

FAITHFUL STEWARDS OF THE CURSILLO MOVEMENT

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During the first meditation of the 3-day Cursillo weekend, the Cursillista is invited to begin a sincere, personal reflection that will lead him or her into a journey – a fantastic journey that will not require him to travel from Earth to *outer space*: to the Moon or Mars, to Jupiter or some far distant star. In fact, the journey on which he or she will set out is far more challenging. For, as Eduardo Bonnín puts it, it is a journey from the surface of the person's skin to his or her *inner space*: there, where the self resides.

In other words, the Cursillista is asked to look inward and in that process to stand naked before God. It is not a process that is meant to fill us with guilt, or shame, or remorse. Rather, it is an invitation to stand before our true self and God free of all manipulation, illusion, pretense, pride, self-deception and fear; so that we might allow God's loving arms to embrace us as the Father once embraced the *Prodigal Son* and draw us to Himself just as we are. In this warm, unconditional embrace, we discover that we are precious in the eyes of God and that we are eternally loved. When we personally experience this fundamental truth, we begin to find answers to the *WHY* and *WHAT FOR* of our existence, to the meaning of our life.

This real encounter with oneself with which the Cursillo begins is what later makes possible the encounter with others and with the Gospel. In this three-fold encounter, which begins and ends with friendship, Cursillos does not wish to impose any new commitments or obligations on anyone. Rather, it seeks to have each one find meaning in the commitment that he or she already has – the commitment that springs from life itself and from human relationships, a commitment that find its source, strength and nourishment in friendship: friendship with God and neighbor.¹

We have been asked to reflect today on our stewardship of this unique and beautiful gift of the Spirit that is Cursillos. And, indeed, it is particularly appropriate that we do so, since in Sacred Scripture the *steward* is a symbolic model of the meaning of life: namely, who we are in relation to God, to self, to others, and to all of created reality.

The most fundamental teaching of scripture – beginning with *Genesis* – is that all things are of God's making. All that is, all that our senses can experience or discover owe their continued existence to Him, including our lives and all that we have: our bodies, our possessions, our talents, our gifts, and our time. Moreover, God has redeemed us by the blood of His Son, Jesus Christ Our Lord². Consequently, it is in Christ that “*we live and move and have our being*”³. And so, St. Paul tells us, “*Those who live [should] no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised*”⁴.

¹ E. Bonnín & F. Forteza, “*Los Cursillos de Cristiandad, Realidad Aun No Realizada*,” p. 18

² 1 Peter 1:18, 19

³ Acts 17:28

⁴ 2 Corinthians 5:15

All of us are stewards, therefore; for we have been entrusted with administering the riches and blessings that we have received from God; and, we are called to serve and care for His household and our fellow servants. We have been given absolute dominion and freedom over this bounty of life and God's rich patrimony of grace. But, to paraphrase that giant of popular literature, *Spider-Man*, with great power and great freedom comes great responsibility.

Our stewardship requires faithful use of the gifts received, as the parable of the *Talents* teaches us⁵. It calls us to watchfulness and readiness, as the parable of the *10 wise and foolish virgins* reminds us⁶. It challenges us to be as resourceful as the dishonest steward of the parable⁷, "*For the children of this world are more prudent in dealing with their own generation than are the children of light*"⁸. In fact, we are accountable for everything God gives us, no matter how much or how little we feel we have received. For, "*the person who is trustworthy in very small matters is also trustworthy in great ones; and the person who is dishonest in very small matters is also dishonest in great ones*"⁹. How then could we be entrusted with the things of the *Kingdom* if we are unreliable in the small things of this world?

As stewards we are called above all to fidelity to the spiritual gifts received. Speaking of his ministry and that of his companions, St. Paul will say: "*Thus should one regard us: as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Now it is of course required of stewards that they be found trustworthy*"¹⁰. And, the author of the first letter of Peter, applying the same principle to all Christians, adds: "*As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace*"¹¹.

In what way then, are we called to be faithful stewards of the Cursillos Movement?

If Cursillos, as we firmly believe, is a gift from God, it is a manifestation of the Spirit for the common good of the Church¹². As such, Cursillos fulfills a unique and specific role in God's plan. As recipients of that grace, therefore, we are called to be trustworthy in our fidelity to its essence and the specific role, which God assigned to it within the Body of Christ. If the unique Charism that is the Cursillo Movement is to fulfill its mission, we cannot treat it as if it were our own possession, as if it was ours to use or tinker with to our hearts' content, much less use it for a purpose for which it was not intended. Cursillo is the work of the Spirit; and we are accountable to God for the gift received.

We know that Cursillo is a living, breathing thing – as beautiful, as delicate and also as fragile as a butterfly. Eduardo Bonnín and Francisco Forteza once wrote:

⁵ Matthew 25:14-30

⁶ Matthew 25:1-13

⁷ Luke 16:1-18

⁸ Luke 16:8

⁹ Luke 16:10

¹⁰ 1 Corinthians 4:1-2; cf also Ephesians 3:2

¹¹ 1 Peter 4:10

¹² 1 Corinthians 12:7, cf also verses 1-11

*Anything that has life must grow and develop; and, to thrive it requires permanent creativity and evaluation. As it grows and develops, a living thing affirms its essential elements, what is distinctive and intentional, or it breaks away from them and loses its identity.*¹³

Let us approach our understanding of Cursillo in this “*organic*” way – it must grow and develop, yes. But, it must be true to its reason for being, to its essence, to what makes it distinctive – to what God intended it to be, or it will risk losing its identity and thereby frustrate God’s Plan.

Some of us can appreciate a butterfly and ask of it nothing other than what the Creator intended it to be. Yet, for some the life of a butterfly might seem pointless: an endless cycle of flying from flower to flower laying eggs that will hatch a caterpillar whose only purpose will be to eat until it attaches itself to a leaf; where it will dry up to form a cocoon from which a butterfly will fly out to mate and begin the cycle again.

A geneticist might decide that the best, most productive and useful thing would be to change the genetic composition of butterflies so as to give them the specific task of pollinating flowers – not as the natural consequence of its life cycle but as a predetermined, assigned task of its “*updated*” mission in life: *Butterfly 2.0*, if you will! As such, they would become the handmaidens of the botanist and the gardener and anyone else interested in having “*worker butterflies*”.

There is no question, however, that butterflies would have lost their identity. They would, in fact, cease to be the creatures that God made only to become a re-invention of man – a well intentioned meddling no doubt, but one that would surely bring havoc to the natural ecosystem established by their Creator.

To use another analogy: Sometimes, when it is expedient, when there is no hammer around, or when we’re too busy or lazy to look for one, some of us are tempted to take a shortcut and use a screwdriver to drive a nail into the wall. Now, experience tells us that we can do it; we can drive that nail in. But, more often than not, it damages the screwdriver and the nail gets bent or doesn’t go in all the way.

We can treat and, in the past, have treated Cursillo the same way!

Bonnín has pointed out and our own personal experience confirms that in the now long history of the Movement, there have been two ways of understanding and therefore two ways of channeling and directing the Cursillo Movement toward its purpose.

- There are those who believe that its only reason for being should be to revitalize existing structures and organizations (parishes, dioceses, pastoral activities, civic and religious organizations, etc.), which continue to do what they have always done but now do so with the renewed spirit and zeal of those who have experienced a Cursillo weekend and whose energy they wish to tap.

¹³ E. Bonnín & F. Forteza, “*Los Cursillos de Cristiandad, Realidad Aun No Realizada,*” p. 12

- And, there are those of us who believe that, in the complex ecosystem of God's graces, the Cursillos Movement needs to be given its own niche or space to live and be what God intended it to be – with its own basic and minimal structures: group reunion, Ultreya and School. So that, through the very dynamics of the relationships and friendships that develop there, the Good News is taken to every nook and cranny of human existence: to the individual person, to the family and to society¹⁴.

If we are to be faithful to the essence of Cursillo and be ministers of the graces that God wishes to communicate through the Movement, we must go to the source – to the Charism that gave it birth. We must understand what Cursillo is and what it is not!

We must continually re-examine and re-evaluate what we do and how we are doing it in light of that which is distinctive to Cursillo and what was always intended.

We must come to understand that what we in Cursillo have always wanted to do was to put what is fundamentally Christian within reach of the ordinary person: to facilitate that magnificent personal encounter of the human person with the Gospel of Christ. We must constantly remind ourselves that the essence and genius of the gift that is Cursillos is that it has never sought nor does it now seek to propose specific pastoral plans of action.

Again, I repeat lest it be news to you: the Cursillo Movement does not wish to promote apostolates nor channel persons into specific ministries. Its purpose and finality is not to revitalize parishes or change systems or social and ecclesial structures; much less manipulate people so as to lead them into commitments, which, by imposing obligations, soon become burdens. Nor was Cursillos created, as one often hears, to “*charge the batteries*” of tired souls, exhausted by the harsh demands of modern life. Cursillos are not, nor should they ever be, a filling station one drives into to fill his or her tank and thus continue steering more confidently through life.

The essence of Cursillo and what defines its purpose – its central core, the axis around which everything revolves – is that as many people as possible experience that which is *fundamental to being a Christian*. And, this is not, as Eduardo Bonnín says, “*a doctrine that must be learned*.” Rather, it is a “*reality that must be lived*.” And, that reality is that Christ loves us: GOD LOVES ME! Is that not amazing?

Indeed, the most essential thing about being a Christian is to feel loved by God and to live in perpetual wonder before this truth. **BECAUSE WHAT IS MOST GENUINELY CHRISTIAN CONSISTS IN LETTING OURSELVES BE LOVED BY GOD.**

When a person in all his or her individual uniqueness, creativity and freedom experiences God's love as the most fundamental truth of his or her life, that person is transformed... Because, one can live one's life fully only when one finds the meaning of one's life. Cursillo has proposed only one means toward that end: friendship. And, it is only friendship that is its goal – friendship with self, friendship with God and all of His works, and friendship with our companions on the road.

¹⁴ E. Bonnín & F. Forteza, “*Los Cursillos de Cristiandad, Realidad Aun No Realizada*,” p. 25

Let us then be faithful stewards... Let us allow the beautiful butterfly that is Cursillo to fly freely, planting the seed of the Gospel, in every flower of this beautiful garden of life. Let it be what God intended it to be: the joyful proclamation of the best news possible, that God loves us and has reconciled us to Himself in Christ. Let it fulfill its mission by the only means that God Himself employed: friendship. So that, more and more persons may come to accept themselves as they are, learn that they can be better, and seek to find their place in God's plan in the company of others. Then surely, our world will begin to resemble that *lost paradise* and will bloom more each day with the colors of God's grace and love as we await the coming of *His Kingdom* in glory.