

FOUNDATIONAL CHARISM OF THE CURSILLO MOVEMENT

Source: National Cursillo Center Mailing – June 2010

Let us begin with a dictionary definition of ‘Charisma’: *a quality attributed to those with exceptional ability to secure the devotion of large numbers of people. Gk kharisma: favor, divine gift* (The American Heritage Dictionary-paperback edition).

Charisma, in the Catechism of the Catholic Church #799, is defined as “*a specific gift or grace of the Holy Spirit which directly or indirectly benefits the Church, given in order to help a person live out the Christian life, or to serve the common good in building up the Church.*”

Concerns of the Founders:

The Cursillo Leaders’ Manual states, “*During an address given in Rome on February 6, 1940, Pope Pius XII acknowledged that there were a great number of people who had moved away from the Christian life. He challenged the Church leaders to make every effort possible to bring others back to Christian values. The reading of this address inspired Eduardo Bonnín, who at that time was not a member of the Youth Catholic Action, to carry out a thorough and deep study of the scenario in a more serious and systematic way and put it on paper concretely. ‘Eduardo worked out a script which already at that time – 1940 – was named STUDY OF THE ENVIRONMENT. We tried to think of how to reach that ENVIRONMENT and how to make that ENVIRONMENT a Christian one.’*” (Leaders Manual p. 2)

This very first rollo of Eduardo, the Study of the Environments, concluded that the world was becoming less and less Christian and consequently, Christians were even less influential in their cultural and social environments. The situation stimulated him to develop what we know today as the Cursillos in Christianity Movement. In order to be able to confront this pastoral situation in which many people, mainly the young ones, have moved away from their Christian faith, the Cursillos in Christianity have endorsed these two purposes:

- The integral and progressive conversion of the person - to evangelize the baptized, helping them understand the value of the Baptism they had received, and stimulating them to a continuous conversion.
- To vertebrate (to provide a backbone to) Christianity (Fermentation of the Environments) - the converted person, with capacity of decision and with conviction, is able to bring the light of the Gospel to the different environments where he or she lives and where his/her daily life develops, to give a Christian direction to the culture of this world.

These two pastoral objectives were based on the conviction that the environments of the world can only be evangelized by transformed people because they had found the risen Christ. In order to transform the different environments the presence of renewed men and women are necessary.

This brings about a mentality as summarized by Eduardo Bonnín.

Mentality:

- ❖ The best news that God loves us in Christ.
- ❖ Communicated by the best means possible--friendship.
- ❖ Directed to the best in each man or woman, that is, to his or her very being as a person—with a capacity to be convinced, to make decisions and to persevere.

Key Elements:

Christ, the Person, Friendship.

The person is never really separable from the circumstances of his/her life.

Purpose:

To understand and assimilate that the Gospel is not simply opting for virtue, but rather an honest attempt to always exercise the power to opt for Christ and the person.

To understand the clear fact that God loves us in Christ. God loves me. To be Christian, more than anything else, is to feel loved by God and live astonished by this, because what is most genuinely Christian is to be loved by God.

“While one could certainly bring about an understanding of this process by deep theological teachings, we believe that the key to making this joyful Good News accessible to the average persons is to make them aware that their long search for happiness, friendship, and love makes the three essential encounters with self, Christ, and others easier; thus, the Good News becomes attractive and attainable” (Eduardo Bonnín – Evangelizing through Conversion).

As my dear friend Father David beautifully puts it: “The purpose of the three encounters of the Cursillo Movement is that we may come to live our identity profoundly in Christ. We live this identity in relationship with the person of Jesus Christ and with the whole Christ, that is, the Mystical Body of Christ. ‘...the Holy Spirit spreads the grace of Christ the head throughout the Church which is His Body’ (Catechism of the Church #774). When we answer the invocation “Christ is counting on you,” we should remember that it is Jesus Christ and his Body, the Church, which is counting on us to continually become Good News for a world overwhelmed by bad news. If the Church cannot count on us, in essence, we are “decapitating” Christ, that is separating the Head from the Body.

We are called to live our identity in Christ in the whole Body, without allowing the Body to be “decapitated” (cut off from the Head, Jesus Christ) nor should we exaggerate the importance of any one member or organ or system of the Body, to the detriment of others. In the human body, the hyper proliferation of cells in any one organ or system constitutes a tumor, which if untreated, will debilitate, cripple and even kill the body.” (Fr. David Smith – 2009 Mailing from the OMCC)

The Postcursillo is designed to facilitate the nurturing of those three essential encounters. Our role as leaders is to facilitate this process while not disturbing it. As Eduardo Bonnín

always said: *“Being Christian is not a project to be realized, but a realization that we project.”* In other words, we believe that “people” make and shape history, and therefore, by transforming “people”, history will be transformed from the inside out, thus transforming every environment and all of life’s circumstances by living out their new life. St. Paul describes the theological core of the conversion or “metanoia” as a sequence that includes both the death of the “old man” and the birth of the “new man;” incarnating Christ; to live out our holiness every second, every moment, everywhere, with everybody.

Ultimate and Primary Purpose:

The personal encounter with Christ reaches the most possible, preferably, but not limited to the ‘far-away’. With a concrete, well thought-out, studied, and prayed-upon plan, the Precursillo, Cursillo and Postcursillo can attempt to use its strength and energy in an adequate and possible way (Group Reunion and Ultreya) so that those far- away Christians and sometimes not yet Christians, whether because of lack of formation, misinformation, or no information, may be brought to the good news that God loves them in Christ.

Precursillo, Cursillo, and Postcursillo are structured in such a way that the mentality, essence, and purpose can be fulfilled completely.

The primary basis of the method is Gospel, Friendship, and common sense.

In order to make sure this is true; the method in its three phases puts all the emphasis on the encounter with oneself, without which nothing would be true. The method also secures the certainty that "the encounter with oneself" is dynamic rather than static; it must always be promoted and sought, otherwise the friendship would not be true and the movement would be an absurdity. To achieve the encounter with oneself is to assure the other two encounters with Christ and with our brothers; so the Cursillistas are given the opportunity to discover their uniqueness, creativity, and originality.

Precursillo Is Comprised of:

The search for the far-away and any man or woman with personality, (the capacity of conviction, determination, and constancy), regardless of age, helps bring dynamic candidates to experience a Cursillo.

The Precursillo cannot be done in a series by some people that teach and others that learn. The Precursillo is simply the beginning of a friendship that is generated by the Group Reunion and Ultreya, if they are not distorted.

The 3 Days:

The Cursillo, by the Grace of God and the prayers of many, attempts to connect, to communicate, and to make friendships amongst Christians who strive to live their faith in spirit and in truth, and to share it with others who live a life without the living Christ; people who are only concerned with the external circumstances of their daily living, or

perhaps simply to survive due to the demands of life; thus they don't have the time to be concerned or concern themselves with themselves or others.

Cursillo is not an event of life, but the means, the way, the form to obtain that life would be an event; since being Christian is not an event of life either, but to make of life a continuous, amazing, and grateful event.

The method of properly conducting the Three-Day Cursillo according to the Foundational Charisma is delineated in the Cursillo Manual of the United States, 2006 edition.

Postcursillo:

What the Cursillo Movement intends, above all, is to awaken in each person their uniqueness, originality, and creativity. The discovery of these three dimensions of their personality can converge with their intention and can refine their personality to develop themselves accordingly.

We understand that in the Foundational Postcursillo, the person, once knowledgeable of the Christian message, contributes his/her personal, concrete and specific viewpoint and response to the Gospel. This is why we do not tire of saying that what is genuinely human and Christian are not our actions, in other words, the image we create or our accomplishments; but rather, what comes forth from the person corresponds with what has been given to him/her. (Charisma e Ideas Fundacionales)

Anyone who has lived the experience of Cursillo and has understood it does not limit themselves in making use of the specific and concrete means that are offered: *the Group Reunion and the Ultreya*. When exercised according to their purpose and for what they have to offer in spirit and in truth, these means serve not only to maintain the enthusiasm and the drive discovered, rediscovered and experienced in the three days of the Cursillo, but also to make them dynamic, to activate and expand them from the very being of the persons in their concrete circumstance, that is, where God has placed them. Of course, it may be easier to represent roles of "Committed Christians," because obstinate salespeople of prayers, meetings, and "pious" works, upon lacking the dynamics of faith, conviction, enthusiasm, and gospel, strength that every Christian ought to have and express, soon experiment the "fatigue of those who are good." (Charisma e Ideas Fundacionales)

Strategy:

Friendship, the Group Reunion, and the Ultreya.

By cultivating and nurturing true interpersonal relationships, and the warmest of them all is *friendship*, within all of life's circumstances or environments, we create the vertebrae, and the ferment or leavening that is needed to get from the *precursillo* of today, to the *Postcursillo* of tomorrow, which will grow with the assistance of the *Group Reunion* and our sharing at the *Ultreyas*.

The Group Reunion:

Life as a reality shared in friendship.

The Ultreya:

A circumstance in which the best of each person reaches the most people possible.

Foundational Style:

Is the manner in which life is lived. It is the Grace that God has made into a gesture, a kindness, and an expression of what is being lived, with spontaneity, joy, and enthusiasm.

Characterized by its radical optimism; joy; boldness and firmness; conviction; values.