

FOUNDATIONAL CHARISM OF THE CURSILLO MOVEMENT (Part 1)

Source: National Cursillo Center Mailing – November 2003

The United States National Cursillo Movement would like to continue to enlighten you on the foundational charism of the Cursillo Movement. The National Staff has researched some materials that will help us better comprehend the origin of the Cursillo Movement.

Eduardo Bonnin: “The Founder”:

In the book “The Origins and Development of Cursillo” by Fr. Ivan J. Rohloff on the introduction (page 1), the last sentence of the 2nd paragraph states clearly about the founders, “...the leadership of Eduardo Bonnin and Gabriel Segui gave birth to the ‘Cursillos de Cristiandad’”. Then the last sentence of paragraph 4th reads as follows: “Meanwhile Eduardo Bonnin continued to direct an unofficial Cursillo Movement on the Island, which, without the bishop’s blessing, maintained the original Cursillo genius”.

Fr. Ivan also clarifies and eliminates the possibilities of Bishop Hervas and Fr. Juan Capo as being founders, stating: “Since the movement dates from the midforties, it is not the creation of Juan Hervas (1904-) and Juan Capo (1923-) as is sometimes stated. These men were not yet in Mallorca during the earliest stages of the formation of Cursillo.” (Pg. 26, 4th paragraph)

So, why didn’t Eduardo speak before? The answer is also in the same book, page 4, fifth paragraph states: “Serious historical study of the movement has been delayed because the most valuable historical evidence has to be obtained from archives of Eduardo Bonnin, whose account of the history is not accepted by the National Cursillo office of Spain. Eduardo Bonnin does not feel that he enjoys the freedom to write the real history of the movement, but he is very concerned that it be done”.

Spain does not accept Eduardo’s historical events because they want to be the protagonist, the “founders”. Eduardo, as he states it here did not want to write the real history (about himself) although others are doing it and calling themselves “founders”. This is why he is “coming out to say it now”; in fact, he has been saying it for over ten years.

Although Eduardo does not mind who takes credit for being the founder, he does care that we stay faithful to the Foundational Charism. We are not the only ones who call Eduardo the founder, the Vatican recognizes this fact in a recent book entitled “Signos de Esperanza – Retrato de siete Movimientos eclesiales” - Presentacion de Juan Pablo II (Signs of Hope- Picture of seven Ecclesial Movements) Presentation of Pope John Paul II. This book, written by Bishop Paul Josef Cordes who was the Vice-President of the Pontifical Council for the Laity through 1995, presents Eduardo Bonnin as “the Founder” of the Cursillo Movement (Pages 52-71). There is so much literature with the “real history”, but unfortunately only available in Spanish at this time. We are diligently working on translating some of this literature into English, for example:

1. “Historia y Memoria de Cursillos” (History and Memory of Cursillos) by Francisco Forteza - 1992. It is not just a history but also a thorough investigation of the facts right from the beginning.
2. 1st Conversations of Cala Figuera, 1994. Our 2003 National Encounter was based on them.
3. Volviendo a las Fuentes (Returning to the Origins), 1997 - Alberto Monteagudo
4. Historia de los Cursillos - Another book about the real and complete History of the Movement.
5. Signos de Esperanza . Retrato de siete Movimientos Eclesiales (Signs of Hope - Picture of seven Ecclesial Movements) Present Eduardo Bonnin to Pope John Paul II as “the Founder” – 1998.
6. Eduardo Bonnin: Un Aprendiz de Cristiano, 2001 (E. Bonnin: an Apprentice of a Christian) His biography with a history in his own words (the words that he was not able to say back then).
7. Historia de un Carisma, 2003 (History of a Charism) (documented).

As more and more literature of the Cursillo Movement has become available (primarily in Spanish), the majority of the national leadership has experienced an evolution in the understanding of the Cursillo Movement exactly the same as what was expressed by Tom Sarg in the August, 2003 National Mailing.

Why has this information become available now? Why has more emphasis been placed on the role of Eduardo Bonnin in receiving the Foundational Charism? In “Historia de Un Carisma”(p.13), Eduardo states: *“It is not through a desire to be recognized as the lead player, but rather in the service of the truth and to clarify concepts and events, that we (Secretariat of Mallorca) have found it opportune to make available to people interested in the Cursillo Movement, what occurred in the beginning, and in this light to make it clearer, always counting on the grace of God, we have tried to be faithful to the intention with which the Cursillos were proposed, prayed, reflected, structured, and for which we give thanks!”*

The Mallorcans and many of the world Cursillo leaders repeatedly pleaded with Eduardo until he shared his understanding in order to preserve the Foundational Charism, while he was still able to do so.

Gabriel Segui, “the movement’s historian” as quoted in Ivan’s book (pg. 4), made public his manuscript of the “Origenes de los Cursillos de Cristiandad”, 1941-1949, (Origins of the Cursillos in Christianity) as requested in 1965 by Pope Paul VI to Hervas. This manuscript was presented to the Vatican in 1967 (we can see that this is not just

something recent) by Bishop Hervas and it was also published in the book “Volviendo a las Fuentes” (Returning to the Origins) by Alberto Monteagudo, pages 271-315. Here are some of his points:

#63 “The essential structures of Cursillo can be considered already very well set in the year 1944 ... in August of the same year in Cala Figuera de Felanitx (Mallorca) was the 1st Cursillo in Christianity.”

#71 “The essential structures of the new form of Cursillos were clearly fixed by 1944. Without a doubt, the 1st Cursillo carried out in this new style (3 1/2 days, and not specifically as a preparation for the 1948 National Pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela) was the one that took place between August 19-23, 1944 in Cala Figuera). This judgment is based on items from the Bulletin and from some of the young who participated.”

#72 “In this Cursillo we find all the structures of the future Cursillos. They began with a retreat day, the 20 young men were divided into 2 decurias (tables of 10) to motivate each other to achieve the 3 ideals of Catholic Action: Piety, Study, and Action. They presented poster, followed by an exchange of impressions. There was an atmosphere of a frank and youthful joy. This Cursillo ended with a solemn closing, in which the young cursillistas, the President of Young Men’s Catholic Action and the diocesan spiritual director participated. Fr. Juan Julia was in charge of the spiritual direction and dogmatic formation of these youths.”

“These selected youths (all of whom had been presidents of the Diocesan Council of Catholic Action), Jose Ferragut, Eduardo Bonnin and Jaime Ruitort, did presentations on the themes that today are the rollos of the Cursillos in Christianity. Eduardo Bonnin was rector of that Cursillo. That the Cursillo Movement began with this Cursillo is a very important piece of information.”

“I have intentionally refrained from having recourse to other commentaries published about the Cursillos. I have used only primitive sources. Perhaps this version of the first stages of Cursillo is not in complete agreement with other versions, which are being circulated. We should not be surprised at this discrepancy because there are only a few of us who witnessed the origins of this renewal movement.”

On page 4, top of the page, Fr. Ivan acknowledges that the Cursillo of 1949 was not the first one saying: “Since Bonnin is convinced that Cursillo began considerably before that date, the author does not use January, 1949.”

The Shift of Focus Regarding the Tripod:

“Study” is what a person does (“if he wishes”); Formation is what a person “receives.” Study can lead a person anywhere (by his free choice, a concept taken from many other writings). It is creative. On the other hand, Formation directs one to a prefabricated model (a mold) thus, it is imitative.

Similar observations are shared about “Faith” (instead of Actual Grace), “Study and Evangelization of Environments” (instead of Study of Environment) and “Developing Christian Community” (instead of Christianity in Action).

Certain leaders, especially among the clergy, attempt to mold the Movement into an ecclesiastical implement, instead of respecting the laity’s call to holiness in their environments, to bloom where they are planted (and not in a way preprogrammed by others.) Based on the first 3 Rollos, it is said that the encounter between “freedom” (“Ideal”) and “Grace” gives use to “Secularity” (in the best sense of the word. N.B. “Seglar” (Secular in Spanish) is the translation for “Layperson.” All that follows in The 3 Days is an elaboration of this convergence. (Freedom & Grace = Role of the Layperson).

There is then a clear contrast between the definition of the Movement. The Fundamental Ideas (#111) has this definition of the Movement: *“A movement of the Church which by means of its own method makes it possible for people to live what is fundamental for being a Christian, and to live it together, it helps people discover and fulfill their personal vocation, and it promotes the creation of core groups of Christians who leaven their environments with the Gospel.”*

Eduardo Bonnin in “Aprendiz de Cristiano” (p.57) defines Cursillo thus “Cursillos in Christianity” is a movement from the Church which, through its own method, intends that the realities of what is Christian become incarnate, in the singularity, originality and creativity of the person, so that discovering his potentials and accepting his limitations, exercises his freedom from out of his conviction, reinforces his will through his decision and lives a friendship of his individual and communal living.

Transformation of the Person:

Eduardo Bonnin has not changed the focus. From the beginning, in 1944, the focus of the Precursillo, the 3-Day Cursillo and the Postcursillo are thought, programmed and directed so that the concrete, real and normal man/woman, who lives his/her normal life can have an encounter with himself/herself. Only then his/her encounter with Christ is profound and his/her encounter with his/her neighbor is gratifying and effective. To evangelize is not only to speak about the Gospel, but also to try to make it live in the life of each one of us, right here and right now. The Kingdom of God is inside each one of us. When we make this reality conscious, it is then, and only then that it becomes communicative and contagious.

Cursillo awakens in us the hunger for God and it gives us the tools (method) for perseverance; for a progressive conversion. At the same time we are leavens in our environments. Nothing is imposed or mandated. One does not have to tell a Christian to christianize just as we don’t need to tell water that it needs to “moisten” (“wet”) or the light to “illuminate”, because they are made for that purpose, it is their nature. From the beginning, Bonnin has said, “if a person has a true conversion, he/she will naturally Christianize his/her own environments. What is important is not to interrupt their natural

process with 'offers' (i.e. you need to evangelize; you need to incorporate to this or that group, institution, association, etc ... etc....)"

"It is clear that the Cursillo Movement evangelizes, not by a system but rather as a consequence of its primary focus, which is the enculturation of the Christian ideal (or life). Cursillos preoccupy to make the Kingdom of God a reality on earth, providing the means and method of perseverance for Christians to help them comprehend their true identity as loving children of God, and thus motivate themselves to enter into an ever-growing and real loving relationship with the Father (Piety)."

As our Piety and Study progress, so will our Action, to the extreme that we really begin to live our growing comprehension of what it means to be Christian, in authentic union (communion) with our brothers and sisters, His other loving children.

The word Evangelization may lead us into being evangelizers preaching the Good News, instead of us **becoming** the Good News and that our actions be evangelical. (Historia de un Carisma, page 220)

We are either Christians or we are not; there is no in-between. Approximately 2 million people have lived their 3-Day Cursillo here in the United States. If each person had a true and progressive conversion, they would be like water that does not need to be told to "moisten", or light to illuminate, or like leaven that ferments the dough. We are Christians in our daily lives and in our natural environments. Therefore, there is no need to say to a Christian that they need to evangelize; that they need to transform their environments. A Christian lives his/her Christianity 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 52 weeks a year, every year of their lives.

(To be continued in the December 2003 National Mailing ...)