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## **Buffalo Cursillo History #10 (September 2022 Newsletter)**

### “Cursillo Looks for a Permanent Home”

In the late 1960's and early 1970's parish schools, diocesan and private high schools were at full capacity with young baby boomers. Men's and Women's Cursillos were held wherever it was possible to use a school gymnasium with an adjoining kitchen during the summer months or Easter vacation.

Two Buffalo Catholic schools which had already closed were used extensively in the early days. From 1965 to 1968, St Mary's Redemptorist Church hosted Men's Cursillos #1 through #11 and #14 as well as several Spanish Men's weekends. In 1968, St Mary's Business School accommodated Women's #2 and #4 and Men's #12 in addition to Spanish Women's #1 and #2.

In 1967-68, Women's #3 and #5 were held at the new St. Mary's high School, Lancaster, and also Men's #10 and #13.

In 1969, Women's #6 was held at Cana Grace Retreat House, Alden; Women's #7 at St. Gerard's Lyceum, Men's #15 at Bishop Turner High School, Men's #16 at St. Marks School, in Buffalo; and Men's #17 at Bishop Neumann High School, Williamsville.

Members of the Secretariat formed the Cursillo Center Committee, composed of Fr. Barry Smith, Dick O'Donnell, Paul Needham and Tom Alberalla, to search for an available place for each weekend.

Finally, in November, 1969, the Committee found a Cursillo Center at Brothers of Mercy Sacred Heart Home in Clarence where Men's #18-#21 and Women's #8-#11 were held as well as at least two Spanish weekends. For a year, there was no need to transport cots, big screens (which were used to divide the gym into a conference area and sleeping quarters), the essentials for Mass, songbooks and supplies for the candidates from place to place, week to week or month to month.

The Secretariat suggested a letter to Brother James Murphy, FMM, Provincial, be written thanking him for the use of the Brothers' facilities.

The next year, Cursillo found another Center at the Consolata Mission Seminary, Brompton Rd., Williamsville. The Consolatas were an Italian religious order of priest founded to work in the foreign missions. Fr. Anthony Bellagamba, Dean of Studies, and Fr. Ralph Lombardo Superior, welcomed Cursillo in January, 1971. The Chapel in the building afforded the Candidates to visit

the Blessed Sacrament and attend Mass and Cursillistas to be at the Holy Hour on Saturday. There was a whole room for Cursillo Storage.

From February, 1971 to September, 1972, Women's #12 - #18 and Men's #22 - #28 were held there as well as one Spanish Men's and one Spanish Women's Cursillo. Imagine 16 Cursillos in 20 months! In addition, Leaders' School, a Single's Ultreya and the first Men's Second Touch Weekend\* were based there.

Fr. Lombardo enthusiastically made Men's #22 and Fr. Tom Talentino, a teacher, made Men's #26 and later sponsored two Consolata Seminarians.

A farewell thankyou letter was sent to Fr. Lombardo, IMC and the Consolata Fathers for their helpfulness and generosity extended to Cursillo.

Following the cultural upheaval of the 1960's and the end of the Vietnam War, Consolata like most religious order seminaries in WNY closed in the 1970's. The building later became Brompton Heights for Assisted Living.

\*Note: One of the traditional parts of the 4<sup>th</sup> day program described in the official Cursillo literature is that each Cursillo should hold an annual reunion. Buffalo followed the practice rather sporadically. In June, 1971, the Secretariat approved the new program of annual reunions in the form of a Cursillo-style weekend from Friday evening till Sunday afternoon open to men or women separately. The talks would include a review of the major points of a three-day weekend, with a re-introduction, on Sunday, to the other elements of the fourth-day program (since Buffalo was still trying to solidify the Ultreyas). The name "Second Touch" was adopted from the story (mark 8:22-26) of the blind man whom Jesus cured upon touching him a second time. The second Touch Weekend didn't become an annual event until 1992 and continued for 28 years until 2020 (Covid-19). The weekend was open to any man or woman who had ever made a Cursillo. It was intended to be a retreat and reunion for all who attended.