



# History of the Cursillo

## *Cursillo: "A Short Course"*

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*Presentation Based on  
The Origins and Development of Cursillo,  
Father Ivan Rohloff, 1976*



# Presentation Outline

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- † Origins of the Cursillo 1940-49
- † Mallorca 1947-55
- † Cursillo Movement Trials and Triumphs



# Spanish Catholicism

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- † Most Spaniards from 1930s to 1960s had an militant attitude – in part came from universal service in the Army during WWII
- † Spanish Catholics were very conservative –
  - Clergy seen as authority figures
- † Spaniards had a strong sense of community and commitment to build community
- † The Spanish Church had a close relationship with the Spanish government – the Church had helped to establish stability in Spain for Hundreds of years

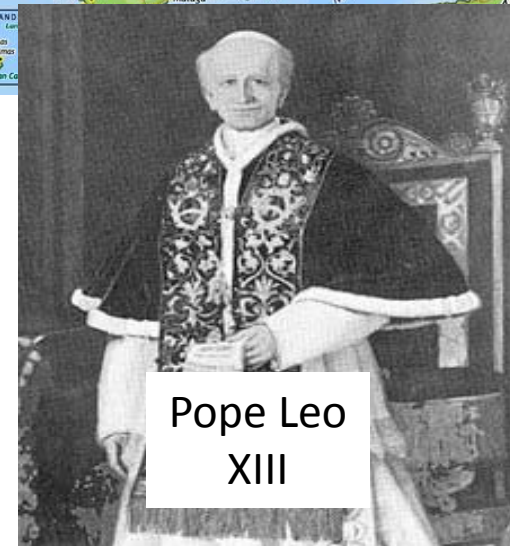
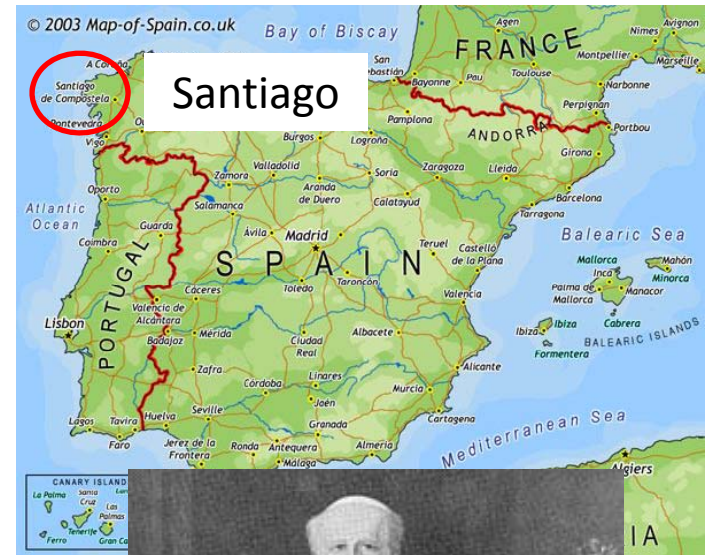


**St James the Greater**



# Catholic Action

- † Spanish had a special attachment to Pilgrimages
  - The National Destination for pilgrimages was Santiago de Compostela, & the Tomb of St James the Greater
  - This was the way Cursillo started
- † Catholic Action [CA] was a Church Program implemented by Pope Leo XIII in 1891 that prepared the pilgrims for their journey
- † CA Leaders had planned an national youth pilgrimage to Santiago Spain as early as 1937, but the first one would not happen till 1947/1948
  - Spanish Civil War 1936-38
  - WWII 1939-1945





# Origins Of Cursillo

- † Cursillo originated from Catholic Action Leaders in Mallorca Spain
- † Island had a mystical orientation
- † In 1957 Mallorca had:
  - 36 Male religious communities
  - 204 Female Religious communities
- † Strong Apostolic Spirit
- † All had special Devotion to Blessed Mother
- † Clergy were loyal to Spanish Government & Vatican
- † A hierarchical, close knit community



Mallorca



## Key Cursillo Leaders

† Eduardo Bonnin

- On Diocesan Council for Catholic Action
- Avid reader, interest in psychology
- Most influential person in development of movement

Eduardo Bonnin  
Aguiló



† Father Sebastian Gaya

- Cursillo Spiritual Advisor in early years

† Juan Hervas Benet

- Bishop of Mallorca, 1944-55
- Youngest Bishop in Spain
- Protected Cursillo movement when it split from CA [1944-48]
- Held mass and met weekly with Cursillo founders

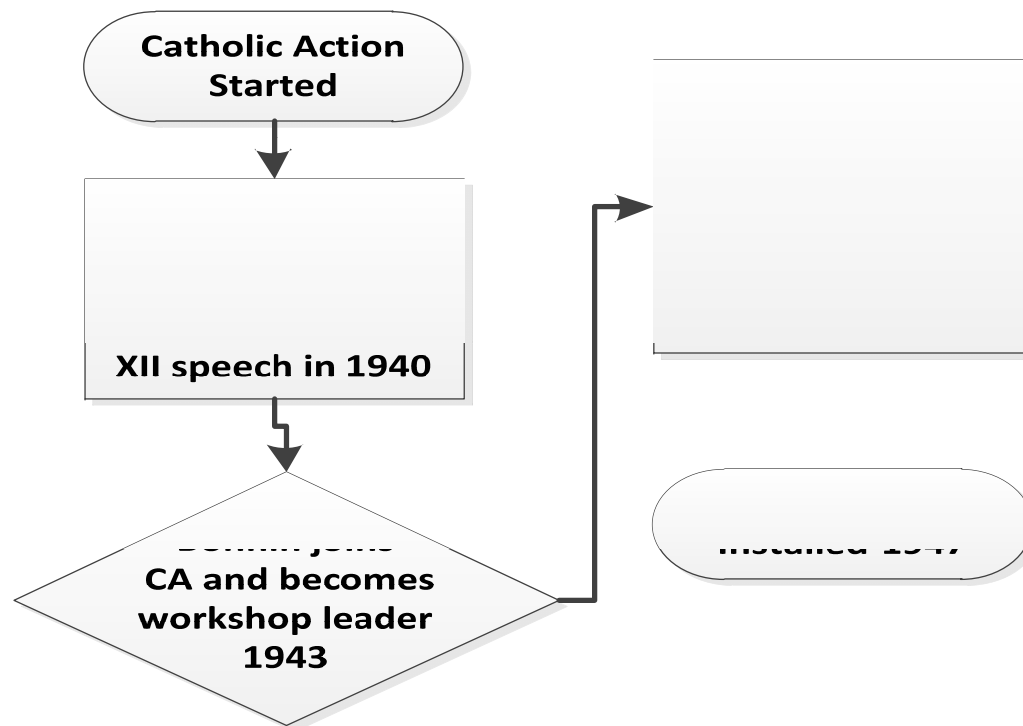


Bishop  
Hervas



# Cursillo Timeline 1937-1948

**1937-1948**





## The Early Weekends

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- † Cursillo weekends were modeled on the Cursillo of Pilgrim Captains weekends:
  - † Stated with silent retreat
  - † Stations of cross
  - † Candidates assigned to tables – had discussions and made posters
  - † Pilgrim's guide
  - † First day of the weekend stressed Liberation/Trust [from attachments]
  - † Second day was intended to be a religious experience – “Hearts are filled with Fire”
  - † Consisted of Lay discussions & Theological presentations by Clergy

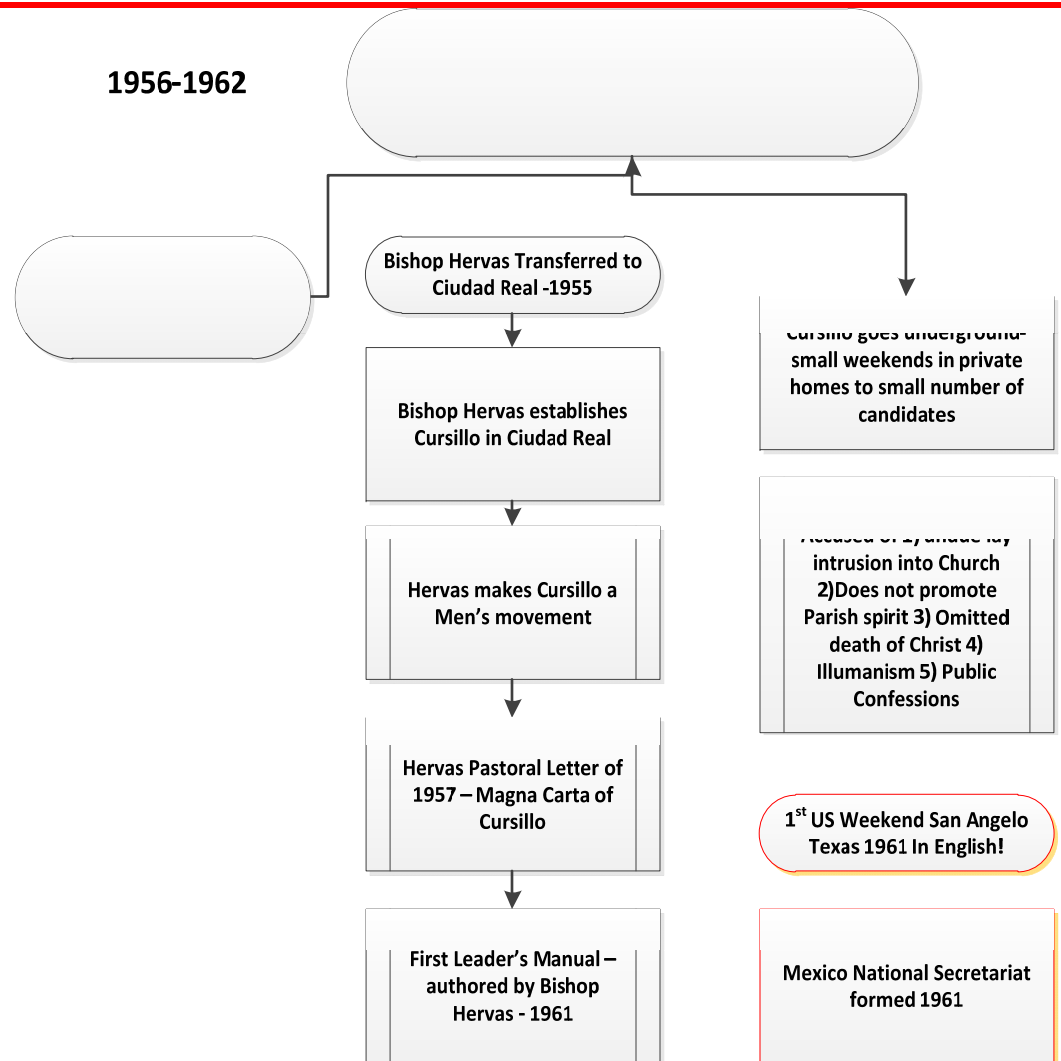




# Cursillo Timeline 1956-62

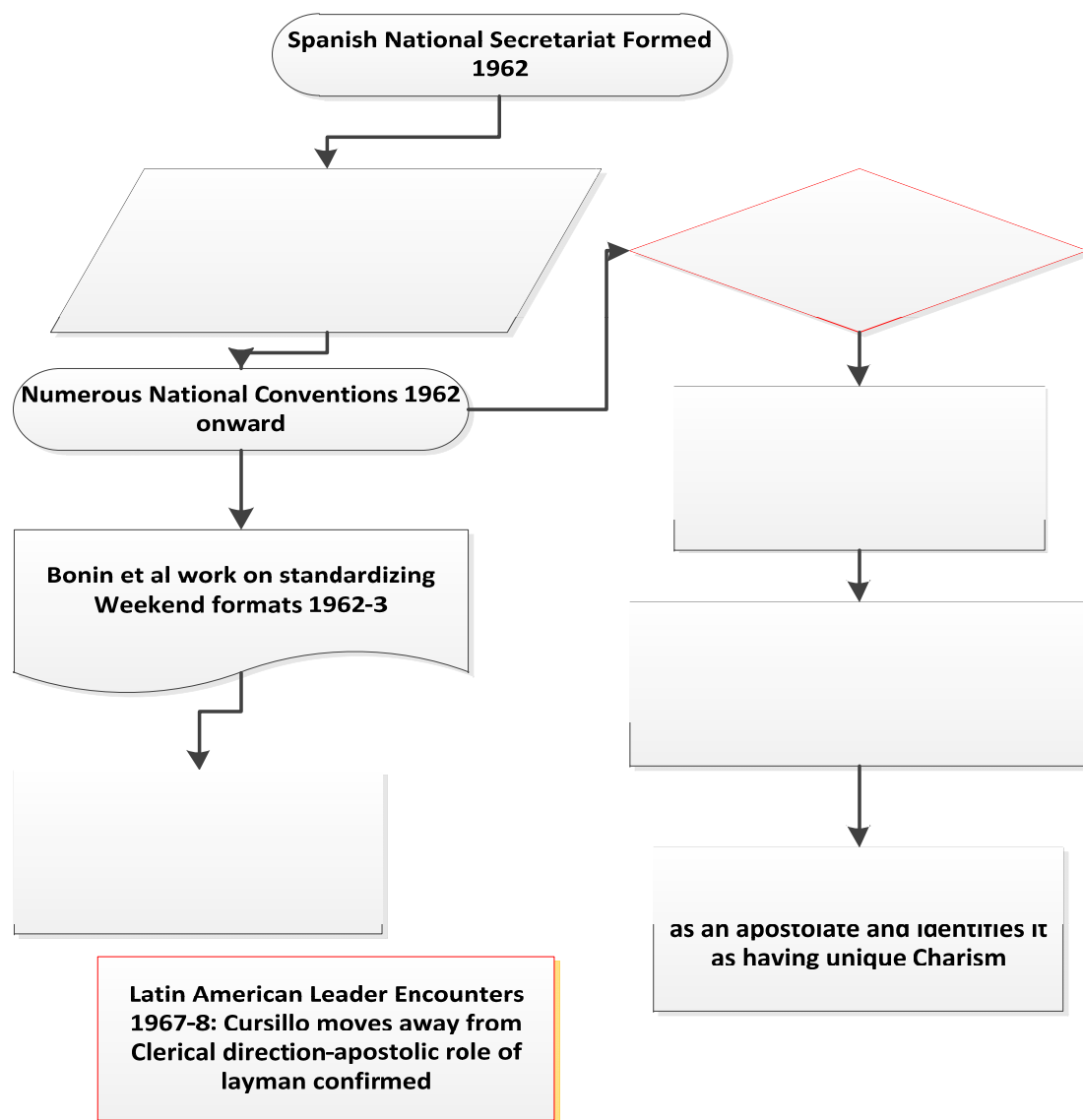


1956-1962





# Cursillo Timeline 1962-1971





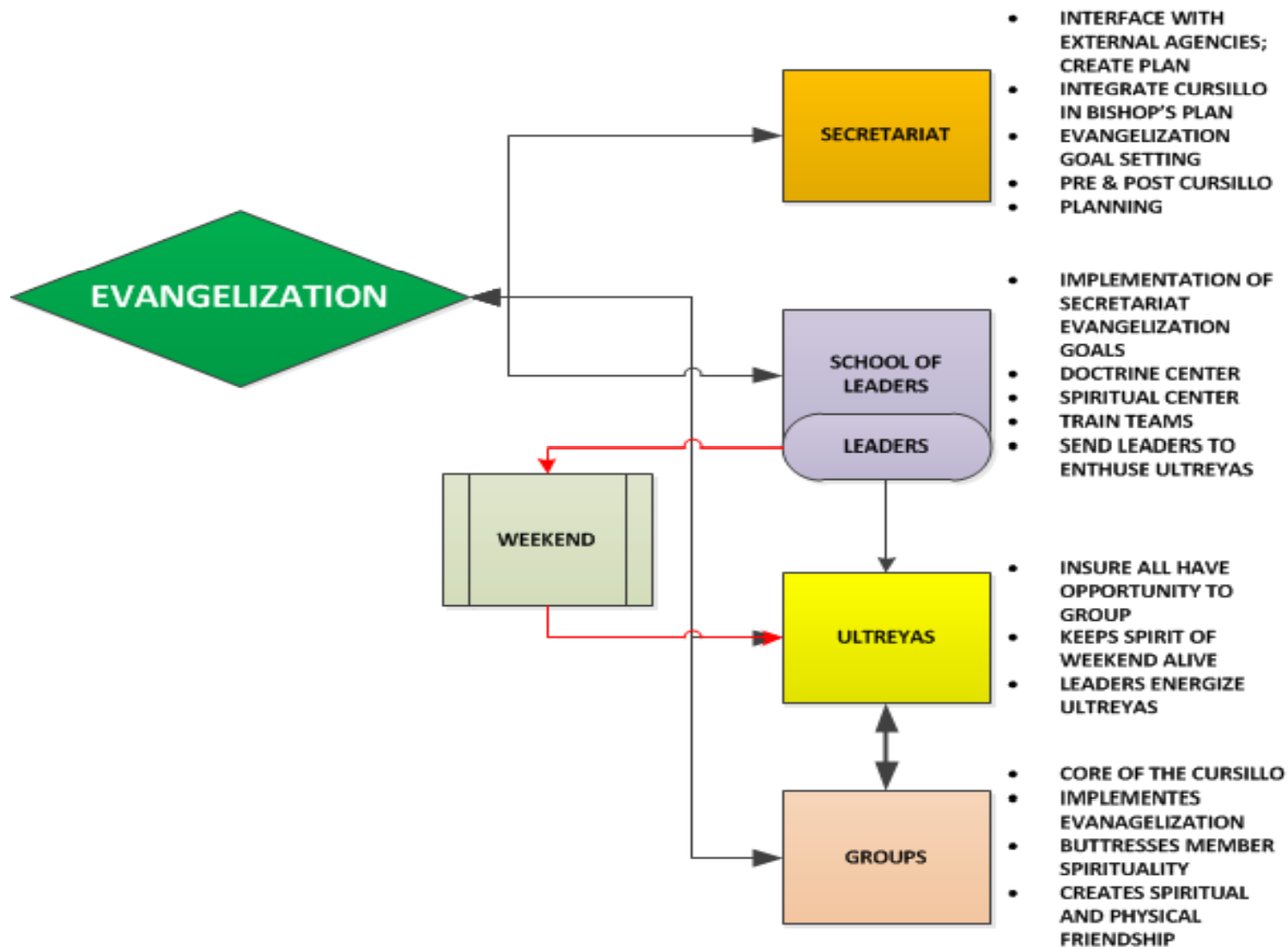
## Cursillista Mentality

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- † Layman is an apostle by virtue of his Christian vocation
- † “Christianity is caught, not taught” –we are led by the Spirit
  - One has to have a conversion experience and be open to change in order to be led by the Spirit
- † The actualization of the apostle should come from the inside out
- † One’s conversion is an individual effort so Cursillo would operate in conjunction with the Church;
  - But it would not be led by the Church [like Catholic Action]
- † To structure the Christian Community is not the institutionalization of religion, but to infuse the Christian spirit into existing structures
- † Cursillistas needed to associate with others for effectiveness; this association came from free will and these groups received their power from friendship
- † The basic structure from the beginning was the group -10 max; 2 minimum

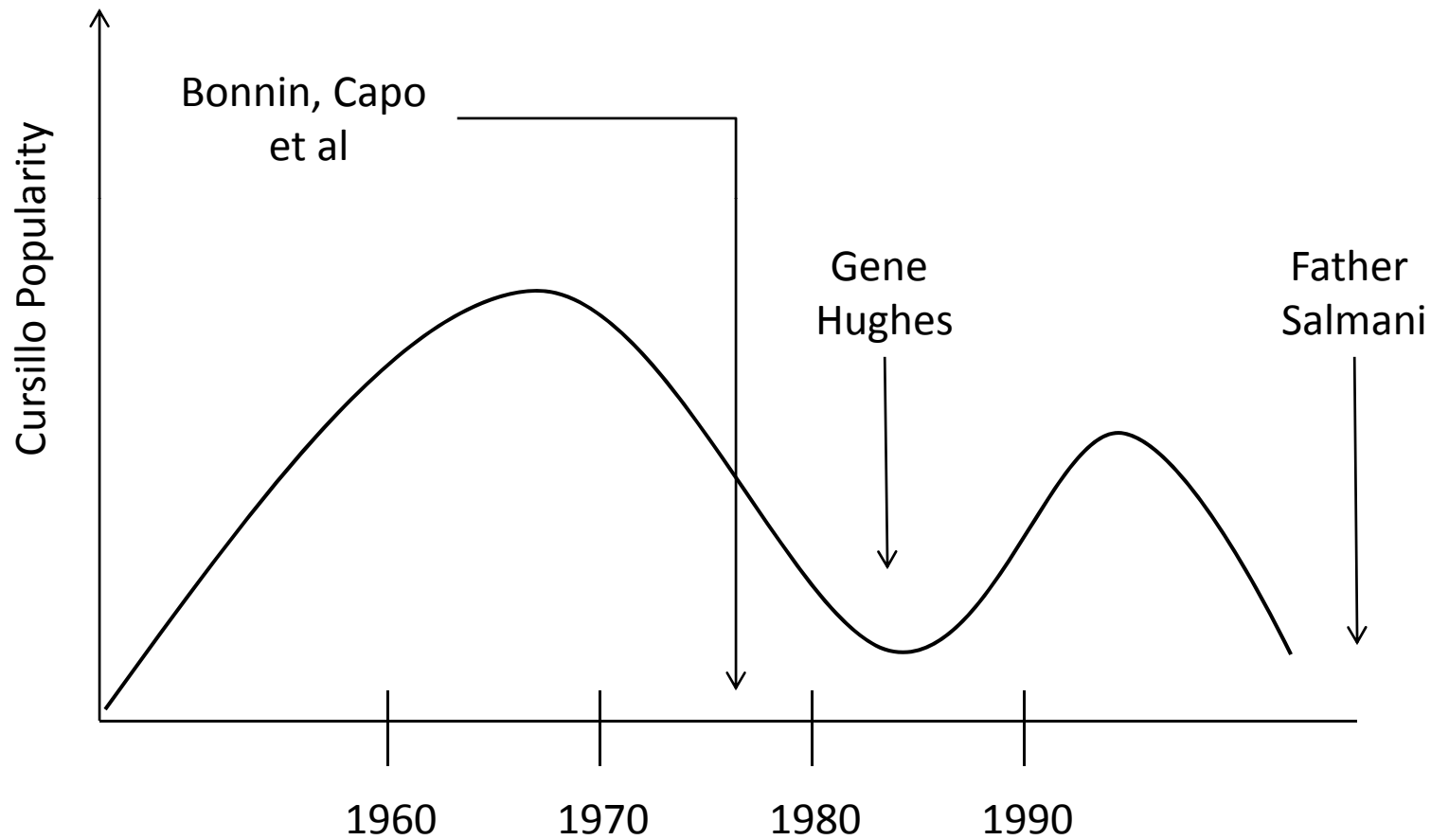


# Cursillo Organizational Roles





# Cursillo Popularity





## Cursillo Facts

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- † CURSILLO means "short course." Cursillo is a short course in Christianity.
- † DeColores means "of many colors." To the Spanish the rooster's beautiful tail feathers was symbolic of the rainbow in the Old Testament where God makes a covenant with His People.
- † ULTREYA. This Spanish word means "to go forward" or "onward." The term was adopted by the Cursillo Movement as a result of the founders participation in National Pilgrimages
- † PALANCA means "lever." Prayer and sacrifice are a lever to bring change and support.
- † The words piety, study and action were first used together in 1940
- † Grouping began in 1948



## Conclusion

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- † Cursillo movement was a result of a number of zealots who went against the flow
  - They strongly believed in the Lay Person's apostolic mission
  - They had a Heavy reliance on the Holy Spirit and God's graces
  - Supported the Church, but resisted direction from the church
- † Featured an infrastructure for each Cursillista to grow
  - Group
  - School of Leaders
  - Ultreya
- † Their primary focus was to bring people to Christ - - all else was secondary



**DeColores!**