



# The Cursillo® Movement

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## Attitudes and Reactions

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De Colores! I am happy to be here with you, praying together, studying together and sharing the many opportunities we have for becoming better friends and better friends of Christ. I lived my Cursillo in 1999 and I am from the parish of St. Benedict in Montebello, California. But I have to tell you that it cost me quite a bit to get here. And I do not mean the airline ticket. I was invited by a friend to give this talk—a friend who makes it hard for me to say no to him simply because he helps me learn a lot and that's how I end up being on projects that are much bigger than my ability. But with the help of the Holy Spirit we can grow and we can do what God wants with the grace that he gives to us. He never fails.

The truth is that I did have a very difficult time with this rollo. In this rollo we will deal with attitudes and reactions. Cursillistas are known for having a positive attitude and a joyful reaction. Perhaps we might be interested in knowing why this attitude and reaction. When we are filled with joy perhaps we aren't interested in knowing why, but like with everything, we don't realize what we have until we think we can lose it. This will be a time to reflect on ourselves in order to make a conscious search for our self. This is the name of the small book, which I am referring to in this talk, "Reflections II, In search of oneself". The Cursillo has proposed to us that we constantly have an encounter with self, with God and with others. The ideas I found on these six pages in the section on Attitudes and Reactions were difficult for me to understand but I asked the Holy Spirit for help, I shared them with friends and I also studied the Forgotten Evidences book. I found out that I was really going to have to travel from my skin (my outer self) to my heart (my inner self) in order not to lose this optimism and this joy no matter what comes my way.

My dad says that in a town where he lived there was once a contest to find the laziest man. And a man who happened to be resting under a tree when the announcement was made won the contest. So the townspeople approached him to let him know, "You won the contest, you won!" and yet, he showed no signs of having heard them. So they said again, "You won the contest. Don't you hear us? You won and your prize is 2,000 pesos." Hearing this the laziest man opened one eye just enough to point to his pocket and said, "Just put them right there." Although very lazy, he was very faithful to his lazy attitude, don't you think?

In my work place customer service is extremely important and when I interview people what I look for is evidence of their attitude. We have a slogan that says, "The systems and techniques can be taught but not the attitude." And we know that the reactions a person will have depend on their attitude. So rather than looking for talent and experience I seek to find out what their attitude is. And this made me think that friendship is this way as well — someone's talent or position in society or their importance to others doesn't matter, what matters is what attitude they

have with us. And for us who want to be friends of Christ to the point of following him, there are two roads, two ways of acting with one being good and the other one being bad.

And in the Gospel the Teacher called good that act that came from a good interior, “though I bestow all my goods to the poor, if I do not have love, I gain nothing.” (1 Cor. 13: 3)

We say we want Christ to count on us and it is clear that what the Teacher asks of us is that we pay attention to what is inside of us to serve Him in truth.

We will first take a look at what defines attitude:

- A definition of attitude is: the disposition that one develops from the experiences that one has. Our attitude is acquired from the experiences we have and the choices we make to adapt to our surroundings or environment.
- This development involves our cognitive sense (thoughts and ideas), affective sense (emotions and feelings) and behavior (expressions and actions).

Our attitude is what determines how we respond to stimuli that we perceive in our environment. Attitudes can help us to defend ourselves or to adapt to what's in our environment.

Commenting the other day with my cousin she shared with me that she struggles to see her daughter react every time her granddaughter begins to cry. She will be driving with one hand and with the other she tends to the baby, giving her a bottle, or a pacifier, moving her blanket and what not. And my cousin tells me, “I feel like telling her to let Amari cry because this way the child does not have to decide because her mom is deciding everything for her.”

This is important for us to understand that we form our attitude in the way we choose to respond to what is happening to us. Things can happen to us that we consider good and bad but what is important is how we respond to them. We cannot control what happens to us but we have the ability to take many decisions that will develop a positive attitude in us. Someone was once asked, “What makes you so happy?” “It’s what I make that makes me happy” they responded. And so they were asked, “And what do you make that makes you so happy?” “I make decisions”, they answered.

Decisions lead us to having a positive attitude that helps us face reality in a healthy way and decisions can also lead us to having negative attitudes that hinder our relationship with our environment. The freedom of the person is exercised by choosing which decision to make that will lead to the right attitude to apply at every moment.

There are about 700 people in this room who have had an experience, a common experience - that of our baptism. In that experience in particular and those that followed, we had an encounter with Christ. How much does that encounter with Christ define us? It can be said that a positive attitude allows us to face Christ’s proposal and adapt ourselves to His life, but a negative attitude puts us on the defensive and hinders our relationship with Christ and with others.

In Eduardo’s writings he tells us that the Christian attitude is manifested by a spirit that makes everything converge on “the one thing necessary”; a mindset, which brings about a luminous chassis of ideas; a criteria as a lucid conviction and meditated decision; a lifestyle, which is

personal and allows everyone to vent their “Cadaunadas” as Eduardo would say, or “peculiarities” as we say.

The person is greater for the attitude taken in response to what we cannot do, than for what we do or have done.

In May we accompanied our son to a sports competition, which qualified him for being the pole vault champion in his league. We went with the desire to see him vault a few times and perhaps break his high school record at 12 ft. He had just done so during the week in practice. All he had to do was make it official at the meet. But he had a very bad day. He failed to clear the first mark at 10 feet. It was a big surprise to see him scratch so soon. But I remembered these words as I saw our son go gather himself, pick up his pole and leave the competition area. *The person is greater for the attitude taken in response to what we cannot do, than for what we do or have done.*

I got up from the floor where I was and waited. He came to us after we had taken a few moments to reflect, he hugged us and said, “get over it, this is just another meet.” And soon after he told his older brother how he had managed to make all the spectators laugh when on one of his attempts he seemed to be stuck in the air and yet he tried to somehow reach his legs over the bar.

Most anyone can deal with success but it is much more difficult to deal with failure and yet we are told that we learn more from our failures than our successes.

As a mother I had to decide that it had not been in vain to make the four-hour drive, pay for the hotel stay, and spend the time while our son prepared because we were there for our son no matter what the outcome.

It did not go well but he reacted very well. And his reaction made me see that there is something much more important for Antonio. Much more than to want to win in his sport — he loves his sport. And although he was not satisfied, he is happy with what he had achieved. That day Antonio was my teacher.

Being satisfied is not a Christian attitude. I repeat the words of Eduardo when I say that we should not leave something well enough if it can be better. A Christian is moved by concern. And as it is explained in *Forgotten Evidences*, a depressive attitude highlights what is wrong, and restlessness begins when one highlights what is still wrong and discovers the possibilities of transforming it.

In *Forgotten Evidences* it says that in understanding our daily, normal life we prove that what really matters is the conscious sense that man can give his life, as his conviction, his decision and his persistence embodies his attitude.

What is normal, our day to day, is our mission territory. And we know that square meter per square meter we will have encounters with people who will be affected by the attitudes that each of us has inside. The leader of which is spoken in the Cursillo knows herself; himself called to transform those attitudes into positive attitudes.

Eduardo tells us that there are fundamental attitudes that should inform the mission of the laity. These are:

1. To be open to the world and immersed in temporal realities.
2. To be a sign of saving freedom, making clear the liberating message of the Gospel in a life of transparency.
3. To renounce self-sufficiency.
4. To have a spirit of poverty.
5. To give a fraternal hand to all who try to make our world more human and therefore more divine.
6. To be more willing to consider what unites us than what divides us.

### **Being open to the world and immersed in temporal realities.**

God put us in a place with many circumstances that are simply beyond our control. The world is very big in that regard. But my little world, as we say, my little world of family, work, and society has circumstances in which I can participate to transform them.

The other day a leader at School told us that in order to solve our problems we should understand that the one no one talks to has all the answers. What can happen is that we seek out others and then we close our circle to a small set of ideas and realities. Rufus told us “stop choosing people to be on your committees that you already know”. And this is true. At the Cursillo we were told and now we tell others to always go about making new friends and we should keep doing this always.

Someone else asked, in what way we can keep our group reunions from only being superficial. You know what I mean, because we do not want the group reunion and Ultreya to be simply requirements that are fulfilled. Cross out the box on Friday, I went to the reunion, I shared my week-done! As this would be a waste of our time. We see that just sharing the tripod is not enough. What gives them depth is the encounters we have. The group and the Ultreya should motivate us to have encounters with the world — the savage world, the cold world, the world that is in need . . .

We need to be sensitive in order to understand problems, have the clarity to discover them and have the necessary toughness to face them.

### **To be a sign of saving freedom, making clear the liberating message of the Gospel in a life of transparency.**

Eduardo speaks about natural urges (impulses), which are fear and aspirations. When we react to fear we flee. But when we follow the aspirations we move towards the encounter.

Part of my moveable square meter is my relationship with the employees in my business. Like any business we must follow the law, there are customer demands and sometimes there are conflicts between employees. And who likes problems? Usually we like to run away from them, right? But when we understand that we are the sign that God puts along the path for others to find Him, then we seek the truth that will set others free.

I remember once an inspector came to my place of business for the first time. I got nervous not knowing what they were looking for. But my reaction was to pray, trust in God and go meet that person with a smile — it's the company policy. The inspector introduced herself and told me she

was going to investigate my business to which I said, “I’m glad you are here!” And she was surprised because she said she had never been received so positively. And I told the truth, “Well, I’m happy because I will learn from you.” I did not say I was also scared because I decided that what was most important was what I could learn from her.

One thing I used to want to hide from, were customer complaints. It’s very clear to me that it is never our intention for a customer to have a bad time. But what was missing was to share this intention with my employees and make this intention more evident.

The one area that has had the most lasting effect on others in my work is employee relations. There used to be many problems amongst employees due to gossip. And I made it a point to remain objective — never did I take a side. And with the simple question, “Did you hear this person say this about you.” I helped many people see how much they need to dialogue with one another.

But one time there was a very serious situation and I saw two people who really feared they were being robbed of their dignity. I was tempted to avoid the work because it was going to take a lot of time to carry out an investigation that might reveal things that were troublesome. But I asked myself what else I wanted to use my time for? And then I remembered how every morning I begin my work with a prayer that I needed to take seriously:

*Lord God, creator of all things who commanded men to do the duties of work, in your mercy may our work serve to increase human progress and to extend the Kingdom of Christ through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Reflecting on this prayer I realized that I had the opportunity in my hands to serve these people I work with. So I searched for a guide to follow and began the investigation promising to be faithful in carrying it out as best as I could. I offered everything up to God and without fear began to search for the truth come what may. The whole truth will never be known but enough of the truth was revealed so that I could see that both employees were responsible for the problem and we began to work on a resolution. One of those employees had not come to work due to the great stress this caused them. It was a very painful time for that person. Once we started working out the resolution I saw how that person regained their sense of dignity and that was what I was there for.

### **Renounce self-sufficiency.**

I can be on time for Mass much easier if I go alone. I like to get to Mass early. But God’s plan won’t be fulfilled just because I am on time to Mass. And for this reason when I am heading out late to Mass with my family I can calm myself knowing it is better that we all go together even if we’re late and that it’s better that we go in peace even if we are late.

Eduardo implores us that it is about enjoying “us”, and eliminating the “you guys”, let’s learn the good in “others”. Admiration and being in awe and understanding shorten the distance and bring closeness to God and other persons”.

### **To have a spirit of poverty**

It says in Structure of Ideas: it is best to start by humbling oneself. It is about making “when you are invited to a banquet. . .” our reference point so as to find ourselves solidly in reality. The

other day listening to Immaculate Heart Radio, the Catholic radio station, they put a very concrete example of a psychologist who had put his family in the habit of having a spirit of poverty to reward the person who had the greatest achievement in the week to be the person designated to take out the trash. Think about it a little, how different our attitude would be if a compliment from someone would mean it's our turn to take out the trash. It's not important how we get in touch with reality what is important is that in any way we can we need to be clear that everything comes from God.

### **To give a fraternal hand to all who try to make our world more human and therefore more divine**

Our attitude certainly does influence others to accomplish what Study of the Environment promises and Christianity in Action confirms. How many people are discouraged simply from feeling alone? I mentioned earlier how important our encounter with Christ is and how important it is to share it with others. It is not that we should treat each other *as if* we are family. We are family! And to reach the ideal that no one die without knowing that God loves them we must start by giving a hand to anyone who is trying to be better. We must not walk alone. It really makes my heart ache when someone starts out in some form of service only to be bombarded with criticism. They say that when someone tries to become a better person they make everyone else who is doing nothing very uncomfortable.

What a difference this made for me the other day. A group of us at the parish were serving the community by holding a conference and in the middle of all this my dad got sick but I went to do my part. But I made a mistake. I made a change but forgot to tell one of the people participating. I was so tired I didn't realize that I had assigned too many people to say the petitions and it was too late to correct that. I feared that one of the people was going to feel bad and possibly hurt. She had been having a very bad day but made the effort to go anyway. What a beautiful moment when one of the people noticed my mistake and omitted themselves so that the other person could take her place. It was such a difficult event to be at and it was filled with mistakes but this one fraternal act gave me hope that it had not been in vain. Come what may there are opportunities to make this world a better place when we give a helping hand.

### **To be more willing to consider what unites us rather than what divides us.**

This is the way to stay united. I think of the group of friends we have around the Ultreya. I refer to this group as the plague. For truly we seek to infect everyone. This group of friends is born from the desire to be friends. And so the Ultreya was made possible. It is very common to hear talk of proposals to setup Ultreyas in different places and this is good but is not the same as the experience that I'm living with this lived friendship in Christ. We have this Ultreya because we want to be friends. And we are all very much different. But I enjoy seeing the different ways in which we all love Christ and love one another. There is even one of us who has kept himself at a distance lately because he has a way of acting that many do not understand and he can be problematic. But he has great gifts for talking to people about Christ and proposing the Gospel to them. Only that his follow through is really rough. But I don't let that stand in the way of us being a team and I tell the rest jokingly, he catches 'em and we skin 'em. And it is in this way that we endure someone who is intolerable that he might gradually become more tolerable. And this way we can unite instead of divide. He truly is out there catching people that are in the wilderness and we follow up here in the comfort of our environment.

These 6 attitudes I have shared with you are fundamental for us to become informed when making decisions. They are like the lenses of a camera that must open so that the light can come in from the image that is being shot. In our case what this proposes is to open ourselves and allow God's likeness to enter us. We are already made in his image but Eduard says that what we lack is his likeness. To be open places us in reality — the only place we will find Christ; to be transparent so the Gospel can put us in contact with the sick, the imprisoned, the naked, the hungry, the faraway, the problematic; And when we renounce ourselves we allow Christ to act; to become poor is to make God visible to others; and our unity will be like the mirror that magnifies just one light to serve as a guide for ships as they travel the sea.

A word of caution — both fears and rewards are conditions that limit our freedom.

The other day I read something on the Internet about a man who was on a ship with his wife and the ship was sinking. There was a life raft but there was only space for one person and this man jumped into the life raft and left his wife on the sinking ship. What was explained was that this couple was on a trip and the wife knew she had a terminal illness and very little time left to live. She and her husband had decided that he was supposed to take the responsibility of raising their daughter who had special needs. The wife gave him the responsibility she could not carry out. How free are we to make the decisions necessary for being Christian? We act more freely the more we are free from fears as well as the attraction of rewards. Our freedom comes from the truth and Christ is the Truth.

The kingdom of God is within us and it expands in the measure that we ourselves use our freedom to love, forgive, understand and hope.

To Love even in the midst of our natural impulses of fear, violence, and hatred.

To Forgive even in the midst of grudges; to forgive oneself and forgive others means to trust again in yourself and in others.

To Understand even in the midst of misunderstandings.

To Hope even in the midst of disappointment, hopelessness and despair.

LOVE — As I share with you, last month I helped my dad during the days of his illness. He became very ill and the possibility of death was very real. However, the readings at Mass those days were about Tobias' travels with the archangel Raphael. I didn't know the result my dad would have but I knew God accompanied us through the action of the angels, through our family and friends and this allowed me to see beyond the danger and trust that we are assured of God's love in this life and the next. While I still feared that my dad might die I was closed in with my worry. But when I trusted in God I received the ability to be thankful to God for all He had already given me through my dad. Rather than think of what I would lose I was in awe of how much God gives us in one single person.

FORGIVENESS— No matter how bad things go for me I know God is good and he is so good that my things no matter how bad, just don't compare. My things must be according to God's things. And it is in this that I find the importance of forgiveness. The kingdom of God is within us. Forgiveness is simply the first step in believing we can be better.

UNDERSTANDING — It is not that we understand everything but that in putting myself in your shoes there are many things I can understand through your experience and your point of view. This is about crying with those who cry and laughing with those who laugh. I don't understand everything people do but when I see someone struggle with being nice or listening to others I understand we all have weaknesses. I tell my friends that what helps me appreciate my husband is that we are close enough to see our weaknesses. From afar it is easy to hide them. I respect the privilege of being close enough to see his.

HOPE — We search for what is best, the best in us and in others. We are in search of the likeness of God and we hope to find it. The fulfillment of being human is being Christian, in that we leave everything behind in search of authentic relationships. We seek a sincere look, true feelings, and faithful friends. We want to communicate and be in awe of life. Let's not forget to smile with one another; to greet each other with warmth; to listen to one another and to express how much we mean to one another.

I told you this really took me from my skin (my outer self) to my heart (my inner self). This process usually takes time but these are the building blocks of the kingdom of Christ. It is a kingdom that many people don't take the time to build because it is not really visible. It is within each of us and we can only see it when we open the doors to friendship. I say this because I have to pay attention to myself to know what my attitude is and I have to keep my attention on God to put my attitudes and reactions in accordance (harmony) with the will of God and only then will I serve my brothers and sisters and all beings that are close to me because it is then that I am truly attentive and present to them. And this is expressed in *Forgotten Evidences* this way, "The place of a person who is and wants to be a person is to always be attentive to everything, of something and someone, with all the branches of the veins of our being and awareness and with all the satellites of our understanding in order to realize what is going on in the events and above all in the persons around us." (p. 40)