

## THE JOURNEY TO CURSILLO ...

I grew up in a Catholic family of five boys. We attended church regularly and life was normal. While a senior in High School, my father passed away. I was lost. I needed to find some direction for my life. Without a father figure, I had to quickly grow up and figure things out for myself. I saw my brothers were all doing the same thing.

I chose to train in a new field of emergency medical services. I became a paramedic. This career path was brand new at the time and there were only a few of us to serve a mid-sized city of 50,000. My work schedule would end up being a 48 hour shift from Friday night through Sunday night. This career would ultimately keep me busy for the next seventeen years. During that time, I forgot all about going to church. I was so preoccupied helping other people in need that I neglected my own needs. Spiritually, I was lost. I was roaming around in the dark.

It would be many years later that I would find my way back to church. A close friend invited me to attend a parish Men's Retreat at Our Lady of Florida. While in the chapel, and after reconciliation, I found myself kneeling quietly for quite a long time. During that time, alone in the chapel, I had a very subtle feeling of calm and peace in my heart. Was I feeling a connection with God again? I think maybe he was saying to me, "I'm with you now."

The next morning I was invited to play drums for the band that provides music at the Easter Sunrise Mass each year. I don't know why I said yes. I hadn't played drums since high school, some forty years ago. I was not prepared for this. I did not even own drums! I had just five weeks to be ready and I didn't know any of the music. My excitement to participate was quickly clouded with doubt and fear. Logically thinking, there was no way I could be ready for this, I should back out now, but that's not what happened.

I returned home on Sunday, and shared my weekend experience with my family. They were surprised but mildly supportive. I knew it would take a lot of hard work and dedication to get ready for this event, but there was something swirling in my head that kept saying "you can do this." On Monday morning, I went out and purchased an electronic drum set (so I could practice quietly). I practiced day and night for the next five weeks. Along the way, I found many new friends (also in the band) who would become my music mentors and my best friends.

With God's help, I felt somewhat prepared for Easter. I remember sitting there that early morning, frightened and insecure, thinking "What am I doing here?" I remember saying to myself: "God, this is your day, this is your church, and these are your people. Make this good!" And he did! As it would be, I would continue to learn and play along with the band making many new friends through Christ.

My involvement in this music ministry has brought me back to my faith. Having recently made my Cursillo weekend, where I completely accepted God's love, I now accept the Holy Spirit working through me. I know this to be true because during this journey over the past four years, everything I remember about music has changed. What I previously saw as just music, black and white notes and lyrics on a page of paper, has now become a colorful symphony. I connect with the music and lyrics in a brand new way. I better understand what the artists are trying to convey through their heartfelt music. I hear God's message in the lyrics.

"God is ingenious." That was the theme of my retreat for my first weekend at Our Lady of Florida. I think back now, and wonder if this was His plan for me all along? Was He just waiting for me to make a commitment, to say "yes Lord"? I know now that He has been there along my side, each step of this journey. He provided me with everything I would need; be it drums, teachers, practice time, opportunities and confidence. He just wanted me to be "willing." I am, and will continue to be, as long as I can move my arms and feet.