



EPISCOPAL  
CURSILLO  
MINISTRY

## Guidelines for Table Leaders

RELATIONSHIP • EVANGELISM • RECONCILIATION

*These guidelines are intended to assist table leaders in various Episcopal Cursillo Situations: Episcopal Cursillo Weekends, Leaders' Workshops, and Clergy Workshops.*

14. **No one is to leave the table** during the presentation of a talk, (except, of course, in an emergency). No one should leave the table during discussion either. Table leaders should quietly keep track of their group members.
15. **Be sure everyone wears a name-tag.**
16. **Be sensitive** to any negative “games,” jokes or comments that might be seen as embarrassing or hurtful to anyone else.
17. **Remind** Cursillistas each day of convenience items available.
18. **Feel free to seek a Spiritual Advisor’s help** in pastoral matters or in any situation where you feel you need help.
19. **Keep all information and matters of a personal nature shared around the table confidential.** Failure to do so is called “gossip,” even if well-intentioned. This rule applies during weekends as well as after them.
20. **Pray for** each member of your group by name. There may be specific needs of the Cursillistas for which you can pray. Also, requests for prayer can be referred to the Palanca Chapel, Spiritual Advisors, or the Rector, for inclusion in intercessions.

### To Summarize:

- Just relax. Let the Holy Spirit direct you. Open yourself to His presence.
- Remember with different persons present with different needs, **no two Weekends are ever the same!**
- You have accepted a serious but extremely joyous and rewarding task as a table leader. Use the opportunity to grow, and to share yourself and allow Christ’s love to shine through you to a handful of people to whom the Spirit will bind you in spiritual fellowship.
- It will be, for you and for each member of your table group, a richly rewarding experience!

### The Role of Discussion Groups:

Cursillo is designed to prepare Christians to work together to witness to Christ in the world. Its chief gift is the small group, which forms links that bind and strengthen its members together for this work. Key to the Cursillo experience is the beginning and development of these links around table discussion groups. Here is where Group Reunion is first experienced, and later deepened and sharpened.

Because of the importance of table groups — the discussions that typify them, and their development of the group into a living Christian community — the Table Leader plays a key role in the success of any Cursillo Weekend.

The nature of your leadership is to be subtle rather than controlling, to be supportive rather than demanding. You are a loving *member* of your group while at the same time the *leader* whose responsibility it is to see that discussion is used effectively. Think of yourself as a “discussion facilitator” rather than a “classroom teacher.”

Two aspects of this special form of leadership suggest themselves:

1. You are to encourage discussion covering the content of the talks. This increases the likelihood of dealing seriously with the fundamentals the talks present.
2. Your task is to allow natural leadership to emerge within the group, engendering mutual trust and confidence, while not letting one or two persons dominate.

In short, you are a leader who seeks to transfer responsibility to the group for its sake.

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## The Role of Table Leader:

The success of Cursillo for each Cursillista depends to a large degree on his or her participation in the group discussions. If that sounds like a heavy responsibility for you...it is! Yet, you are not alone in facing this responsibility. You have a community that has identified you as one who can be trusted with this responsibility, and who will support you in it. And, you have the Spirit of Christ to guide you as you are open to it.

- You should be well prepared for your job. It goes without saying (but we will say it anyway) that the spiritual preparation through constant prayer is all important. This is so whether preparing for a Cursillo Weekend, a Leaders' Workshop, or a Clergy Workshop -- indeed, in any phase of Cursillo. These activities are the Lord's, not ours!
- You should be thoroughly familiar with the outlines of the talks before you undertake your role. Study the outlines and listen carefully to the talk giver — If possible, in rehearsals and always during their deliveries. Mark points or questions that emerge from the talks as most likely to engender discussion and/or which call for discussion. This will help you stimulate discussion when it lags.
- You should familiarize yourself with the general literature of the Episcopal Cursillo Ministry.
- Remember, although you are a table leader, you are not expected to be the final authority on Cursillo or Christianity. You must not "push" but gently "pull" the reluctant Cursillista into discussion. While some Cursillistas may indeed be experiencing their first direct encounter with Jesus Christ, many (most?) already come to Cursillo deeply committed to a personal relationship with their Lord. How presumptuous it would be, should we represent ourselves to them as if we are "in the know," or possess something that they do not.

Building on this, it is also important to recall a significant, but subtle point that persons are called "Candidates" or "Pilgrims" only up until the moment the Cursillo experience begins. Then, they are called "Cursillistas." This means, "those who make the course," and sheds light on the role of the weekend leaders. We are not the experts who are going to hand on a package of new ideas or insights: we are pioneers making a trek together with our fellow pilgrims toward a destination for which we all strive. We are partners in the journey.

***Relax. Be natural. Be yourself — a Christian "under construction" who has accepted the role of an instrument of the Holy Spirit — not the Holy Spirit's advisor.***

## Guidelines:

1. ***Get the discussion started*** as soon as possible after a short period for the Cursillistas to consider what they heard in the talk. Be prepared with a few key questions to stimulate discussion. *Never ask a question that can be answered with just a "yes" or "no."*
2. ***Time management*** is a large part of your responsibility. Table leaders can help keep the whole group on schedule by being on time themselves.
3. ***Gently prevent "side talk"*** between individual members around the table.
4. ***Everyone is encouraged to take notes*** during the talks. Set a good example by taking notes yourself as the talk proceeds. This may also provide you with a source of questions later.
5. ***Appoint a secretary*** to take notes of each table discussion for reporting later. Rotate the secretarial job.
6. ***Promote a free exchange*** of ideas from all your table members. Watch for signs that a shy member would like to say something.
7. ***Be positive.*** Try to reinforce participants. Paraphrase their remarks to clarify meaning. Never discourage someone who speaks no matter how naive his or her thoughts may appear to be.
8. ***Be a reflector.*** Sometimes an effective technique is to answer questions with a question. Don't be afraid to let another member of the group come up with the answer. Let the group come naturally to its own conclusions even if they are not the same as yours.
9. ***Be a summarizer.*** Collect the ideas of the group to assist the secretary in stating the group's conclusions.
10. ***Do not be afraid of periods of silence.*** Often, it takes time to process new ideas, or particularly moving insights -- or simply collect one's thoughts. Welcome such "pregnant moments" as they occur.
11. ***Do not get involved in doctrinal or theological debates*** or arguments. When significant issues of dispute arise, send for one of the Spiritual Advisors for his or her input.
12. ***Stay on common ground.*** Seek consensus.
13. ***Don't talk about the process of the Weekend,*** or about what is going to happen later. Each Weekend is unique and unfolds according to the leading of the Spirit, not technique.