

My name is Jeremy Engel. I worship with my wife, Kim, and our two children at St. Jude in Tequesta. I made Men's Cursillo #60 at Our Lady of Florida in August, 2018. I sat at the Table of St. Jude.

The theme of this talk is "In the Spirit of St. Monica."

I'm told that Ultreya witness talks are supposed to focus on apostolic action. So I will start by saying that I am here, as a direct result of the apostolic action of my mother-in-law, Cindy Sheldon. I married her daughter Kim in 2007. From the beginning, Cindy and I had a strained relationship. From my perspective, I didn't hate her, I just didn't want anything from her. She persisted in loving me. Despite our distant and nearly nonexistent relationship, I still received gifts for Christmas and my birthday. They were usually gift cards and something thoughtful, like books on some kind of spiritual development, or a rosary. The first time Cindy brought me back a rosary from Bethlehem; and I specifically remember having the thought: "never in a million years would I pray the rosary." I would even twist and play on the words to be disrespectful my wife. "Hail Kimmy, full of grace ..." etc.

After Cindy came back from Medjugorje in the fall of 2017, she brought back another rosary. I told my wife Kim, "tell your mom to stop wasting her money, I'm not ever going to use these rosaries." Little did I know how that one in particular would be used.

It was actually after Cindy's trip to Medjugorje that the invitation to attend Cursillo came up. I remember opening a Father's Day card telling me that Cindy had gifted me a Men's Cursillo weekend retreat. I really didn't know what that meant, but I thought "That's nice," and threw it down on the counter to be forgotten.

Our Cursillo applications were finally submitted, and the prayers for me continued. Despite some resistance on my part, and serious scheduling interference from my job, I showed up ... 25 minutes late ... to Men's Cursillo #60 on Thursday, August 9, 2018. During all of the last minute, touch and go logistical complications that had to be resolved to get me to the Cursillo weekend at Our Lady of Florida, Cindy was praying for me in an Adoration Chapel.

That Cursillo weekend changed my life. I experienced the metanoia that we hear about throughout the weekend. It was during my Cursillo weekend that I realized how beautiful saying a rosary was. I found it meditative and I pictured Gabriel and Elizabeth speaking those words to Mary. It no longer seemed like a monumental task to say all five decades at once. It was also during that time that I realized the special role of Our Lady and I noticed the peace and grace I felt when it was completed. Want to shift an atmosphere of anger and frustration? Pray a rosary. I will not spend much time quoting the saints who have advocated for praying the rosary, but Padre Pio referred to it as his weapon.

After the Cursillo weekend, when I was going through difficult times, I learned to pray the rosary and drive. I prayed daily rosaries, sometimes twice (and even a Divine Mercy Chaplet thrown in occasionally), in my car with my Medjugorje rosary that Cindy brought back for me. God answered those prayers and blessed me and continues to bless our family.

This past year, as part of a large group of Cursillo men, we consecrated ourselves to Jesus through Mary. It was an amazing experience and I was blessed to have been a part of it. There is an old Hebraic understanding, that if you wanted an audience with the King, you petitioned his mother. She could approach the king in an intimate way that no other subject could. This is illustrated in 1 Kings 2:12-20.

I saw my first paracord rosary from my Cursillo brother, Mike Bolduc, and a few others that had Rugged Rosaries. I went online and bought a paracord rosary. It was not up to my standards, so I took the beads off and re-made it. I began making my own all paracord rosaries, which got the wheels turning. I had an idea for an all stainless bead and crucifix rosary on paracord. After making the one like I wanted, my Cursillo brothers thought pretty highly of them and encouraged me to take orders. So now I spend my spare time making rosaries by hand. My children have even gotten involved. Jonah loves helping and practices his barrel knots, and Lily is ready with beads counted out for me.

More important than spending time with me making them, we are learning to pray the rosary as a family. Some nights are better than others, but it is a worthy undertaking. I have also started putting my rosaries on Facebook and receiving positive responses from both

Catholics and Protestants, some of whom I never would have guessed would respond in such a positive way. My rosaries have become a tool for my own apostolic action. Our Blessed Mother has a sense of humor!

I would like to close by saying that I acknowledge and am grateful for the special role that my mother-in-law Cindy has had in my life. If it weren't for her efficacious prayers, I would not be here. My kids and I wouldn't be making and praying rosaries together, I would with almost certainty, be divorced, and in all probability be dead both spiritually and physically.

Jeremy Engel
Men's Cursillo #60
Table of St. Jude