

CURSILLOS IN CHRISTIANITY – A LAY MOVEMENT

Source: National Cursillo Center Mailing – October 2011

“But the time came when he who had set me apart before I was born and called me by his favor chose to reveal his Son to me that I might spread among the Gentiles the good tidings concerning him. Immediately, without seeking human advisers or even going to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before me” (Gal 1:15-17).

Some people use the expression layperson, while others prefer laity. Laity or layperson is understood as having the same significance. The term refers to us, the baptized, who have not received the “laying of hands”, an act of “ordination” or Sacrament of Holy Orders.

Since the beginning of the twentieth century there has been dialogue about the presence and action of the laity in the public life of the Church and the lay apostolate. The first is a hopeful joy; the second, the lay apostolate, is not a new idea, it has always existed.

In the Gospel we find many ways in which Jesus invites the laity to the apostolate. Immediately thereafter, St. Paul reiterates the evangelic invitation announcing it in all the places he traveled.

During the last century, the laity was referred to as the “sleeping giant”. This "giant" began to awaken slowly, however, isolated and in some cases in a personal way. And it was awakened by prominent voices of theologians that gave foundation to the mission, although somewhat forgotten, of the laity in the Church.

At present, this giant is awake and alive. The "normality" of an active participation of the laity in the missionary work of the Church's mission, in intimate *communion*, which according to St. Cyprian, is the harmony of love in following Jesus Christ, is a joy for the Lord.

It matters not that the road may still be rocky. This intimate *communion* with Christ will make the stones disappear and clear the path.

Without a doubt, the Second Vatican Council, as well as "Christifideles Laici", has been instrumental in providing the driving force for awakening the lay faithful of Christ.

The apostolate of the Good News of the Gospel is for everyone. It is not only a role for the hierarchy. We are all represented by the 72 missionaries, referred to by St. Luke because the "Go forth!" of the Gospel "is directed and extends to all" (Christifideles Laici 2)

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Paul, Patron of Cursillo, proclaims it; the first and greatest "Christifideles Laici". We are all Paul!

In this edification of "Go forth", all of us who believe in Christ form one platform because Baptism unites us as priests, prophets, and kings.

In the Church, no one is just a fisherman or a shepherd and no one is just a fish or a lamb. A wide field of action is opened for the laity when all the Baptized are fish and fishermen at once.

The Mystical Body, which we create, is one body (1Cor 10:17), and each is member of the other" (Rom 12:5); growing for God, supported and held together by its ligaments and joints (Col 2:19). Christ is the head of this body and we identify ourselves with Christ through Baptism (1Cor 12:13), (Lumen Gentium 7). When the nets are cast and the catch is great, what happens is, that those in the boat who have filled the nets, signal their companions in the other boat to come and help.

This is the doctrine of Lumen Gentium: when it proclaims the equality and unity of laity and clergy within the City of God, identifying these People by the dignity and freedom of the sons of God, in a common priesthood and through God's grace, each group shares their gifts with one another so that the community and each one of its parts is enriched through this mutual sharing and with the quest for fulfillment in unity. So that, each one, with the gifts he has received, may place them at the service of others as good stewards of God's varied grace (1 Pt. 4:10).

Indeed, there are difficulties. There has always been the "illusion" of sitting to the right or to the left of the "Master". The one who has received the grace to be "powerful" often forgets, even when guided by good faith, without a doubt, that the "greater" should be the servant of all" (Mk 10:41-45). Nothing is new. We follow the same paths as always and we come across the same people.

It has been determined that "the post Vatican II path of the lay faithful has not been without difficulties and dangers (Christifideles Laici 2).

It happens at times, and we say this with love, that wherever the Church invites us to be Church, there are those who, acting in a spirit of service and in good faith, will claim an ecclesial position that is unjust and intolerable.

This is the time of the laity . . . here and now. Although, as Cardinal S. Rylko tells us, "It is not easy being a layperson in today's world" and "to be a layperson in our times requires courage", nevertheless, it is the time of the laity, because "the laity are irreplaceable in the task of evangelization."

The new evangelization will be done primarily by lay people or it will not be done at all!

We need to stop considering, on the one hand, the clergy and afterwards, the laity. We must stop placing emphasis on one or the other. This can be the means to begin undoing the "knots" that impede the life of the Church.

One of the many ways to achieve this is to allow ourselves to be guided by the objectives of Vatican II.

Another way is to avoid making enthusiastic affirmations whose effectiveness cease at the very moment they are made. Another way is to be consistent with what we proclaim and what we live.

Another way is to proclaim complete truths, because when we put together pieces of partial truths, the result is half-truths.

We want to clearly state in order to avoid doubts and bad intentions that this is not denying the ordained, the clergy, their rightful place in the life of the Church, but rather, that what comes from our hearts is a firm and clear statement of love and admiration for the priesthood.

However, as we have heard Pope Benedict XVI state: "It is something beautiful that, without the initiative of the hierarchy, a grassroots initiative, as they say, but also with an initiative from on high, that is, as a gift of the Holy Spirit, there arise new forms of life in the Church just as there have been in every century."

In the words of R. Cantalapiedra, we are the laity of ecclesial movements, the successors of those 72.

The title of "laity" (Christifideles Laici) is to give honor to this truth; Cursillos in Christianity is a lay Church Movement.

It was from this lay apostolate, that in the 1940's, the Essence and Purpose of the Cursillos and the basis of its methodology originated after a thorough study of the environments.

The "idea" was made known to the "ordained" and they blessed it with both hands. There was loving harmony, *communio*, between clergy and laity.

Cursillos came from the Lay apostolate of bringing the Good News, specifically to the environments in which each one lives.

Cursillos was born, not as a response from the Church to the world, but as a way to communicate to man that God loves him. They were designed, structured and prayed upon not to evangelize the world, but to evangelize the person. The Cursillos came in order to awaken a hunger for God in the world and in the context in which Christianity develops and grows.

The purpose that the "idea" of Cursillos seeks is not for doing things, attending events, but to grow, develop, and be Christian where God has planted each person with faith, hope and charity. This life, through its connection to Christ, can be an inexhaustible source of meaning, authenticity, and a catalyst of energy and evangelical joy in the family, at work and at play.

"The Cursillo method aims to contribute change, in a Christian sense, in the environments where people live and act, by means of the insertion of new men who have been transformed thanks to their encounter with Christ ..." (Pope John Paul II). While each one remains in the state in which they were called (1 Cor 7:24) because no one should be removed from the custom of caring for family, work, leisure, but rather convert their way of caring for them, by making grace the manner in which to guide themselves. The Cursillos, like everything human, are not perfect, but confusion and complications begin when, without a clear idea of why they were designed, people intend to offer their generosity as the grace of God arises, to do that which seems best to each person.

In Cursillos a lay path is designated because the strategy focuses on the person and the environments, rather than on structures.

The apostolate, whose development is geared more specifically to the structures within the parish, existed before and still lives. This apostolate is, without a doubt, exceptional and extraordinary, and carried out through its pastoral care. A ministry that is undoubtedly very good and effective for the "workers" who were called to the vineyard from the first hour, but that does not fit into the passionate surrender of a new convert because the parish is at once narrow and insufficient to meet the needs of pastoral concern and formation of all the faithful. The parish church or other structures do not seem to be the most appropriate platform and even less so, the exclusive one for reaching certain sectors, especially the far away, and transforming them into Christian ones.

Cursillo directs its focus, especially, but not exclusively, to the far away, to those who do not participate in or attend parochial events as a routine, without it causing them any concern not to participate. While it is true that when the parish is able to accomplish a timely collaboration, it will always be provided with simplicity, without encroaching on areas or taking on roles that belong to other sites.

Eduardo Bonnín clearly and specifically emphasized, that Cursillos in Christianity is a movement of lay initiative, in which priests contribute in their primary role. And that Cursillo can only persevere and grow "with a perfect fit between priests and laity." The Cursillo, more now than ever, must be anchored in a faith that lives in close union, in friendship with everyone, lay and clergy, without ... the "dictatorial" attitude from either side. And with real holy fear, and in constant awe and a supernatural normality, namely, not to believe they know, but to know how to believe. Clearly, the Cursillo Movement can bring the Good News to the most distant and far away within the normal operating range of the ordained.

Cursillo, as a lay ecclesial Movement is realized in the person who lives their Baptism, announcing the Good News of the Gospel, the love of God, through personal testimony in the places they move about in their square meter in which they find themselves living: at home, at work, places of entertainment, etc.; but always in intimate union with priests.

Let us pray together, priests and lay people, that as we cross paths with others in the square meter in which we find ourselves living at this exact moment, we may love them

(Lk 10: 25-29 and Mk 12:31) in the same spirit of the Samaritan (Lk 10:30-37) because we are all Church. We are not church or more of a church because we occupy a position, a responsibility or a mission of greater or less importance.

No. We are Church because we are baptized and confirmed in the Faith in Jesus Christ.

Ultreya!