



The Cursillo® Movement

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Cursillo Evangelization and the Internet

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Like it or not, we are all using the Internet. And recently, our national leaders discovered that we are unintentionally publishing a newsletter for Cursillo “insiders”. We had 1,400 newsletter readers last month. How many Cursillistas did we miss? About a million?

Watching our Cursillo website traffic has reinforced my “*movable square meter*” evangelization thoughts. Have you noticed a mentality shift that has been happening in society when it comes to the Internet? Have you experienced a *lack of effectiveness* when attempting to use the Internet to communicate with your friends?



Cursillo Website Traffic. Map of 243 downloads of the National Newsletter for 6 days, Feb. 5-10, 2015. Notice clusters of readers have appeared, suggesting that bulk-emailing techniques are being used in some dioceses to encourage readership. Do email announcements help or hurt Fourth Day communication?

In this modern world, *square meter evangelization* and *personal contact* are still our Charism. And this holds true for all phases of the Movement, from Precursillo to Postcursillo, including all communication techniques used during the Fourth Day.

It is time to gather some data. A lack of attendance (or growth) at our Group Reunions, Ultreyas, Schools of Leaders, or Weekends might indicate that we are moving in the wrong direction. Could weak attendance numbers be related to *personal contact*, or a lack of it? There are many causes for stagnation, but I would like to believe that *personal contact* is at the heart of the solution.

Here is a bad idea. To increase our National Newsletter readership, let’s propose a bulk-mailing effort and put everyone to work distributing 10,000 paper newsletters, like we did during the

good old days with Ultreya Magazine? At least when I received Ultreya Magazine from the post office, I took time to read it. I did not consider it “just another piece of junk mail”.

Here is another bad idea. Enlist a team of volunteers to manage a bulk email-marketing directory of 50,000 Cursillistas in the USA and ask all diocesan movements to give us their address lists? Then obtain a professional account with Constant Contact Marketing and join the spammers? This proposal is so worldly and non-cursillo that it hurts. The idea lacks the *charism of personal contact* and goes beyond our *moveable square meter*.

Or maybe we need to build a fancy website with nice graphics to attract more Cursillistas to our newsletters? Do we jump into the Internet marketing world or stick to the *foundational charism*?

A reminder. There is no better way for the evil one to crush the Cursillo Movement than to hit us right between our eyes at the core of our charism. Personal contact is still the key to evangelization; so don't keep this a secret.

Here is a list of excellent **personal contact methods** that get my attention:

- talk to me after Group Reunion or visit me at home
- call me on the phone
- listen while I share my life events with you
- learn the names of my kids and grandkids
- pick me up and take me to the Ultreya
- treat me to lunch after Mass
- send me a handwritten letter
- show me that I am not just another person, but individually loved by you and by God.

Here is a list of **non-personal contact** (NOT RECOMMENDED) methods:

- refer me to your website
- email me your newsletter or calendar of events
- send me an email invitation or text message
- forward an email from someone else
- post information on your website or Facebook account and wonder why I did not attend Ultreya and Group Reunion
- send me a flyer about your upcoming event
- expect me to attend Group Reunion without a phone call

For the Cursillo Method to be effective, we must be true to our *foundational charism* in everything that we do, during every phase of the Movement. Our message must permeate into every interaction of life and with everyone who enters into our *moveable square meter* of space.

When the founder Eduardo Bonnín suggested that we evangelize the *faraway*, he did not mean those outside our physical square meter (i.e. those so-called friends in our Facebook or email contacts lists). He meant our close personal friends who are far away from God - those we can physically touch.

“The Internet can offer magnificent opportunities for evangelization if used with competence and a clear awareness of its strengths and weaknesses.” (Pope John Paul II) However, the Cursillo

has a specific charism and method for evangelization: true friendship can only come by way of *personal contact*.

Some people believe that posting something on a Cursillo website or broadcasting an email will substitute for good old-fashioned personal contact. St. Paul, Patron of the Cursillo, gives us his insight into First Century communication, “*How beautiful are the feet of those who bring the Good News!*” (Romans 10:15) We most effectively communicate the Good News with our feet, not our keyboards.

How do we use the tools of this world and still remain true to our Charism? How do we find the time needed for personal contact - without using email? I don't know. But it must be done.

Here are some suggestions. Let's begin at the foundation. Bring one person to Group Reunion next week. Pick them up or take them to Ultreya. Call them on the phone just to chat. Concentrate on one person, one at a time. Literally, be a true friend.

The Cursillo Message is important. God in Christ loves us. And I need to communicate this message by the most effective means that God has given me, through friendship. Computers can assist at times, but they can only *post* raw information. It's my job, with God's grace, to *communicate* it.

Technology is attractive, but please avoid using this “tool of temptation” if it alters the physical size of your *moveable square meter* or it substitutes for personal contact. Use personal contact in your *moveable square meter* (not 100 square miles) at all cost. And if the Internet becomes the only way, then maybe we are too busy to evangelize.

De Colores!