

***The Importance of Fellowship, the Social Aspect of Cursillo, and Personal Contact***

Good morning, my name is Sandy Vas. I lived my weekend in May of 2000. The journey of living my 4<sup>th</sup> day continues as I group weekly with Kathy, Maureen and Jennifer on Tuesday mornings, and is encouraged by attending Ultreya on a (mostly) monthly basis.

I was asked to speak about the importance of fellowship, the social aspect of Cursillo, and the significance of personal contact within Cursillo.

From the very first rollo of the Cursillo, reference is made to the offer the Lord makes to us to live in Grace. During the three days of Cursillo, it is repeatedly reinforced that it is possible to live a life in Grace. In the last rollo of the Cursillo, a Total Security of friendship is offered, to ensure the living of what is fundamentally Christian by living in Grace in our environments and in the world during the Fourth Day. The content of Total Security is presented and is made possible by means of friendship in two concrete ways or dimensions, the personal dimension and the social dimension. The Friendship Group Reunion tends to the personal dimension, and the social dimension is accomplished through the Ultreya.

Christian fellowship is *attractive*, and leads individuals into desiring to "have what they have" by the hope and joy that they see. In almost every meeting in Cursillo, there is always time set aside for fellowship, usually about a half hour before the meeting "begins". Often times, the conversations, and the small acts of kindness shown in that fellowship time are the most fruitful, as they involve welcome, and personal contact. If we are paying attention, we can observe how we all work together to make sure everyone has a seat, that everyone feels welcome, the song sheets are handed out, and that no one is in a corner, sitting by themselves.

In both the Friendship Group and Ultreya, Cursillistas can count on this environment as being a safe place where brothers and sisters in Christ are present, listening to you, not looking at their watches, or thinking of something to say, but truly listening to you and your journey. A place where we celebrate the joys, struggles and challenges in our lives, and discuss what it means to live a life

of Piety, Study and Action. Also, the consistent personal contact keeps us connected and allows us to offer palanca.

Ultreya is a word of invitation to build community and to journey beyond while infecting others with the joy of Jesus Christ in the different environments of life. The Ultreya is a festivity of the community that celebrates the reality of different people in common-union, living their Christian experience with all. The Ultreya is a Group Reunion where contact is made between brothers and sisters who live and give their life for what is fundamental to being Christian. It is the place where what was said at the Cursillo is lived.

***Hebrews 10:24-25 says:***

***"And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near."***

This past Tuesday evening, we celebrated our community by gathering for Central Ultreya. A meeting of the the Groups and Reunions. The purpose of the Ultreya is to encourage living the faith, facilitating that the best of each person reaches the most people possible, through friendship and personal testimonies, so that each person feels loved, understood, supported and appreciated as a person. I can personally say, that my experiences at Ultreya have reflected that. I am never disappointed when I go to Ultreya. The encouragement and encounter with Christ through friendship, when I attend Ultreya and group with others, listen to the witness, and learn from the Spiritual Wrap up, seems to alleviate any of the obstacles that presented themselves before my getting there. I don't know about you, but sometimes just getting to grouping or an Ultreya feels like a pilgrimage!

***John 17:23 says "I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me."***

The “complete unity” He refers to is the oneness that Christians experience in true fellowship, oneness with one another, with Christ and with the Father. Community, especially the Christian community, viewed as “the whole group of believers . . . united, heart and soul” is the body of the faithful bound together by a common faith in Christ, common worship, and common allegiance to the Church's divinely established authority. The closer these bonds of unity, the more intimate the fellowship.

Postcursillo is a very important piece in the Cursillo life. Whether we are gathered in Christ’s name to group, go to Ultreya, or even attend our community’s social events like a baseball game or picnic, we are telling the world that our community is important to us. It is our AMEN to Christ, through friendship, through fellowship, through being, and sharing those experiences together. It helps unify our community. It strengthens our charism. Postcursillo is designed to facilitate the nurturing of those three essential encounters that took place during the Cursillo so that they grow and develop into true friendship — friendship of the individual with himself, with Christ, and with his brothers and sisters.

In these present days where technology is everywhere, and “communicating” often involves a quick text, or email, or worse, the forward of a forward, communication can seem confusing, and impersonal. Technology can be a wonderful tool for efficiency, if done diligently, but it can never be as affective or as powerful as personal contact.

Personal contact is the key to evangelization. Nothing can replace what one feels when they receive a personal card, or letter from a friend. Or a call, just out of the blue. Any small step we take in making someone feel special is striving to be more like Christ. Talking to someone after Ultreya, or following up with an invitation to visit. Listening when someone shares an important life event with you. Learning the names of spouses, children, grandchildren. Offering to pick a fellow Cursillista up and take them to Ultreya. Introducing two or more people that have not met. Showing someone by your words and actions, that they are not just another person, but that they are individually loved by you, and by God.

The Cursillo message is an important one. God in Christ loves us all very much. We need to communicate that message in the most effective means that God has given us, through friendship.

***“Let no one ever come to you without coming away better, and happier.”***

***Mother Teresa -Thirsting for God***

May we continue to encourage, be present and love one another as we continue to deepen our friendship with Christ, and with others as we meet in our weekly friendship groups, at Ultreya and in our personal environments. Let us be the pilgrims on the journey, and allow the Holy Spirit to use us to bring others to Christ, so that we may never be alone. May we make the world better, and our friends happier, by being a part of it.