

EVANGELIZING WITHIN YOUR MOVEABLE SQUARE METER

Source: National Cursillo Center Mailing – April 2012

“Evangelize the environments of the third Christian millennium: this is the challenge to Cursillos in Christianity”. (Pope John Paul II at III World Ultreya, Rome, July 29, 2000)

Cursillo came from the Lay apostolate of bringing the Good News, specifically to the environments in which everyone lives. Cursillo was born, not as a response from the Church to the world, but as a way to communicate to men that God loves them. Cursillo was designed, structured and prayed upon not to evangelize the world, but to evangelize the person.

The Cursillo came in order to awaken a hunger for God in the world and in the context in which Christianity grows and develops in a normal manner. In Cursillo a lay path is designated because the strategy focuses on the individual and the environments, rather than on structures.

On Sunday of the Cursillo Weekend, we are introduced to the rollo that set the foundation for all other rollos in Cursillo – Study of Environments. In this phase of the Cursillo we give attention to the different areas where a person’s activity should develop, so that the person may be the ferment of a better world. The actions of a Christian are always carried out with the circumstances, the time, and place that the person already occupies, that is, where the person finds himself at that precise time and place. The Cursillo, by this time, may usually have infused the new Cursillistas with a climate of overflowing Grace and an admiration for one another, which will keep on growing. The Cursillista is already concerned with how to communicate to the others in their environment what they have discovered, assimilated, and lived.

Each person must undergo a continuous and progressive change of criteria and attitudes, as a person and as a Christian. However, this change (conversion) cannot be limited to: oneself alone, for oneself alone, or within oneself alone. The world, the life of our entire society, must undergo such a conversion. The radical and only solution for the problems of the world is always the same – Jesus Christ and his grace. The laity’s mission is to transform society in Jesus Christ. Cursillo provides a strategy and method to accomplish the mission.

Christianity is community - “Those who sincerely accept the Good News, through the power of this acceptance and of shared faith, therefore gather together in Jesus’ name in order to seek together the Kingdom, build it up and live it. They make up a community which is in its turn evangelizing.” (Evangeliu Nuntiandi 13, Pope Paul VI)

People live their lives as an integral part of groupings. In each of these groupings certain ideas and attitudes are accepted, certain types of behaviors are encouraged and certain personalities predominate. The group’s ideal can be the combination of individual ideals affected by circumstances. A certain spirit is generated. Therefore, the *environment* is

the sum of ideas, persons, and circumstances which exist when people get together – the spirit of the situation.

The environment has a vital impact on persons. People tend to conform to the spirit being generated. Persons with ideals and drive, structure, change, and influence the environment. The idea is to influence the environment more than it influences us.

In *Study the Environment*, Cursillo shows the way to transform the environment for the better. Before going further, though, we must be clear that when Cursillo speaks of environment, it is referring to *the person and his circumstances within their sphere of influence at this exact moment*. If you recall, in the Ideal Rollo we were told: *we can be more and be better* and in the Layperson in the Church Rollo we were told: *we can do so from where we are*. So what we learned is that we do not have to go anywhere specific to be who we are as Christians and we can influence (evangelize) the person whom God places in our path where we are at the moment, that is, within our moveable square meter. In daily life, we find ourselves *moving* from one environment to the next.

As leaders we are called to study the environment (person) before we can transform it. We must determine its ideal, nature, and circumstances. In each environment a few people extend more influence than the rest. To find them, we must familiarize ourselves with their personalities.

- The followers (those of deference) – satisfied to imitate others' actions, they lack strong convictions. Adherence through respect or acquiescence before what is proposed to them.
- The impulsive (those of impulse) – waver according to the rhythm of their emotions, their conviction is not constant. Those who at the hour of truth are not capable of upholding their ideas.
- The leaders (those of drive) – use their abilities to achieve what they believe is worthwhile. Since the truth is sought, is found, is lived and shared with the whole soul, those of drive for the best are needed to embody it in the world in a clear, living, convincing, and truthful manner.

Cursillo seeks leaders, natural leaders, who are willing, able, and capable of using their influence to build Christianity in their environments.

By Sunday of the Weekend, the Cursillistas' heads are full of ideas and their hearts filled with eagerness; they feel the call to respond to Christ and to reach out to their surroundings. The Study of Environment rollo invites and encourages them to transform their environments, stressing that they are not to detest and run from the world, but are called to bring a Christian influence to that world.

Study of Environment proposes a practical method to win the environment (person) and bring them to Christ. There are three areas that we are asked to consider in order to be effective evangelizers. The method demands courage and effort in progressive conversion.

- First; *ourselves* - strengthen and convince ourselves that Christ is the answer.

- Second; *others* - acquaintances, associates, casual friends and the process of knowing them, placing them, enlightening them, and accompanying them.
- Third; the *environment* - those who surround us in our moveable square meter.

The first step – *Ourselves* - the effectiveness in the leavening of the environment is based on the depth of relationship each one has with oneself. First is our **will**, we must want to place our will to the highest degree in order to move from “I can” to “I will”. Second is **prayer**, all our apostolic undertakings should have at their core, prayer. Our strength comes from this. Third is our **mind**, it is necessary to use our God given intelligence in our evangelization efforts just as we do for everything else we do. And fourth is the **heart**, our heart must be open to be all things to all people in order to win them for Christ.

The second step – *Others* – the relationships with those who accompany us in life: family, neighbors, and friends. In this step, we basically use the reverse sequence as applied above to ourselves. First, we must win the person’s heart, second open their mind, third their will and lastly, introduce them to prayer. If we do not reach and influence the **heart** first, not much will happen. From the heart, open their **mind**. This is not as difficult as it may seem because as Christians, we have the seed of Grace that was planted in us at our Baptism. We must win the person’s **will** in order to bring our companions along with us. And lastly, Grace from the Father will lead the person to **prayer**.

The third step – the *Environment* – the relationships with those who surround us with their circumstances in a certain time and place. This step is a natural consequence of beginning the process with ourselves first and the others second. The conscious and progressive conversion of our lives is the effective factor in the environment. The *consequence* of the Cursillistas’ response to Christ will be a *natural* reaching out to the person to introduce them to Christ through friendship and a personal witness of *living* what is fundamental for being Christian.

The rest of this article is taken from Study the Charism book published by OMCC. The *dough*, the *site*, the *environment* is the field of work of the purpose of the Cursillo Movement. To leaven the environments, the recesses of everyday life that must be reached refers to the shop, the office, the bar, the sports field, the beach, the school, the college, the taxi, the train, and all the locations each person occupies in their daily lives. The men and women, who, through a Cursillo have had an awakening of the hunger for God, should remain in their places. They should not be removed from the realities in which they find themselves only to be taken to work in a different reality, no matter how good it may be.

Persons, men and women, who have understood the simplicity of the Cursillo message, should remain in their reality, in the same environment, fermenting Christianity by means of friendship with those whom they live and interact with: family, work, and leisure. Places where the priests do not reach because their work has its limits.

The purpose of the Cursillos in Christianity Movement is not directed toward building up of ecclesial structures (Structure of Ideas), but to create a world of friends, by building up Christianity, in natural environments. Pope John Paul II specifically expresses the purpose of Cursillo: “Your movement asks of you *to be leaven in the dough* of the world . . . acting in the world.”

The immediate purpose of Cursillo is to provide knowledge, belief lived, and shared experience of what is fundamental to being Christian, spreading it in the environment, the *dough* of the world where ordinary life is lived. We should reach out to people, giving testimony of friendship so that they might encounter Christ without the intention of removing them from their *place* in order to take them to another. This is the only way that those who are far away can accept us. We are to continue to generate friendship among people that we find in the *movable square meter* in which the Lord has placed us, so that everyone, especially those far away, might know that God loves us.