Meeting Report – Bishop Barry Knestout

On November 29, 2018 Dan Martin, Chairperson for the Central VA Cursillo Center, and Ellie Henrietta, Lay Director for the Diocese of Richmond, met with the Most Rev. Barry C. Knestout, the bishop of the Diocese of Richmond. Michael School, Director of the Office for Evangelization, was also in attendance. The meeting was conducted at the Pastoral Center at 7800 Carousel Lane, Richmond, VA.

The purpose of the meeting was twofold: to acquire the endorsement and support for the Cursillo movement within the Diocese, and to demonstrate to Bishop Knestout that Cursillo provides a path for meeting the evangelization goals of the Diocese of Richmond.

Ms. Henrietta began the discussions by providing Bishop Knestout with an organizational chart depicting Cursillo from National through Region-2 down to the five Cursillo centers within our diocese. Part of the discussion that ensued was the large geographic size of the Richmond Diocese. There are approximately 142 parishes spread over roughly 36,000 square miles.

A 14-page PowerPoint presentation was prepared, reviewed, and approved by the CVCC prior to the meeting with Bishop Knestout. This presentation was used during the briefing and covered the following areas: Cursillo-An Action Movement, The 3-Day Cursillo, Cursillo Purpose, Cursillo Goals, Cursillo-A Call to Metanoia, Cursillo Tripod, Cursillo Essence, and Cursillo-Method of Evangelization.

In the discussion on the make-up of the team, Bishop Knestout wanted to know the training level associated with the lay Spiritual Director (SD) team members. We responded that the lay SDs had to meet a number of requirements: 1) they had received extensive formal training as provided in a program like the Spiritual Direction Institute (SDI) that was developed by Msgr. Chet Michaels; 2) they had extensive team experience so that they understood the spiritual application and benefits of the Cursillo method; and 3) they had to be familiar with Church doctrine to ensure that the theological elements of team formation and the Weekend, and their talks and meditations were authentic and accurate. Bishop Knestout seemed satisfied with our response as he is familiar with the SDI program.

During our discussion about the weekend talks, we gave Bishop Knestout a spreadsheet that listed each talk and mediation and whether the talk or mediation is presented by a team member or by a SD.

Bishop Knestout made some positive comments when we discussed the call to metanoia. The presentation slide mentioned that the dynamics of the Cursillo Weekend is designed primarily to bring about a change – to have a progressive metanoia through an ongoing formation program. Bishop Knestout also wanted to know a little about how we do this progressive process and this opened the door to discuss our group reunions and our Ultreyas.

During the discussion on our three-step process of evangelization (make a friend, be a friend, bring a friend to Christ), Michael School made a comment that there has been a history of some Cursillistas that over-do the process of asking people to make a weekend to the point of harassment. I ensured Mr. School that we were aware of the problem and that we emphasize to Cursillo community members the importance of "being a friend" before an invitation is extended. I explained to Mr. School that harassment was never an acceptable method of recruitment.

I expressed my concern about retreat centers as we were wrapping-up our meeting. I mentioned that since I moved to the Richmond area in 2010 that Tabor House in Lynchburg, The Well, and the Abbey have been eliminated as viable options for Cursillo weekends within the Diocese. I expressed that there is a vital need for a retreat center that will support the broad spiritual needs of the Diocese. Bishop Knestout responded by saying that because of the large geographic size of the Diocese (36K sq. miles) that it was a difficult challenge to find a retreat center solution that would adequately serve such a large and very diverse Diocese.

Ellie and I had been optimistic that we would have an hour to deliver our presentation. Much to our surprise, we had about an hour and 20 minutes with Bishop Knestout and Michael School. At the end of our presentation, Bishop Knestout said that we had his endorsement.

Diocese of Richmond

Office of the Bishop

August 30, 2022

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

It is with a spirit of thanksgiving that I offer you my warmest congratulations on the 50th Anniversary of Central Virginia Cursillo. A milestone such as this offers an occasion to reflect with gratitude on how the Holy Spirit has worked through the Cursillo Movement in this diocese.

As we endeavor to live out the Church's mission of evangelization in our world today, it is instructive to remember that, as Pope Saint Paul VI stated, "Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses." This statement evokes the truth that what the Church offers to the world is not compelling ideas, but rather the person of Jesus Christ who reveals to each of us our identity as a person loved by God.

I am thankful for all that the Cursillo Movement has done to provide opportunities for men and women to encounter Our Lord, and through the experience of friendship among the members of His body, to foster growth in the baptismal vocation to be witnesses to the life-changing encounter with Him.

I pray that, with the intercession of Our Lady and St. Joseph, the Holy Spirit will continue to use the Cursillo Movement as an instrument for extending the Kingdom of God.

Assuring you of my prayers and congratulations, I remain

Sincerely in Christ,

+Barry C. Knestout

Most Reverend Barry C. Knestout
Bishop of Richmond

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