops and military*

To, CMSgt. Darin Beckes, Michael J. Brown II, Msgt Joshua T. Brown, Joey Garvey, Matthew Gredler, Military Specialist Evan S. Hornick, Felix Cruz III, Stefan Treacle, and all those of whom we may be unaware - Thank you for your service.

### *Our Religious*

As always, keep our seminarians (especially Cursillistas Ben Dagher, Luke Dagher, Christopher Wheeler), women and men religious candidates, as well as our deacon candidates and their wives in your prayers.

Please pray for a quick end to Covid-19 and prayers for all those that are sick with it!

## Joyful News:

Congrats to Jen Durney and her husband on the birth of their 3<sup>rd</sup> child Josephine Elizabeth!! Welcome to the Cursillo family!

We are blessed to announce the Ordinations of three seminarians to Transitional Deacons, Chris Wheeler, Ben Dagher and Nicholas Fratus. We are excited for their future and ask for continued prayers for them in their journey!

We are also excited to announce the Newly ordained Deacon couples; Paul and Debbie Barko, Frank and Carrie Hannah, Dave and Peggy Jacquiel, Paul and Joanie McCoy, Dan and Fran Reilly, Larry and Ann Tyers, Joe and Jennifer Glover.

It is especially nice to look at these lists and realize how truly blessed Cursillo is to have most of these lists be active members! De Colores!

## FOR THE GOOD OF THE MOVEMENT:

Erie Gives: We will once again be participating in Erie Gives this summer. It will be held on August 10, 2021. You will receive a post card with more information as it gets closer. We are grateful for your continued support even in these uncertain times!

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