

ULTREYA – THE REUNION OF GROUP REUNIONS

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Excerpts from “Evangelization through Conversion” by Eduardo Bonnín

The Postcursillo is designed to facilitate the nurturing of those three essential encounters that took place on the Cursillo so that they grow and develop into true friendship — friendship of the individual with himself, with Christ, and with our brothers and sisters.

Methodologically speaking, there is no doubt that the key to this process of friendship building is the last encounter — friendship with the others; not only the “others” that encompass “all” but especially the friendship with those who are intimately involved in our conversion process, those in our Friendship Group Reunion and Ultreya.

Precisely because Friendship Group Reunions always run the risk of turning into mutual admiration societies, self-focused groups or groups under the direction and control of someone who manages or manipulates it, either from within or without, they should always be part of the universality and diversity afforded by the Ultreya.

It is in the “witnessing” environment of the Ultreya where those who have just started their conversion process can meet and develop true friendships with other, likeminded people already on the journey. This is why Cursillo always discourages any attempt to turn the Ultreya into a “collective” or “public” event that cuts out or undermines the Group Reunion aspect that defines Ultreya just as Cursillo always discourages any attempt to suggest that the opening Group Reunions should always be made up of the same people.

It is essential to the Cursillo method that the Ultreya remains primarily a kind of meeting place where individuals can go to make new acquaintances, to make and be friends — and develop friendships of the type that will drive, strengthen, direct and sustain the conversion process and all its unsuspected blessings.

The Ultreya is the gathering of the Friendship Groups – the Reunion of the Group Reunions. The Groups and their members participate in it for the same reasons they go to the Friendship Group Reunions: to share what everybody and every Group lives. They *do not* go there to acquire knowledge *nor* to receive instructions.

If the purpose of the Ultreya were to be an educational or organizational one, it would not have the “universal” aspect that so clearly characterizes and defines it. If that were the case (i.e. educational and organizational) it would be better to divide into groups from similar professions, or environments or other defining characteristics. Instead, and consistent with what Cursillo has maintained from the very beginning, the aim is to simply provide the opportunity for each and everyone to share their experiences so as to sustain and motivate the pilgrim mentality of conversion. As such the larger and broader the structural base of the Ultreya is, the more effective and efficient it becomes.

Because of this, Cursillo highly discourages the notion of controlling and orchestrating the Ultreya Group Reunions since orchestrating and controlling have no place in something, which by design must be “spontaneous” if it is to sustain conversion!

Catholics of today complain about the rise of sects and cults among everyday people and especially the youth, but we forget that in large part, it is because we lack the baptismal simplicity, (the enthusiasm for what is simple — because it is everlasting) and the cheerful wonder of the Good News that GOD LOVES US — that many people are driven to seek outside the established Church, what they were absolutely entitled to have found within it since it is an essential part of Christ’s heritage and thus our inheritance as children of God.

This is not to say that Cursillo wishes the Ultreyas to possess the “hard sell” atmosphere of the sects, or that they be focused on cultivating “feelings” but in no way should they stifle the sharing of what is actually being felt or the overflowing joy of those who are aware that they are beloved Children of God.

Unfortunately, there are those who insist on making the Ultreya a venue of studies or of coordinated activities in addition to being the place where experiences are shared. When this happens, and despite the person’s noble intentions, the focus shifts away from the conversion process in a way almost unnoticeable at first by even the faithful Cursillistas, until the entire focus has changed from that of *being and becoming Christian* to that of *doing Christian things*. It is to prevent this very shift that the Ultreya must be faithful to the mission. The whole Movement depends on it being so. Once the Ultreya ceases to be this instrument of conversion and turns into venues for those who believe they know better or are better than the others — they inevitably lose members and end up simply being a place where the “the most saintly” and those who attended “the most recent” Cursillo, gather.

In short, the genuine Ultreya is one of the few places and occasions where the person who is in the process of conversion can really see that he can be the best without being better than the others. This unique and evangelical sensation can be attained by those who are becoming fully human and fully Christian. The Ultreya should show and prove, through its method and proper atmosphere that while a human can always become more fully human and more fully Christian, we can never become more than what we truly are, children of God.

To avoid the vital and essential character of the Ultreya from turning into mere fireworks, into a show rather than an abode, it is essential that it be supported and strengthened by a School of Leaders. The most important thing to keep in mind is that the primary and essential role of the School of Leaders is to support the Ultreya in their area. One of the main tasks of the School of Leaders is to ensure that the Ultreya is accomplishing its purpose. The Ultreya should be discussed by the leaders during the School sessions to determine if the person leading the Ultreya fulfilled their task, was the witness rollo what it should be, were the responses (echo) in keeping with the mentality, were the new Cursillistas there, did they seem comfortable, and what measures can be taken to improve

the Ultreya? Instead of finding innovative things to introduce to ‘liven’ it up, the School of Leaders should study and discuss the different elements that are part of an authentic Ultreya and look for ways to improve those.

By cultivating and nurturing true interpersonal relationships, and the warmest of them all is *friendship*, within all of life’s circumstances or environments, we create the vertebrae and the ferment, or leavening, that is needed to move the Precursillo of today to the Postcursillo of tomorrow, when all things shall be restored to Christ and the Kingdom of God that is already amongst us will be revealed through friendship and love in all of its glory.

De Colores!