

## THE HISTORY OF VIA DE CRISTO

Via de Cristo is the Lutheran expression of the Cursillo Movement, which began in the Roman Catholic Church in Spain in the late 1940s. A group of men from Majorca, Spain were concerned about the erosion of influence the church was having on society and dedicated themselves to bring the young men of their city to know Christ. Cursillo gradually developed as this group prayed and worked together. They did not want this to be an instructional experience like confirmation, but a renewing experience that would motivate the men to influence others for Christ.

The weekends were a success and the movement spread throughout Spain and then to the Spanish-speaking world, mostly Central and South America. It is now active on all continents and includes women.

The first Cursillo came to the United States through Mexico to Texas in 1957. The first English-speaking Cursillo was held in 1961.

Several Lutheran laymen began investigating Cursillo as a potential method for renewal in the Lutheran church about 1969. In 1972 several laymen attended a Roman Catholic weekend in Florida. Later that year Lutheran Cursillos were held in Florida and Iowa.

By the mid-1980s many of the Roman Catholic movements had become very ecumenical, and the leaders of the Catholic movement felt that this was at the expense of teaching Roman Catholic doctrine. Because of this the National Roman Catholic Secretariat felt that each denomination should hold its own weekends for its own people. This had to be agreed upon in order for a movement to continue to use the name Cursillo.

The Episcopal Movement signed the agreement and continues to call its weekends "Cursillo". The National Lutheran Secretariat chose not to sign this agreement, so in mid-1986 changed its name to "Via de Cristo", which means "Way of Christ" in Spanish. Some of the Roman Catholic movements also chose not to sign the agreement because they valued the ecumenical experience. They use the name "Cum Cristo". The Methodist movement has been called "Walk to Emmaus". There are now more than 31 Lutheran movements in 29 states.

In 1985 seven couples from St. Peter Lutheran in Sheboygan attended an Episcopal Monarch Cursillo in Appleton, Wisconsin. Their pastor and two other couples from their church had gone before them. This group of Lutherans in Sheboygan began what is now the Wisconsin Lutheran Via de Cristo, SonRise Secretariat. With help from their Episcopal Monarch friends, the Minnesota Lutheran Via de Cristo and a few souls from the Indiana Cursillo, the first set of weekends were held in the fall of 1989.

Weekends have been held at various locations throughout a large area of Wisconsin. There are generally two to three sets of weekends held each year.