

## **PERSONAL CONTACT & AUTHENTIC WITNESS**

*Source: National Cursillo Center Mailing – December 2008*

*“The task of evangelizing all people constitutes the essential mission of the Church...”* said Pope Paul VI. *“Evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize...”* (Evangelii Nuntiandi #14) The purpose of the Cursillo Movement is the Evangelical leavening of environments with the Gospel by means of persons -*vertebrae*- who live what is fundamental for being Christian.

The personal contact, together with the witness, along with other contributors, are essential elements utilized in each one of the three phases of the Cursillo Movement Method to obtain their purpose. *Personal contact* are two words that cannot be misinterpreted in our Movement. When referring to “contact” in Cursillos, we refer to the approach, to the treatment, the friendly relation of a person to another with the end result of bringing him or her to Christ. “Personal”, means: unique, private, individual, original, subjective. In other words, what we mean is, to apply the “method of action” that we emphasize so much in our Cursillo Movement, that is, “to make a friend, to be a friend, and to bring that friend to Christ”.

*“This person-to-person style of evangelization is, without any detriment to the validity and importance of collective proclamation, endorsed by Evangelii Nuntiandi: “Communication of the Gospel from person to person must be encouraged and esteemed. This is the method which Our Lord Himself constantly employed as we see in His discussions with Nicodemus, with Zaccheus, with the Samaritan woman, and with Simon the Pharisee. It is the method employed by the Apostles. It may indeed be said that the only true form of evangelization is that by which the individual communicates to another those truths of which he or she is personally convinced by faith. We must not allow the necessity of proclaiming the Good News to the multitude to make us neglect this method by which the personal conscience of the individual is touched by some inspiring words which he or she hears from another.”* (Fundamental Ideas #317; Evangelii Nuntiandi #46)

### **In the Precursillo**

Precursillo is the first phase of the Cursillo Movement; therefore it should be developed as a function of what is first, last and always the purpose of the Cursillo Movement. (FI 206-234)

The Precursillo cannot be reduced to simply inviting a person to live a Cursillo; or to an announcement in the parish bulletin. The Precursillo, before being “a study and selection of environments”, before being “a selection and preparation of candidates”, should be a sincere effort of establishing a friendship which can only come by way of personal contact. Persons who carry out the Truth of the Gospel are those who give witness of their life. *“Through this wordless witness these Christians stir up irresistible questions in the hearts of those who see how they live: Why are they like this? Why do they live in*

*this way? What or who is it that inspires them? Why are they in our midst?"* (Evangelii Nuntiandi #21) We should remember that our Postcursillo - our fourth day - is the Precursillo of others. The witness we give will only match what we are living.

Personal contact in the Precursillo will carry over to the Cursillo where the team will continue the work.

### **During the Cursillo**

The three day Weekend integrates a series of technical resources to obtain its purpose. The objective of the Cursillo is to give knowledge (by the word) and conviction (by the witness). The theology, psychology, and pedagogy of Cursillo is about knowing what to say, how much to say, when to say it, how to say it, and what not to say, thus stirring up dialogues among the decurias, and channeling to a personal dialogue. This sharing is traditionally known as *corridor work*.

It is necessary to know the person(s): how they are, how they should be, and how they may become what the Cursillo intends. *"The leaders of the Cursillo have to be in touch with the times; they have to be attuned to people as they are here and now. Evangelization will lose much of its power and efficacy if it does not take into consideration the people to whom it is addressed, if it does not make use of their language, their signs, and their symbols; if it does not offer an answer to the questions which are relevant to them; if, in a word, it does not reach and influence their way of life."* (Fundamental Ideas #261; Evangelii Nuntiandi #63)

We should be in constant personal contact during the Cursillo weekend; making good use of the *sounding* and *stabbing* technique although always, and above all respecting the freedom of the candidates. During the first day, the sounding and the dialogue develop as the candidates get acquainted with each other by means of a natural dialogue. In the second day, the dialogue is now a result of friendship; the sounding by the leaders continues by strategically applying the stabbing aspect -the leader befriends all, illuminating them so that they clearly see the Truth, and directing them so that all become friends of Christ and friends with each other. In the third day the dialogue develops as brothers in Christ - through an assurance of being children of the same Father. In the third day the most important contacts of the Cursillo are carried out. The new Cursillistas want to put in practice what they have found with others in their environment. Therefore, the leader will illuminate their path so that they can help others see clearly, and guide them all toward their fourth day. (For more information please see the Leaders Manual - Pgs. 49-54, and Structure of Ideas, Pgs. 26-34).

*"The 'corridor work' of personal dialogue has a different focus for each of the three days. On the first day, the goal is to get better acquainted with the Cursillistas; on the second day, to free them of any prejudice against the proclaimed truth, by showing how it relates to their individual circumstances; and on the third day, to help them plan their re-entry into their respective environments."* (FI #316)

Although not all of us have been called to share a rollo at a Weekend, some of us have been called to give witness as part of a team. To share a rollo is not the same thing as presenting a talk. Sharing how one lives the various aspects contained in the message being presented is to give a rollo; therefore, this includes a personal witness of how we are living the fundamental ideas of the rollo.

Let us remember that the intent of each rollo is to provide a piece of the overall message. It is important that the witnesses be related to the ideas contained in the rollo. If the witness does not go with the idea intended, the message may create confusion. In some instances it may be better to provide an anecdote to better illustrate an idea.

## **The Postcursillo**

*“Everything done by means of the Cursillo method to attain the purpose of the Movement as a whole has the Postcursillo as its final objective. The Postcursillo is meant to continue the process begun during the Cursillo Weekend - that of being converted and living out what is fundamental for being a Christian.”* (Fundamental Ideas #452)

*“The leader in the Postcursillo has a double role to play:  
a) as an individual, making personal contact with each Cursillista; and  
b) as a team member, in the School and in the Ultreya.”* (Fundamental ideas #514) For such reason, the leaders who have served in a Cursillo have the responsibility to continue the work of Personal Contact in the Postcursillo. *“The leaders should have, for a prudent time, the responsibility for the perseverance of those who attended a weekend, while they incorporate fully to their Christian community”* (II. World Encounter)

*“Just as a team is what makes the Cursillo weekend possible, it is also a team that makes the Postcursillo possible. The immediate objective of leaders in the Postcursillo is to motivate and help new Cursillistas to find a group of friends they can join so that they can take part in Christian community. Participation in this community will enable them to take on the apostolic responsibilities of their life situations.”* (Fundamental Ideas #513)

*“Above all the Gospel must be proclaimed by witness. Take a Christian or a handful of Christians who, in the midst of their own community, show their capacity for understanding and acceptance, their sharing of life and destiny with other people, their solidarity with the efforts of all for whatever is noble and good. Let us suppose that, in addition, they radiate in an altogether simple and unaffected way their faith in values that go beyond current values, and their hope in something that is not seen and that one would not dare to imagine. ...”* (Evangelii Nuntiandi #21)

*“Finally, the person who has been evangelized goes on to evangelize others. Here lies the test of truth, the touchstone of evangelization: it is unthinkable that a person should accept the Word and give himself to the kingdom without becoming a person who bears witness to it and proclaims it in his turn...”* (Evangelii Nuntiandi #24)

While on this subject, it is important to mention the witness shared at the Ultreya. When we speak of the lay rollo at the Ultreya we are referring to the witness itself. The witness cannot be different to what one is living in the fourth day (although it should be something recent); the living and sharing of the love of God and the love of neighbor. In other words, how am I contributing to the extension of the Kingdom of God in my daily living? How am I bringing Christ to light in my environments? All in all, how am I carrying the Cursillo I am living to others?

One may think that giving a witness is sharing something extraordinary. A witness is to share that which is lived. When a person talks about what he or she is living, it is almost always told well, unless it is lived just to be told. The dazzling personalities will entertain, but those who live close to God will reflect Him. *“When I came to you, my friends, I did not use big words and great learning to announce God’s message.”* (I Cor. 2:1).

After the witness rollo at the Ultreya, an “echo” or “resonance” is also shared. This does not mean providing a summary of the witness that was shared or giving another witness. The echo is a brief affirmation of what the brother/sister shared, “I also live it this way...”; simply emphasizing on some points of the witness of how both live the love of God and the love of neighbor supported by their Piety, Study, and Action.

### **In conclusion, let us cite from *Evangelii Nuntiandi* about “Authentic witnesses of life”**

*“Let us now consider the very persons of the evangelizers.*

*It is often said nowadays that the present century thirsts for authenticity. Especially in regard to young people it is said that they have a horror of the artificial or false and that they are searching above all for truth and honesty.*

*These “signs of the times” should find us vigilant. Either tacitly or aloud-but always forcefully-we are being asked: Do you really believe what you are proclaiming? Do you live what you believe? Do you really preach what you live? The witness of life has become more than ever an essential condition for real effectiveness in preaching. Precisely because of this we are, to a certain extent, responsible for the progress of the Gospel that we proclaim...*

*We are all responsible for the answers that could be given to these questions.*

*We therefore address our exhortation... We say to all of them: our evangelizing zeal must spring from true holiness of life, and, as the Second Vatican Council suggests, preaching must in its turn make the preacher grow in holiness, which is nourished by prayer and above all by love for the Eucharist.*

*The world which, paradoxically, despite innumerable signs of the denial of God, is nevertheless searching for Him in unexpected ways and painfully experiencing the need*

*of Him-the world is calling for evangelizers to speak to it of a God whom the evangelists themselves should know and be familiar with as if they could see the invisible. The world calls for and expects from us simplicity of life, the spirit of prayer, charity towards all, especially towards the lowly and the poor, obedience and humility, detachment and self-sacrifice. Without this mark of holiness, our word will have difficulty in touching the heart of modern man. It risks being vain and sterile.”*

De Colores!