



Strait From the Heart

The Voice of Heart of
Florida Via de Cristo
for 20 years
November 2005

Heart of Florida Via de Cristo—20 Years

The first weekends of Heart of Florida Lutheran Cursillo were held in December of 1985. During the two years prior to that time, the Holy Spirit led to Orlando a number of couples who had made their Cursillo weekends in Ohio, Atlanta, North Carolina and Jacksonville. As this group met together, they knew they wanted to share the Cursillo experience with others.

In October of 1984, a Secretariat was formed with Chuck Hoover as Lay Director and Pastor Dick Hardel as Spiritual Director. In the very first community newsletter published in November of 1984, Physical Arrangements chair Joe Feagins listed what was needed for the first weekend: "EVERYTHING!" A small group of dedicated people worked hard to sponsor candidates on weekends held by other Florida movements. Heart of Florida received much support from the communities in St. Pete, Indian River and Jacksonville. Local Catholic and Episcopalian communities helped with fund raising. In the fall of 1985, the first men's and women's teams were formed jointly by Sunshine North Via de Cristo in Jacksonville and Heart of Florida Lutheran Cursillo and the first weekends became a reality.



A special moment of grace marked our first weekends. We chose Corinthians 5:17, "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation: the old has passed away, behold the new has come" as the Heart of Florida "theme". A roster cover was designed using the words "We are a new creation". As we began receiving palanca for the weekend, we received a package from a community in another state containing a banner. The banner was exactly the design that we had chose for our roster cover.

In 1991, the Secretariat voted to become affiliated with the National Lutheran Secretariat. Because of restrictions by the Catholic Cursillo on who could attend a Cursillo, the National Lutheran Secretariat voted to rename the weekends "Via de Cristo". Our #11 weekends in October of 1991 were the first official Via de Cristo weekends for Heart of Florida.

In the very first Heart of Florida newsletter published in November of 1984, Spiritual Director Dick Hardel wrote: "Cursillo is just one tool of spiritual renewal. We are

committed to use this tool well. God causes all the growth. We just celebrate our Father's presence...and we are here to give thanks."

In a message to the Heart of Florida Community on the occasion of our 15 Year 50 Weekend Anniversary, Pastor Dick reminds us "...We wear bright rainbow colors, put confetti in our letters, cry, laugh, sing, pray, share and grow. But the only purpose of Via de Cristo is to strengthen us to serve so others see Jesus. It is never about Via de Cristo. It is always about Jesus! His presence is our present and we will celebrate that forever."

.....and so on November 12, 2005, we will gather as a community to celebrate HIS presence and give thanks!

PLEASE Call 407-362-1731 to RSVP,

by Saturday, November 5!!!

Potluck: 6:00 pm Celebration: 7:00 pm

**at St. John Lutheran Church
1600 S. Orlando Ave., Winter Park, FL**

Potluck: If your name begins with:

A-H Bring Salads

I-P Bring Vegetables

Q-Z Bring Desserts

But most importantly we want you there to celebrate with the Community!

(Meats (turkey and ham) are being provided . A free will offering will be accepted to offset the cost.)



Reflections from founding “Cursillistas”

(Excerpts from the 15 Years 50 Weekends
“Memories and Blessings”)

After making our weekends in Ohio, we moved to Orlando and were disappointed to find there was no Cursillo community here. I remember meeting Mary Hoover and just the two of us started the first reunion group, meeting each week and praying for guidance on beginning a new Cursillo community. It wasn't long until God somehow led us to several other couples who had also recently moved into the area.

I can't think of those early days without remembering the blessings of so many loving, dedicated people who helped to get us started. Our first fund raiser, a spaghetti dinner, was put on by a reunion group from the local Catholic community. Sonbeam let our small core group serve on their teams in St. Pete to gain experience. Sonshine North not only provided half of the team members, but also let us borrow needed supplies and equipment for the first HoF weekends. As each obstacle was overcome and each need met, we were reminded over and over of Who was really in charge of bringing a Lutheran Cursillo to the Orlando area.

Lynn White



One evening a group of us were sitting at St. John in one of the classrooms and the issue of naming our community surfaced. It was late and we were all tired but we began to discuss possibilities. The other Cursillo groups in Florida had names that suggested their geographic locations. Pastor Dick Hardel wanted us to be different from that so I said, “Well, we're in the middle of Florida” to which Dick responded, “Yes, we're really in the heart of Florida.” We all looked at one another and with very little further discussion agreed on Heart of Florida as our name. **John Bost**



For the first 3 sets of weekends we held at Camp Thunderbird, there was no building available to use as a chapel. The solution: we built a temporary chapel for each of those weekends. A group would go out to Thunderbird the Saturday before the men's weekend, construct a wood frame and then cover the entire structure with plastic sheeting.

Though not as lovely as the Sistine Chapel in Rome,

worships in those “Vis Queen Cathedrals” are remembered fondly by those who participated in our early weekends. The beauty of God's world was clearly evident from inside those chapels! Between weekends #4 & #5, Camp Thunderbird added some buildings and the rollo room was moved to one of the new structures that was air conditioned! Before #5, when the days were warm, most rollistas made a walk-in refrigerator stop between the chapel and the rollo room to cool off for a few minutes! It took many more hands to accomplish set-up and tear-down than it does now, but God's people responded and community was strengthened as we worked side by side.

Dale Nelson



Christ is counting
on you...

After many years, there is little detail I remember about Women's Weekend #1 except, of course, the blessings which continue to go on and on. Because half the team came from Sunshine North the entire team only met together twice. There was no team retreat, little training material, a few borrowed banners and little or no equipment. This was surely a time when, if Christ was counting on us, we had to be counting on Him! Even though all team members had made their Cursillo weekends in a variety of places outside the Orlando area, the Holy Spirit unified our effort to provide a weekend environment where Christ could touch lives in a personal way. I've never had another experience where so much work was done so joyfully and so generously with such unity of spirit.

The blessings of that first weekend go on and on. It is still a blessing to see pilgrims from the first weekend that were too shy to share a poster and are now confident leaders in their churches. The greatest blessing; however is to trace how friends brought their friends to Christ. As you reflect on the past weekends, imagine all the prayers said, notes written, tears shed and laughter shared, as friends shared Christ with friends. May the blessings continue!

Suzanne Cattell

HAPPY FALL!



Being a Christian is like being a pumpkin. God lifts you up, takes you in, and washes all the dirt off of you. He opens you up, touches you deep inside and scoops out all the yucky stuff- including the seeds of doubt, hate, greed, etc. Then He carves you a new smiling face and puts His light inside you to shine for all the world to see. This was passed on to me from another pumpkin. Now, it is your turn to pass it to a pumpkin. I liked this enough to send it to all the pumpkins in my patch.

Happy Fall

Spiritual Direction

“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” Romans 8:28 (NIV)

As I reflect on my involvement in one of the weekends, I'm struck by the unexpected blessings that came my way. The deer that crossed the yard and let us watch them. The flowers that appeared one day on the dining room tables. The personal stories shared with me by pilgrims and team members.

Of course, I expect God to bless our weekends and to touch our lives anew. I just never know what the specific blessings will be! God often surprises me.

I'm also struck by how frequently unexpected blessings come out of painful times in our lives. This has been true in my life. I've heard team members share stories about how God redeemed dark times in their lives. I've also witnessed pilgrims who began a weekend with a burdened spirit, and then left the retreat center with a joyful heart.

God surely works in all things to bring good to His children. Sometimes we see the evidence. Sometimes we do not. In my life, I have even had to look years back before I could see clearly what God was doing the whole time.

My prayer is that each of us keeps our eyes open to the glory of God all around us, and that our hearts are able to sense the wonder of God's amazing grace. And when we are too burdened to see or feel what God is doing, may we have Christian friends around us who will walk alongside until we reach a place in our journey when the blessings surprise us once again.

Tom McRee,
Spiritual Advisor

Spring Weekends

Men's Weekend – April 27-30, 2006

Rector: Bob Blasberg

Women's Weekend – May 4-7, 2006

Rectora: Martha Harriman

It's time to begin your preparation for the upcoming Spring Weekends. Begin praying for the yet unknown Pilgrims and Team members. Lift them up to the Lord, to strengthen them and bring them to the weekend in service and love.

***Please keep all those
who have suffered
losses from Hurricanes
Katrina, Rita and Wilma
in your prayers.***

Heart of Florida Via de Cristo—New Website

Visit our new website:

www.hofvdc.org

Find:

- More about the history of Cursillo and Heart of Florida Cursillo/Via de Cristo
- What happens on a weekend
- What happens after a weekend
- Who should attend a weekend
- Calendar of Events—Including Ultreyas and Weekends
- Download “Weekend” Application and “Willingness to Serve” Form
- Past issues of the Strait from the Heart Newsletters
- Quick links to your secretariat members
- Links to National Lutheran Secretariat and others
- How you can update your address, phone number and email address
- How to sign up for the prayer chain

So Check it Out!

Heart of Florida Via de Cristo

C/O St. John Lutheran church
1600 S. Orlando Ave.
Winter Park, FL 32789

POTLUCK DINNER – 20th Anniversary Celebration – ULTREYA – See PAGE 1

PLEASE ADVISE US OF YOUR ADDRESS CHANGE – BULK MAIL IS NOT FORWARDED!

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Strait From the Heart is published six times per year and is the official publication of the Heart of Florida Via de Cristo ministry. The newsletter does not have any official authority but represents voices and feelings of those contributing to its pages.

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