



The Cursillo® Movement

National Cursillo® Center • P.O. Box 799 • Jarrell, TX 76537 • 512-746-2020 • Fax 512-746-2030 • www.natl-cursillo.org

THE JOY OF THE GOSPEL

Source: Presented by Fr. Alex Waraksa, National Spiritual Advisor, at the National Cursillo Encounter held at Chapman University in Orange, CA – August 1, 2014

This is an overview of The Joy of the Gospel, Apostolic Exhortation of the Holy Father, Francis. You can access the full text at <http://www.vatican.va/evangelii-gaudium/en/>

The gospel is Jesus' message and is intimately linked with who Jesus is. It draws us out of selfishness to concern for others.

It can lead us to a new personal encounter with Jesus. Everyone is invited into a relationship with Jesus; in Cursillo we would emphasize a friendship with Jesus. We need to be honest if in the past we have rejected this, yet also acknowledge how returning to Jesus and accepting His invitation feels wonderful. Jesus has pursued us as is told in the story of the Good Shepherd leaving the 99 and pursuing the lost sheep.

God is always capable of restoring our joy. (Or giving us true joy for first time.) Pope Francis shares with us some of the Scriptures that refer to this joy. "You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy" (Is 9:3). "He will rejoice over you with gladness, he will renew you in his love." (Zephaniah 3:17) In the Gospel of Luke the archangel tells Mary to rejoice (Lk 1:28), and later in the encounter she says, "my spirit rejoices in God my savior." (Lk 1:47)

"I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and your joy may be complete." (Jn 15,11) In the seminary in philosophy class, we were invited to think about the idea that happiness is in doing god's will.

St. Pope John 23rd said, "a Christian is a joy, a joy for God and a joy for others."

Some can show joy even amid great pressure and obligations. We have seen why we want to be Christian, because of the incomparable joy that it brings, but what does it mean to be Christian. The Cursillo Movement asks, what is fundamental to being Christian?

Benedict XVI says, "Being a Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction".

An encounter with God's love liberates us from self-absorption. An encounter with God's love blossoms into an enriching friendship.

I might describe this encounter as a transforming relationship with Christ. This transforming continues to happen as we respond to the grace we are given. In Cursillo, we call this response the authentic and inspired living of Piety, Study and Action.

The delightful and comforting joy of evangelizing “goodness always tends to spread”, similar to Love always wants to share itself.

The Gospel offers us the chance to live life on a higher plane, but with no less intensity: “Life grows by being given away, and it weakens in isolation and comfort. Indeed, those who enjoy life most are those who leave security on the shore and become excited by the mission of communicating life to others”. When the Church summons Christians to take up the task of evangelization, she is simply pointing to the source of authentic personal fulfillment.”

“Consequently, an evangelizer must never look like someone who has just come back from a funeral.” ...“And may the world of our time, which is searching, sometimes with anguish, sometimes with hope, be enabled to receive the good news not from evangelizers who are dejected, discouraged, impatient or anxious, but from ministers of the Gospel whose lives glow with fervor, who have first received the joy of Christ”.

I remember that one of the petitions we pray during the closing of Cursillo weekends speaks of asking for forgiveness for our lack of enthusiasm.

“God constantly renews his faithful ones, whatever their age: “They shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not be faint” (Is 40:31).

(Christ) ”He is forever young and a constant source of newness.”

“Though it is true that this mission demands great generosity on our part, ...for it is first and foremost the Lord’s work,” “God asks everything of us, yet at the same time he offers everything to us.”

The joy of evangelizing always arises from grateful remembrance for what God has done for us: it is a grace which we constantly need to implore.

The Synod reaffirmed that the new evangelization is a summons addressed to all and that it is carried out in three principal settings.

In first place, we can mention the area of *ordinary pastoral ministry*. In this category we can also include those members of faithful who preserve a deep and sincere faith, expressing it in different ways, but seldom taking part in worship.

A second area is that of “*the baptized whose lives do not reflect the demands of Baptism*”, who lack a meaningful relationship to the Church and no longer experience the consolation born of faith.

Lastly, we cannot forget that evangelization is first and foremost about preaching the Gospel to *those who do not know Jesus Christ or who have always rejected him*.

Instead of seeming to impose new obligations, they should appear as people who wish to share their joy, who point to a horizon of beauty and who invite others to a delicious banquet. It is not by proselytizing that the Church grows, but “by attraction”.

Indeed, “today missionary activity still represents the greatest challenge for the Church” and “the missionary task must remain foremost”. What would happen if we were to take these words seriously? We would realize that missionary outreach is *paradigmatic for all the Church’s activity*.” Paradigm - This means it must be an example for all of the church’s activity.

Here I have chosen to present some guidelines which can encourage and guide the whole Church in a new phase of evangelization, one marked by enthusiasm and vitality.

All of them help give shape to a definite style of evangelization which I ask you to adopt *in every activity which you undertake*.

Chapter One

To Jeremiah God says: “To all whom I send you, you shall go” (Jer 1:7).

“Each Christian and every community must discern the path that the Lord points out, but all of us are asked to obey his call to go forth from our own comfort zone in order to reach all the “peripheries” in need of the light of the Gospel.”

Going forth is our Action part of the Tripod.

Our “missionary joy” should be in seeking new persons and places . . . there is the mystery of the seed growing by god’s grace after sown.

I think we are to remember that we are the sowers of the seeds and we are to allow God to bring about the growth, at times we are to be more active at other times we are to pray and wait with a patient faith.

He talks of communion and mission, for us in Cursillo, Group Reunion and Ultreya is our communion and apostolic action is our mission. This means being involved and supportive bearing fruit and rejoicing.

Those who like to keep things very simple might say Half of Life is just showing up. Or those who use the phrase, you had to be there. We of course know that a Cursillo weekend is a lived experience and although there are many common parts, each one is unique because of the people involved and the time in their lives at which it happens.

“An evangelizing community knows that the Lord has taken the initiative, He has loved us first (cf. 1 Jn 4:19), and therefore we can move forward, boldly take the initiative, go out to others, seek those who have fallen away, stand at the crossroads and welcome the outcast.

Such a community has an endless desire to show mercy, the fruit of its own experience of the power of the Father’s infinite mercy.”

“An evangelizing community gets involved by word and deed in people’s daily lives; it bridges distances, it is willing to abase itself if necessary, and it embraces human life, touching the suffering flesh of Christ in others. Evangelizers thus take on the “smell of the sheep” and the sheep are willing to hear their voice.”

“Evangelization consists mostly of patience and disregard for constraints of time.”

“Finally an evangelizing community is filled with joy; it knows how to rejoice always. It celebrates every small victory, every step forward in the work of evangelization. Evangelization with joy becomes beauty in the liturgy, as part of our daily concern to spread goodness. The Church evangelizes and is herself evangelized through the beauty of the liturgy, which is both a celebration of the task of evangelization and the source of her renewed self-giving.”

Throughout the world, let us be “permanently in a state of mission”.

“I dream of a “missionary option”, that is, a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church’s customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channeled for the evangelization of today’s world rather than for her self-preservation.”

“The parish is the presence of the Church in a given territory, an environment for hearing God’s word, for growth in the Christian life, for dialogue, proclamation, charitable outreach, worship and celebration. In all its activities the parish encourages and trains its members to be evangelizers. It is a community of communities, a sanctuary where the thirsty come to drink in the midst of their journey, and a centre of constant missionary outreach. We must admit, though, that the call to review and renew our parishes has not yet sufficed to bring them nearer to people, to make them environments of living communion and participation, and to make them completely mission-oriented.”

The Parish is described as similar to structure of Cursillo for maintaining a spirit of evangelization. Piety which strengthens and inspires, study which trains and action which serves.

“Other Church institutions, basic communities and small communities, movements, and forms of association are a source of enrichment for the Church, raised up by the Spirit for evangelizing different areas and sectors. Frequently they bring a new evangelizing fervor and a new capacity for dialogue with the world whereby the Church is renewed. But it will prove beneficial for them not to lose contact with the rich reality of the local parish and to participate readily in the overall pastoral activity of the particular Church. This kind of integration will prevent them from concentrating only on part of the Gospel or the Church, or becoming nomads without roots.” This describes Cursillos’ relationship with the parish.

“Saint Thomas Aquinas taught that the Church’s moral teaching has its own “hierarchy”, in the virtues and in the acts which proceed from them. What counts above all else is “faith working through love” (Gal 5:6). Works of love directed to one’s neighbor are the most perfect external manifestation of the interior grace of the Spirit: “The foundation of the New Law is in the grace of the Holy Spirit, who is manifested in the faith which works through love”. Thomas thus explains that, as far as external works are concerned, mercy is the greatest of all the virtues: “In itself mercy is the greatest of the virtues, since all the others revolve around it and, more than this, it makes up for their deficiencies. This is particular to the superior virtue, and as such it is proper to God to have mercy, through which his omnipotence is manifested to the greatest degree”.

“It is important to draw out the pastoral consequences of the Council’s teaching, which reflects an ancient conviction of the Church. First, it needs to be said that in preaching the Gospel a fitting sense of proportion has to be maintained. This would be seen in the frequency with which certain themes are brought up and in the emphasis given to them in preaching. For example, if in the course of the liturgical year a parish priest speaks about temperance ten times but only mentions charity or justice two or three times, an imbalance results, and precisely those virtues which ought to be most present in preaching and catechesis are overlooked. The same thing happens when we speak more about law than about grace, more about the Church than about Christ, more about the Pope than about God’s word.”

We also need balance regarding what we speak of in sharing about Cursillo. How much do we complain about what could be better in Cursillo vs. sharing how my life has changed because of the Cursillo weekend and because of living the Cursillo method? Is it love of God that converts or motivates us or the fear of sin and hell?

Or if people remember a “theme” from the weekend but not the method of piety, study, action or the call to grouping with others who are trying to live the Cursillo method, we need to examine the balance of our method of evangelization.

Before all else, the Gospel invites us to respond to the God of love who saves us, to see God in others and to go forth from ourselves to seek the good of others.”

“At the same time, today’s vast and rapid cultural changes demand that we constantly seek ways of expressing unchanging truths in a language which brings out their abiding newness. “The deposit of the faith is one thing... the way it is expressed is another”.

“Of course, we will never be able to make the Church’s teachings easily understood or readily appreciated by everyone. Faith always remains something of a cross; it retains a certain obscurity which does not detract from the firmness of its assent. Some things are understood and appreciated only from the standpoint of this assent, which is a sister to love, beyond the range of clear reasons and arguments. We need to remember that all religious teaching ultimately has to be reflected in the teacher’s way of life, which awakens the assent of the heart by its nearness, love and witness.”

“I want to remind priests that the confessional must not be a torture chamber but rather an encounter with the Lord’s mercy which spurs us on to do our best. A small step, in the midst of great human limitations, can be more pleasing to God than a life which appears outwardly in order but moves through the day without confronting great difficulties. Everyone needs to be touched by the comfort and attraction of God’s saving love, which is mysteriously at work in each person, above and beyond their faults and failings.”

“A missionary heart is aware of these limits and makes itself “weak with the weak... everything for everyone” (1 Cor 9:22). It never closes itself off, never retreats into its own security, and never opts for rigidity and defensiveness. It realizes that it has to grow in its own understanding of the Gospel and in discerning the paths of the Spirit, and so it always does what good it can, even if in the process, its shoes get soiled by the mud of the street.”

A Mother with an Open Heart

“A Church which “goes forth” is a Church whose doors are open. Going out to others in order to reach the fringes of humanity does not mean rushing out aimlessly into the world. Often it is better simply to slow down, to put aside our eagerness in order to see and listen to others, to stop rushing from one thing to another and to remain with someone who has faltered along the way. At times we have to be like the father of the prodigal son, who always keeps his door open so that when the son returns, he can readily pass through it.”

“The Church is called to be the house of the Father, with doors always wide open. One concrete sign of such openness is that our church doors should always be open, so that if someone, moved by the Spirit, comes there looking for God, he or she will not find a closed door.”

“The Eucharist, although it is the fullness of sacramental life, is not a prize for the perfect but a powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak. These convictions have pastoral consequences that we are called to consider with prudence and boldness. Frequently, we act as arbiters of grace rather than its facilitators. But the Church is not a tollhouse; it is the house of the Father, where there is a place for everyone, with all their problems.”

If the whole Church takes up this missionary impulse, she has to go forth to everyone without exception. But to whom should she go first? When we read the Gospel we find a clear indication: not so much our friends and wealthy neighbors, but above all the poor and the sick, those who are usually despised and overlooked, “those who cannot repay you” (Lk 14:14).

” Let us go forth, then, let us go forth to offer everyone the life of Jesus Christ. Here I repeat for the entire Church what I have often said to the priests and laity of Buenos Aires: I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security. I do not want a Church concerned with being at the centre and which then ends by being caught up in a web of obsessions and procedures. If something should rightly disturb us and trouble our consciences, it is the fact that so many of our brothers and sisters are living without the strength, light and consolation born of friendship with Jesus Christ, without a community of faith to support them, without meaning and a goal in life. More than by fear of going astray, my hope is that we will be moved by the fear of remaining shut up within structures which give us a false sense of security, within rules which make us harsh judges, within habits which make us feel safe, while at our door people are starving and Jesus does not tire of saying to us: “Give them something to eat” (Mk 6:37).”

Chapter Two - Amid the Crisis of Communal Commitment

The Pope cautions us regarding ‘diagnostic overload’ where we might be overly analytical versus an ‘evangelical discernment’ guided by Holy Spirit. In other words we need to make sure we are ministering according to God’s plans and not our plans.

“The joy of living frequently fades, lack of respect for others and violence are on the rise, and inequality is increasingly evident. It is a struggle to live and, often, to live with precious little dignity. This epochal change has been set in motion by the enormous qualitative, quantitative, rapid and cumulative advances occurring in the sciences and in technology, and by their instant application in different areas of nature and of life. We are in an age of knowledge and information, which has led to new and often anonymous kinds of power.”

Beware of excluding and exploiting. “How can it be that it is not a news item when an elderly homeless person dies of exposure, but it is news when the stock market loses two points?”

“The culture of prosperity deadens us” “Almost without being aware of it, we end up being incapable of feeling compassion at the outcry of the poor, weeping for other people’s pain, and feeling a need to help them, as though all this were someone else’s responsibility and not our own.”

The human person must always be put first and not just human needs and consumption.

The autonomy of the marketplace can be defended over the needs of the common good and lead countries and person’s in debt with little real purchasing power.

Greed and other sins can lead to a rejection of ethics regarding the marketplace and other areas of life and thus lead to an unwillingness to share with the poor.

“Money must serve, not rule! The Pope loves everyone, rich and poor alike, but he is obliged in the name of Christ to remind all that the rich must help, respect and promote the poor. I exhort you to generous solidarity and to the return of economics and finance to an ethical approach which favors human beings.”

“The poor and the poorer peoples are accused of violence, yet without equal opportunities the different forms of aggression and conflict will find a fertile terrain for growth and eventually explode. When a society – whether local, national or global – is willing to leave a part of itself on the fringes, no political programs or resources spent on law enforcement or surveillance systems can indefinitely guarantee tranquility.”

“We are far from the so-called “end of history”, since the conditions for a sustainable and peaceful development have not yet been adequately articulated and realized.”

“Today’s economic mechanisms promote inordinate consumption.”

We evangelize when we confront challenges. I think these might include poverty, abortion, racism, and immigration to name a few.

“In the prevailing culture, priority is given to the outward, the immediate, the visible, the quick, the superficial and the provisional. What is real gives way to appearances. In many countries globalization has meant a hastened deterioration of their own cultural roots and the invasion of ways of thinking and acting proper to other cultures which are economically advanced but ethically debilitated.”

He cautions us to be wary of Negative aspects media:

“New patterns of behavior are emerging as a result of over-exposure to the mass media... As a result, the negative aspects of the media and entertainment industries are threatening traditional values, and in particular the sacredness of marriage and the stability of the family”.

“The Catholic faith of many peoples is nowadays being challenged by the proliferation of new religious movements, some of which tend to fundamentalism while others seem to propose a spirituality without God.” “In many places an administrative approach prevails over a pastoral approach, as does a concentration on administering the sacraments apart from other forms of evangelization.”

“The process of secularization tends to reduce the faith and the Church to the sphere of the private and personal. Furthermore, by completely rejecting the transcendent, it has produced a growing deterioration of ethics, a weakening of the sense of personal and collective sin, and a steady increase in relativism. These have led to a general sense of disorientation, especially in the periods of adolescence and young adulthood which are so vulnerable to change. As the bishops of the United States of America have rightly pointed out, while the Church insists on the existence of objective moral norms which are valid for everyone, “there are those in our culture who portray this teaching as unjust, that is, as opposed to basic human rights.”

“Despite the tide of secularism which has swept our societies, in many countries – even those where Christians are a minority – the Catholic Church is considered a credible institution by public opinion, and trusted for her solidarity and concern for those in greatest need. Again and again, the Church has acted as a mediator in finding solutions to problems affecting peace, social harmony, the land, the defense of life, human and civil rights, and so forth. And how much good has been done by Catholic schools and universities around the world! This is a good thing. Yet, we find it difficult to make people see that when we raise other questions less palatable to public opinion, we are doing so out of fidelity to precisely the same convictions about human dignity and the common good.”

In summary when compared to how issues are presented in the news, the church is liberal on social justice issues and conservative on moral issues.

“The family is experiencing a profound cultural crisis, as are all communities and social bonds. In the case of the family, the weakening of these bonds is particularly serious because the family is the fundamental cell of society, where we learn to live with others despite our differences and to belong to one another; it is also the place where parents pass on the faith to their children. Marriage now tends to be viewed, as a form of mere emotional satisfaction that can be constructed in any way or modified at will. But the indispensable contribution of marriage to society transcends the feelings and momentary needs of the couple. As the French bishops have taught, it is not born “of loving sentiment, ephemeral by definition, but from the depth of the obligation assumed by the spouses who accept to enter a total communion of life”.

“The individualism of our postmodern and globalized era favors a lifestyle which weakens the development and stability of personal relationships and distorts family bonds. Pastoral activity needs to bring out more clearly the fact that our relationship with the Father demands and encourages a communion which heals, promotes and reinforces interpersonal bonds.”

“It would show a lack of trust in his free and unstinting activity to think that authentic Christian values are absent where great numbers of people have received baptism and express their faith and solidarity with others in a variety of ways.”

“It is imperative to evangelize cultures in order to inculturate the Gospel. In countries of Catholic tradition, this means encouraging, fostering and reinforcing a richness which already exists. In countries of other religious traditions, or profoundly secularized countries, it will mean sparking new processes for evangelizing culture, even though these will demand long-term planning. We must keep in mind, however, that we are constantly being called to grow. Each culture and social group needs purification and growth. In the case of the popular cultures of Catholic peoples, we can see deficiencies which need to be healed by the Gospel: machismo, alcoholism, domestic violence, low Mass attendance, fatalistic or superstitious notions which lead to sorcery, and the like. Popular piety itself can be the starting point for healing and liberation from these deficiencies.”

“It is also true that at times greater emphasis is placed on the outward expressions and traditions of some groups, or on alleged private revelations which would replace all else, than on the impulse of Christian piety. There is a kind of Christianity made up of devotions reflecting an individual and sentimental faith life which does not in fact correspond to authentic “popular piety”. Some people promote these expressions while not being in the least concerned with the advancement of society or the formation of the laity, and in certain cases they do so in order to obtain economic benefits or some power over others. Nor can we overlook the fact that in recent decades there has been a breakdown in the way Catholics pass down the Christian faith to the young. It is undeniable that many people feel disillusioned and no longer identify with the Catholic tradition. Growing numbers of parents do not bring their children for baptism or teach them how to pray. There is also a certain exodus towards other faith communities. The causes of this breakdown include: a lack of opportunity for dialogue in families, the influence of the communications media, a relativistic subjectivism, unbridled consumerism which feeds the market, lack of pastoral care among the poor, the failure of our institutions to be welcoming, and our difficulty in restoring a mystical adherence to the faith in a pluralistic religious landscape.”

Similarities might be seen here in the Piety Talk.

“God’s presence accompanies the sincere efforts of individuals and groups to find encouragement and meaning in their lives. He dwells among them, fostering solidarity, fraternity, and the desire for goodness, truth and justice. This presence must not be contrived but found, uncovered. God does not hide himself from those who seek him with a sincere heart, even though they do so tentatively, in a vague and haphazard manner.”

“What is called for is an evangelization capable of shedding light on these new ways of relating to God, to others and to the world around us, and inspiring essential values. It must reach the places where new narratives and paradigms are being formed, bringing the word of Jesus to the inmost soul of our cities. Cities are multicultural; in the larger cities, a connective network is found in which groups of people share a common imagination and dreams about life, and new human interactions arise, new cultures, invisible cities. Various subcultures exist side by side, and often practice segregation and violence.”

The following section presents challenges of pastoral workers.

“The pain and the shame we feel at the sins of some members of the Church, and at our own, must never make us forget how many Christians are giving their lives in love. They help so many people to be healed or to die in peace in makeshift hospitals. They are present to those enslaved by different addictions in the poorest places on earth. They devote themselves to the education of

children and young people. They take care of the elderly who have been forgotten by everyone else. They look for ways to communicate values in hostile environments. They are dedicated in many other ways to showing an immense love for humanity inspired by the God who became man. I am grateful for the beautiful example given to me by so many Christians who joyfully sacrifice their lives and their time. This witness comforts and sustains me in my own effort to overcome selfishness and to give more fully of myself.” This is a great description of Apostolic Action.

“We need to create spaces where pastoral workers can be helped and healed, “places where faith itself in the crucified and risen Jesus is renewed, where the most profound questions and daily concerns are shared, where deeper discernment about our experiences and life itself is undertaken in the light of the Gospel, for the purpose of directing individual and social decisions towards the good and beautiful”. This describes to me what we do in Group Reunion and Ultreya.

“Today we are seeing in many pastoral workers, including consecrated men and women, an inordinate concern for their personal freedom and relaxation, which leads them to see their work as a mere appendage to their life, as if it were not part of their very identity. At the same time, the spiritual life comes to be identified with a few religious exercises which can offer a certain comfort but which do not encourage encounter with others, engagement with the world or a passion for evangelization. As a result, one can observe in many agents of evangelization, even though they pray, a heightened individualism, a crisis of identity and a cooling of fervor. These are three evils which fuel one another.” These may portray false piety, or conditional discipleship rather than taking up our cross and following the Jesus.

“At times our media culture and some intellectual circles convey a marked skepticism with regard to the Church’s message, along with a certain cynicism. As a consequence, many pastoral workers, although they pray, develop a sort of inferiority complex which leads them to relativize or conceal their Christian identity and convictions. This produces a vicious circle. They end up being unhappy with who they are and what they do; they do not identify with their mission of evangelization and this weakens their commitment. They end up stifling the joy of mission with a kind of obsession about being like everyone else and possessing what everyone else possesses. Their work of evangelization thus becomes forced, and they devote little energy and very limited time to it.”

“At a time when we most need a missionary dynamism which will bring salt and light to the world, many lay people fear that they may be asked to undertake some apostolic work and they seek to avoid any responsibility that may take away from their free time. For example, it has become very difficult today to find trained parish catechists willing to persevere in this work for some years. Something similar is also happening with priests who are obsessed with protecting their free time.”

“The problem is not always an excess of activity, but rather activity undertaken badly, without adequate motivation, without a spirituality which would permeate it and make it pleasurable. As a result, work becomes more tiring than necessary, even leading at times to illness. Far from a content and happy tiredness, this is a tense, burdensome, dissatisfying and, in the end, unbearable fatigue.”

“This pastoral acedia (laziness) can be caused by a number of things. Some fall into it because they throw themselves into unrealistic projects and are not satisfied simply to do what they reasonably can. Others, because they lack the patience to allow processes to mature and they want everything to fall from heaven. Others, because they are attached to a few projects or vain dreams of success. Others, because they have lost real contact with people and so depersonalize their work that they are more concerned with the road map than with the journey itself. Others fall into acedia because they are unable to wait; they want to dominate the rhythm of life. Today’s obsession with immediate results makes it hard for pastoral workers to tolerate anything that smacks of disagreement, possible failure, criticism, the cross.”

“A tomb psychology thus develops and slowly transforms Christians into mummies in a museum. Disillusioned with reality, with the Church and with themselves, they experience a constant temptation to cling to a faint melancholy, lacking in hope, which seizes the heart like “the most precious of the devil’s potions”. Called to radiate light and communicate life, in the end they are caught up in things that generate only darkness and inner weariness, and slowly consume all zeal for the apostolate. For all this, I repeat: Let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of the joy of evangelization!”

“With the eyes of faith, we can see the light which the Holy Spirit always radiates in the midst of darkness, never forgetting that “where sin increased, grace has abounded all the more” (Rom 5:20).”

“We feel that we must disagree with those prophets of doom who are always forecasting disaster, as though the end of the world were at hand. In our times, divine Providence is leading us to a new order of human relations which, by human effort and even beyond all expectations, are directed to the fulfilment of God’s superior and inscrutable designs, in which everything, even human setbacks, leads to the greater good of the Church”.

“Nobody can go off to battle unless he is fully convinced of victory beforehand. If we start without confidence, we have already lost half the battle and we bury our talents. While painfully aware of our own frailties, we have to march on without giving in, keeping in mind what the Lord said to Saint Paul: “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor 12:9). Christian triumph is always a cross, yet a cross which is at the same time a victorious banner borne with aggressive tenderness against the assaults of evil. The evil spirit of defeatism is brother to the temptation to separate, before its time, the wheat from the weeds; it is the fruit of an anxious and self-centered lack of trust.”

“The Christian world is becoming sterile, and it is depleting itself like an overexploited ground, which transforms into a desert”. In other countries, violent opposition to Christianity forces Christians to hide their faith in their own beloved homeland.”

“Yet it is starting from the experience of this desert, from this void, that we can again discover the joy of believing, its vital importance for us men and women. In the desert we rediscover the value of what is essential for living; thus in today’s world there are innumerable signs, often expressed implicitly or negatively, of the thirst for God, for the ultimate meaning of life. And in the desert people of faith are needed who, by the example of their own lives, point out the way to the Promised Land and keep hope alive”. In these situations we are called to be living sources of water from which others can drink. At times, this becomes a heavy cross, but it was from the

cross, from his pierced side, that our Lord gave himself to us as a source of living water. Let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of hope!”

Greater means of communication help us connect to others, and provide possibilities for this but email etc., no matter how good or convenient do not replace personal contact.

“The Christian ideal will always be a summons to overcome suspicion, habitual mistrust, fear of losing our privacy, all the defensive attitudes which today’s world imposes on us. Many try to escape from others and take refuge in the comfort of their privacy or in a small circle of close friends, renouncing the realism of the social aspect of the Gospel. For just as some people want a purely spiritual Christ, without flesh and without the cross, they also want their interpersonal relationships provided by sophisticated equipment, by screens and systems which can be turned on and off on command. Meanwhile, the Gospel tells us constantly to run the risk of a face-to-face encounter with others, with their physical presence which challenges us, with their pain and their pleas, with their joy which infects us in our close and continuous interaction. True faith in the incarnate Son of God is inseparable from self-giving, from membership in the community, from service, from reconciliation with others. The Son of God, by becoming flesh, summoned us to the revolution of tenderness.” This might be highlighting a difference between a Facebook friend and a personal contact friend.

“Isolation, which is a version of immanentism, can find expression in a false autonomy which has no place for God. But in the realm of religion it can also take the form of a spiritual consumerism tailored to one’s own unhealthy individualism.”

“Today, our challenge is not so much atheism as the need to respond adequately to many people’s thirst for God, lest they try to satisfy it with alienating solutions or with a disembodied Jesus who demands nothing of us with regard to others. Unless these people find in the Church a spirituality which can offer healing and liberation, and fill them with life and peace, while at the same time summoning them to fraternal communion and missionary fruitfulness, they will end up by being taken in by solutions which neither make life truly human nor give glory to God.”

“Christian faith in popular culture. For this reason they entail a personal relationship, not with vague spiritual energies or powers, but with God, with Christ, with Mary, with the saints. These devotions are fleshy, they have a face. They are capable of fostering relationships and not just enabling escapism. In other parts of our society, we see the growing attraction to various forms of a “spirituality of well-being” divorced from any community life, or to a “theology of prosperity” detached from responsibility for our brothers and sisters, or to depersonalized experiences which are nothing more than a form of self-centeredness.”

For Catholics, images of saints are like pictures of family which evoke emotions and memories of a relationship that is real.

“One important challenge is to show that the solution will never be found in fleeing from a personal and committed relationship with God which at the same time commits us to serving others. This happens frequently nowadays, as believers seek to hide or keep apart from others, or quietly flit from one place to another or from one task to another, without creating deep and stable bonds.”

“We need to help others to realize that the only way is to learn how to encounter others with the right attitude, which is to accept and esteem them as companions along the way, without interior resistance. Better yet, it means learning to find Jesus in the faces of others, in their voices, in their pleas. And learning to suffer in the embrace of the crucified Jesus whenever we are unjustly attacked or meet with ingratitude, never tiring of our decision to live in fraternity.”

“There indeed we find true healing, since the way to relate to others which truly heals instead of debilitating us, is a *mystical* fraternity, a contemplative fraternity. It is a fraternal love capable of seeing the sacred grandeur of our neighbor, of finding God in every human being, of tolerating the nuisances of life in common by clinging to the love of God, of opening the heart to divine love and seeking the happiness of others just as their heavenly Father does. Here and now, especially where we are a “little flock” (Lk 12:32), the Lord’s disciples are called to live as a community which is the salt of the earth and the light of the world (cf. Mt 5:13-16). We are called to bear witness to a constantly new way of living together in fidelity to the Gospel. Let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of community!”

Here Pope Francis is also saying the piety leads to community, for us grouping and Ultreya and Apostolic Action.

“Spiritual worldliness, which hides behind the appearance of piety and even love for the Church, consists in seeking not the Lord’s glory but human glory and personal well-being.”

A danger here can be staying in Cursillo till I am on team or a rector or on the secretariat, then when I achieve my personal goal, I move on to another one.

Spiritual worldliness can tempt us only to seek to be consoled and enlightened in such a way as not be concerned about others and even lead us to feel superior to them. A desire to lead others to Christ can be more filled with criticisms of their faults rather than opening the door of grace to God’s mercy. We can become blind to how our faith is only self-serving.

From a popular hymn The Summons we can hear the phrase, should my life attract or scare. Some can be overzealous in knowledge or spiritual competitiveness as to drive people away, even in RCIA they can be met with, “I can’t believe you don’t know that or believe this.” Instead of being accepted for where they are at.

Some evangelize by saying you can only be Catholic if you are exactly like me. Or you can only go to Cursillo if you will get out of it what I did. Or again become like me. Not all of the apostles were exactly the same. Not all of the saints are exactly the same and there are many ways to live out the Catholic faith or to be ourselves and still live faithfully the Cursillo method.

“The mark of Christ, incarnate, crucified and risen, is not present; closed and elite groups are formed, and no effort is made to go forth and seek out those who are distant or the immense multitudes who thirst for Christ. Evangelical fervor is replaced by the empty pleasure of complacency and self-indulgence.”

Beware of spiritual selfishness. All liturgy and prayer, but no charity. Be a super-catholic or not at all. Jesus spent a lot of time seeking out people who were not Jewish, not the ‘chosen’ to

teach us to do the same, to lead them from where they were to where God wanted them to be; yet respecting their freedom to follow Him or to choose their own way.

“This way of thinking also feeds the vainglory of those who are content to have a modicum of power and would rather be the general of a defeated army than a mere private in a unit which continues to fight. How often we dream up vast apostolic projects, meticulously planned, just like defeated generals! But this is to deny our history as a Church, which is glorious precisely because it is a history of sacrifice, of hopes and daily struggles, of lives spent in service and fidelity to work, tiring as it may be, for all work is “the sweat of our brow”. Instead, we waste time talking about “what needs to be done” – in Spanish we call this the sin of *habriaqueísmo* – like spiritual masters and pastoral experts who give instructions from on high. We indulge in endless fantasies and we lose contact with the real lives and difficulties of our people.”

Knowing more than others can lead to a spiritual elitism. The temptation of pride or to be ‘in control’. For Christ and the apostles this meant to be the first to carry the cross, not to get attention or pats on the back. (or to love positions of honor in synagogue or the title rabbi etc.)

“We need to avoid it by making the Church constantly go out from herself, keeping her mission focused on Jesus Christ, and her commitment to the poor. God save us from a worldly Church with superficial spiritual and pastoral trappings! This stifling worldliness can only be healed by breathing in the pure air of the Holy Spirit who frees us from self-centeredness cloaked in an outward religiosity bereft of God. Let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of the Gospel!”

No to warring among ourselves

“Some are even no longer content to live as part of the greater Church community but stoke a spirit of exclusivity, creating an “inner circle”.”

Even in our Cursillo communities this can happen; especially in the challenge to have authentic Cursillos faithful to the charism handed on by Eduardo Bonnín and those who helped him found the movement.

“I especially ask Christians in communities throughout the world to offer a radiant and attractive witness of fraternal communion. Let everyone admire how you care for one another, and how you encourage and accompany one another: “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (Jn 13:35). This was Jesus’ heartfelt prayer to the Father: “That they may all be one... in us... so that the world may believe” (Jn 17:21). Beware of the temptation of jealousy! We are all in the same boat and headed to the same port! Let us ask for the grace to rejoice in the gifts of each, which belong to all.” Especially should be true for Cursillistas living De Colores.

“Those wounded by historical divisions find it difficult to accept our invitation to forgiveness and reconciliation, since they think that we are ignoring their pain or are asking them to give up their memory and ideals. But if they see the witness of authentically fraternal and reconciled communities, they will find that witness luminous and attractive. It always pains me greatly to discover how some Christian communities, and even consecrated persons, can tolerate different forms of enmity, division, calumny, defamation, vendetta, jealousy and the desire to impose certain ideas at all costs, even to persecutions which appear as veritable witch hunts. Whom are we going to evangelize if this is the way we act?”

Forgiveness is essential to our witness, living with those with whom we have reconciled. I think we might hear some of this in the Christian community rollo or perhaps Obstacles to Grace rollo.

“Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (Rom 12:21). And again: “Let us not grow weary in doing what is right” (Gal 6:9). We all have our likes and dislikes, and perhaps at this very moment we are angry with someone. At least let us say to the Lord: “Lord, I am angry with this person, with that person. I pray to you for him and for her”. To pray for a person with whom I am irritated is a beautiful step forward in love, and an act of evangelization. Let us do it today! Let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of the ideal of fraternal love!”

“Lay people are, put simply, the vast majority of the people of God. The minority – ordained ministers – are at their service. There has been a growing awareness of the identity and mission of the laity in the Church. We can count on many lay persons, although still not nearly enough, who have a deeply-rooted sense of community and great fidelity to the tasks of charity, catechesis and the celebration of the faith.”

“Even if many are now involved in the lay ministries, this involvement is not reflected in a greater penetration of Christian values in the social, political and economic sectors. It often remains tied to tasks within the Church, without a real commitment to applying the Gospel to the transformation of society. The formation of the laity and the evangelization of professional and intellectual life represent a significant pastoral challenge.” Here is where and why Cursillo is called to transform people so they can transform their environments. As is Laity Rollo.

“The Church acknowledges the indispensable contribution which women make to society through the sensitivity, intuition and other distinctive skill sets which they, more than men, tend to possess. I think, for example, of the special concern which women show to others, which finds a particular, even if not exclusive, expression in motherhood.... Because “the feminine genius is needed in all expressions in the life of society, the presence of women must also be guaranteed in the workplace” and in the various other settings where important decisions are made, both in the Church and in social structures.”

“Even when the function of ministerial priesthood is considered “hierarchical”, it must be remembered that “it is totally ordered to the holiness of Christ’s members”.

“Many places are experiencing a dearth of vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life. This is often due to a lack of contagious apostolic fervor in communities which results in a cooling of enthusiasm and attractiveness. Wherever there is life, fervor and a desire to bring Christ to others, genuine vocations will arise. Even in parishes where priests are not particularly committed or joyful, the fraternal life and fervor of the community can awaken in the young a desire to consecrate themselves completely to God and to the preaching of the Gospel.”

“It is my hope that, in doing so, they will realize that whenever we attempt to read the signs of the times it is helpful to listen to young people and the elderly. Both represent a source of hope for every people. The elderly bring with them memory and the wisdom of experience, which warns us not to foolishly repeat our past mistakes. Young people call us to renewed and expansive hope, for they represent new directions for humanity and open us up to the future, lest

we cling to a nostalgia for structures and customs which are no longer life-giving in today's world.”

“Challenges exist to be overcome! Let us be realists, but without losing our joy, our boldness and our hope-filled commitment. Let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of missionary vigor!”

Chapter Three - The Proclamation of the Gospel

“There can be no true evangelization without the explicit proclamation of Jesus as Lord”, and without “the primacy of the proclamation of Jesus Christ in all evangelizing work”.

Acknowledging the concerns of the Asian bishops, John Paul II told them that if the Church “is to fulfill its providential destiny, evangelization as the joyful, patient and progressive preaching of the saving death and resurrection of Jesus Christ must be your absolute priority.” These words hold true for all of us.” In Cursillo this means: bring the friend to Christ.

Evangelization is the task of the Church. The Church, as the agent of evangelization, ...she is first and foremost a people advancing on its pilgrim way towards God.”

Salvation is a work of God's mercy, or in other words a work of God's grace.

“Benedict XVI put it nicely at the beginning of the Synod's reflections: “It is important always to know that the first word, the true initiative, the true activity comes from God and only by inserting ourselves into the divine initiative, only begging for this divine initiative, shall we too be able to become – with him and in him – evangelizers”. This principle of the primacy of grace must be a beacon which constantly illuminates our reflections on evangelization.”

“The salvation which God has wrought, and the Church joyfully proclaims, is for everyone. He has chosen to call them together as a people and not as isolated individuals.” Jesus did not tell the apostles to form an exclusive and elite group. He said: “Go and make disciples of all nations” (Mt 28:19).” “To those who feel far from God and the Church, to all those who are fearful or indifferent, I would like to say this: the Lord, with great respect and love, is also calling you to be a part of his people!”

I think God wants us to be messengers to the far away, this was one of the inspirations of Eduardo Bonnín, he felt compassion for those who did not know God or Christ.

“Being Church means being God's people, in accordance with the great plan of his fatherly love. This means that we are to be God's leaven in the midst of humanity. It means proclaiming and bringing God's salvation into our world, which often goes astray and needs to be encouraged, given hope and strengthened on the way. The Church must be a place of mercy freely given, where everyone can feel welcomed, loved, forgiven and encouraged to live the good life of the Gospel.”

A People of Many Faces

“The People of God is incarnate in the peoples of the earth, each of which has its own culture. The concept of culture is valuable for grasping the various expressions of the Christian life present in God's people. It has to do with the lifestyle of a given society, the specific way in which its members relate to one another, to other creatures and to God. Understood in this way, culture embraces the totality of a people's life. Each people in the course of its history develop

its culture with legitimate autonomy. This is due to the fact that the human person, “by nature stands completely in need of life in society” and always exists in reference to society, finding there a concrete way of relating to reality. The human person is always situated in a culture: “nature and culture are intimately linked”. Grace supposes culture, and God’s gift becomes flesh in the culture of those who receive it.”

“In these first two Christian millennia, countless peoples have received the grace of faith, brought it to flower in their daily lives and handed it on in the language of their own culture. Whenever a community receives the message of salvation, the Holy Spirit enriches its culture with the transforming power of the Gospel. The history of the Church shows that Christianity does not have simply one cultural expression, but rather, “remaining completely true to itself, with unswerving fidelity to the proclamation of the Gospel and the tradition of the Church, it will also reflect the different faces of the cultures and peoples in which it is received and takes root”. In the diversity of peoples who experience the gift of God, each in accordance with its own culture, the Church expresses her genuine catholicity and shows forth the “beauty of her varied face”. In the Christian customs of an evangelized people, the Holy Spirit adorns the Church, showing her new aspects of revelation and giving her a new face. Through inculturation, the Church “introduces peoples, together with their cultures, into her own community”, for “every culture offers positive values and forms which can enrich the way the Gospel is preached, understood and lived”. In this way, the Church takes up the values of different cultures and becomes *sponsa ornata monilibus suis*, “the bride bedecked with her jewels” (cf. Is 61:10)”.

“When properly understood, cultural diversity is not a threat to Church unity. The Holy Spirit, sent by the Father and the Son, transforms our hearts and enables us to enter into the perfect communion of the blessed Trinity, where all things find their unity. He builds up the communion and harmony of the people of God. The same Spirit is that harmony, just as he is the bond of love between the Father and the Son. It is he who brings forth a rich variety of gifts, while at the same time creating a unity which is never uniformity but a multifaceted and inviting harmony. Evangelization joyfully acknowledges these varied treasures which the Holy Spirit pours out upon the Church. We would not do justice to the logic of the incarnation if we thought of Christianity as monocultural and monotonous. While it is true that some cultures have been closely associated with the preaching of the Gospel and the development of Christian thought, the revealed message is not identified with any of them; its content is transcultural. Hence in the evangelization of new cultures, or cultures which have not received the Christian message, it is not essential to impose a specific cultural form, no matter how beautiful or ancient it may be, together with the Gospel. The message that we proclaim always has a certain cultural dress, but we in the Church can sometimes fall into a needless hallowing of our own culture, and thus show more fanaticism than true evangelizing zeal.”

At Pentecost the Apostles were sent to many peoples and cultures, they lived out what Paul said when referring to Many Parts and One Body in Christ. We are to especially be wary of criticizing the cultures of others who we may not fully understand.

“The Bishops of Oceania asked that the Church “develop an understanding and a presentation of the truth of Christ working from the traditions and cultures of the region” and invited “all missionaries to work in harmony with indigenous Christians so as to ensure that the faith and the life of the Church be expressed in legitimate forms appropriate for each culture”. We cannot demand that peoples of every continent, in expressing their Christian faith, imitate modes of

expression which European nations developed at a particular moment of their history, because the faith cannot be constricted to the limits of understanding and expression of any one culture. It is an indisputable fact that no single culture can exhaust the mystery of our redemption in Christ.”

We can remember our recent Catholic history of changing the celebration of the Eucharist from Latin to vernacular and local languages which help to express the culture during this greatest mystery in which we can receive the Blessed Sacrament.

We read here that the people are impelled by the Holy Spirit to evangelize. The people by God’s anointing with the Holy Spirit do not err in faith, even though they may not have the words to explain their faith. This is very important in the South where I am from and we are 2 – 3% catholic in many places where often aggressive Christians in other communities seek to convert Catholics who are not confident in explaining their faith.

The Spirit leads to salvation. I think this is always the purpose of God’s gifts of grace for us. “The presence of the Spirit gives Christians certain connaturality with divine realities, and a wisdom which enables them to grasp those realities intuitively, even when they lack the wherewithal to give them precise expression.”

“In virtue of their baptism, all the members of the People of God have become missionary disciples (cf. Mt 28:19). All the baptized, whatever their position in the Church or their level of instruction in the faith, are agents of evangelization, and it would be insufficient to envisage a plan of evangelization to be carried out by professionals while the rest of the faithful would simply be passive recipients. The new evangelization calls for personal involvement on the part of each of the baptized. Every Christian is challenged, here and now, to be actively engaged in evangelization; indeed, anyone who has truly experienced God’s saving love does not need much time or lengthy training to go out and proclaim that love. Every Christian is a missionary to the extent that he or she has encountered the love of God in Christ Jesus: we no longer say that we are “disciples” and “missionaries”, but rather that we are always “missionary disciples”. If we are not convinced, let us look at those first disciples, who, immediately after encountering the gaze of Jesus, went forth to proclaim him joyfully: “We have found the Messiah!” (Jn 1:41). The Samaritan woman became a missionary immediately after speaking with Jesus and many Samaritans come to believe in him “because of the woman’s testimony” (Jn 4:39). So too, Saint Paul, after his encounter with Jesus Christ, “immediately proclaimed Jesus” (Acts 9:20; cf. 22:6-21). So what are we waiting for?”

We hear some of these ideas in the Actual Grace Rollo. Each person evangelizes on their own level, even in Pre-School a child can say, “I love Jesus” and this can influence the other children.

“Of course, all of us are called to mature in our work as evangelizers. We want to have better training, a deepening love and a clearer witness to the Gospel. In this sense, we ought to let others be constantly evangelizing us. But this does not mean that we should postpone the evangelizing mission; rather, each of us should find ways to communicate Jesus wherever we are. All of us are called to offer others an explicit witness to the saving love of the Lord, who despite our imperfections offers us his closeness, his word and his strength, and gives meaning to our lives. In your heart you know that it is not the same to live without him; what you have come to realize, what has helped you to live and given you hope, is what you also need to

communicate to others. Our falling short of perfection should be no excuse; on the contrary, mission is a constant stimulus not to remain mired in mediocrity but to continue growing. The witness of faith that each Christian is called to offer leads us to say with Saint Paul: “Not that I have already obtained this, or am already perfect; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own” (Phil 3:12-13).” This might describe the School of Leaders because it is about preparing the evangelizers.

The Evangelizing Power of Popular Piety

Popular piety can transmit traditional ways of praying or develop new ones as the Holy Spirit aids the Church in her various needs.

Popular piety can have an intimate connection to a particular culture and can inspire in people generosity and sacrifice even to a heroic level. “It makes people capable of generosity and sacrifice even to the point of heroism.”

Just because a person cannot explain or articulate as a theologian may be able to do so, does not make their faith or piety any less sincere or true. (Or their Palanca less powerful)

In some ways their piety may facilitate them knowing the truths of scripture or of the faith without necessarily being able to quote scripture or the catechism. They need not even have the ability to read. Faith and the truth which comes from the Spirit dwell in the mind and the soul.

The next section is Person to person, in Cursillo we call this personal contact, and can be with someone we know or a stranger.

“Being a disciple means being constantly ready to bring the love of Jesus to others, and this can happen unexpectedly and in any place: on the street, in a city square, during work, on a journey.”

The first step is personal dialogue, a conversation. Truly listen first, before planning a response.

“At times the message can be presented directly, at times by way of a personal witness or gesture, or in a way which the Holy Spirit may suggest in that particular situation. If it seems prudent and if the circumstances are right, this fraternal and missionary encounter could end with a brief prayer related to the concerns which the person may have expressed.”

“We should not think, however, that the Gospel message must always be communicated by fixed formulations learned by heart or by specific words which express an absolutely invariable content.”

Charisms are given to be shared with the whole Church.

“A sure sign of the authenticity of a charism is its ecclesial character, its ability to be integrated harmoniously into the life of God’s holy and faithful people for the good of all. Something truly new brought about by the Spirit need not overshadow other gifts and spiritualities in making itself felt. To the extent that a charism is better directed to the heart of the Gospel, its exercise will be more ecclesial.”

“Differences between persons and communities can sometimes prove uncomfortable, but the Holy Spirit, who is the source of that diversity, can bring forth something good from all things

and turn it into an attractive means of evangelization. Diversity must always be reconciled by the help of the Holy Spirit; he alone can raise up diversity, plurality and multiplicity while at the same time bringing about unity. When we, for our part, aspire to diversity, we become self-enclosed, exclusive and divisive; similarly, whenever we attempt to create unity on the basis of our human calculations, we end up imposing a monolithic uniformity. This is not helpful for the Church's mission." Desiring that the other person become like me is not always the solution to diversity.

The gospel can be proclaimed to all parts of culture: sciences, various academic disciplines, and throughout universities.

The Homily

"The homily can actually be an intense and happy experience of the Spirit, a consoling encounter with God's word, a constant source of renewal and growth."

"Saint Paul speaks forcefully about the need to preach, since the Lord desires to reach other people by means of our word (cf. Rom 10:14-17)."

"This context demands that preaching should guide the assembly, and the preacher, to a life-changing communion with Christ in the Eucharist. This means that the words of the preacher must be measured, so that the Lord, more than his minister, will be the centre of attention."

The Church is like a mother who brings out the best in her kids and inspires them. Jesus saw beyond people's weaknesses and failures. What do we first notice or look for in others? Dialogue is heart to heart, and communicates truth, beauty and goodness. We all need to be evangelized. Love draws us even to the sick and unattractive.

Social Dimension of Evangelization

God redeems social relations existing between persons.

The Church has messages for world. "Who would claim to lock up in a church and silence the message of Saint Francis of Assisi or Blessed Teresa of Calcutta? The Church "cannot and must not remain on the sidelines in the fight for justice". All Christians, their pastors included, are called to show concern for the building of a better world. This is essential, for the Church's social thought is primarily positive: it offers proposals, it works for change and in this sense it constantly points to the hope born of the loving heart of Jesus Christ."

Evangelization needs to affect every part of human life. "Its mandate of charity encompasses all dimensions of existence, all individuals, all areas of community life, and all peoples. Nothing human can be alien to it". True Christian hope, which seeks the eschatological kingdom, always generates history."

"Sometimes it is a matter of hearing the cry of entire peoples, the poorest peoples of the earth, since "peace is founded not only on respect for human rights, but also on respect for the rights of peoples". Sadly, even human rights can be used as a justification for an inordinate defense of individual rights or the rights of the richer peoples. With due respect for the autonomy and culture of every nation, we must never forget that the planet belongs to all mankind and is meant for all mankind; the mere fact that some people are born in places with fewer resources or less

development does not justify the fact that they are living with less dignity. It must be reiterated that “the more fortunate should renounce some of their rights so as to place their goods more generously at the service of others”. To speak properly of our own rights, we need to broaden our perspective and to hear the plea of other peoples and other regions than those of our own country. We need to grow in a solidarity which “would allow all peoples to become the artisans of their destiny”, since “every person is called to self-fulfillment”.

“We incarnate the duty of hearing the cry of the poor when we are deeply moved by the suffering of others.” ...”The wisdom literature sees almsgiving as a concrete exercise of mercy towards those in need: “Almsgiving delivers from death, and it will purge away every sin” (Tob 12:9). The idea is expressed even more graphically by Sirach: “Water extinguishes blazing fire: so almsgiving atones for sin” (Sir 3:30). The same synthesis appears in the New Testament: “Maintain constant love for one another, for love covers a multitude of sins” (1 Pet 4:8). These are like the remedies in the Obstacles to Grace Rollo.

“Sometimes we prove hard of heart and mind; we are forgetful, distracted and carried away by the limitless possibilities for consumption and distraction offered by contemporary society. This leads to a kind of alienation at every level, for “a society becomes alienated when its forms of social organization, production and consumption make it more difficult to offer the gift of self and to establish solidarity between people”.

“God’s heart has a special place for the poor, so much so that he himself “became poor” (2 Cor 8:9). The entire history of our redemption is marked by the presence of the poor. Salvation came to us from the “yes” uttered by a lowly maiden from a small town on the fringes of a great empire. The Savior was born in a manger, in the midst of animals, like children of poor families; he was presented at the Temple along with two turtledoves, the offering made by those who could not afford a lamb (cf. Lk 2:24; Lev 5:7); he was raised in a home of ordinary workers and worked with his own hands to earn his bread. When he began to preach the Kingdom, crowds of the dispossessed followed him, illustrating his words: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor” (Lk 4:18). He assured those burdened by sorrow and crushed by poverty that God has a special place for them in his heart: “Blessed are you poor, yours is the kingdom of God” (Lk 6:20); he made himself one of them: “I was hungry and you gave me food to eat”, and he taught them that mercy towards all of these is the key to heaven (cf. Mt 25:5ff.)”

“For the Church, the option for the poor is primarily a theological category rather than a cultural, sociological, political or philosophical one. God shows the poor “his first mercy”. This divine preference has consequences for the faith life of all Christians, since we are called to have “this mind... which was in Jesus Christ” (Phil 2:5). (In Cursillo – *Metanoia*) Inspired by this, the Church has made an option for the poor which is understood as a “special form of primacy in the exercise of Christian charity, to which the whole tradition of the Church bears witness”. This option – as Benedict XVI has taught – “is implicit in our Christian faith in a God who became poor for us, so as to enrich us with his poverty”. This is why I want a Church which is poor and for the poor. They have much to teach us. Not only do they share in the *sensus fidei*, but in their difficulties they know the suffering Christ. We need to let ourselves be evangelized by them. The new evangelization is an invitation to acknowledge the saving power at work in their lives and to put them at the centre of the Church’s pilgrim way. We are called to find Christ in them, to lend

our voice to their causes, but also to be their friends, to listen to them, to speak for them and to embrace the mysterious wisdom which God wishes to share with us through them.”

“Our commitment does not consist exclusively in activities or programs of promotion and assistance; ... This loving attentiveness is the beginning of a true concern for their person which inspires me effectively to seek their good. This entails appreciating the poor in their goodness, in their experience of life, in their culture, and in their ways of living the faith. True love is always contemplative, and permits us to serve the other not out of necessity or vanity, but rather because he or she is beautiful above and beyond mere appearances: ... Without the preferential option for the poor, “the proclamation of the Gospel, which is itself the prime form of charity, risks being misunderstood or submerged by the ocean of words which daily engulfs us in today’s society of mass communications”.

“Since this Exhortation is addressed to members of the Catholic Church, I want to say, with regret, that the worst discrimination which the poor suffer is the lack of spiritual care.”

“No one must say that they cannot be close to the poor because their own lifestyle demands more attention to other areas. This is an excuse commonly heard in academic, business or professional, and even ecclesial circles. While it is quite true that the essential vocation and mission of the lay faithful is to strive that earthly realities and all human activity may be transformed by the Gospel, none of us can think we are exempt from concern for the poor and for social justice: “Spiritual conversion, the intensity of the love of God and neighbor, zeal for justice and peace, the Gospel meaning of the poor and of poverty, are required of everyone”. I fear that these words too may give rise to commentary or discussion with no real practical effect. That being said, I trust in the openness and readiness of all Christians, and I ask you to seek, as a community, creative ways of accepting this renewed call.”

“Welfare projects, which meet certain urgent needs, should be considered merely temporary responses. “ The structural causes of poverty must be addressed.

“Business is a vocation, and a noble vocation, provided that those engaged in it see themselves challenged by a greater meaning in life; this will enable them truly to serve the common good by striving to increase the goods of this world and to make them more accessible to all.” The dignity of the human person should drive economic policies more than search for profits.

“The economy can no longer turn to remedies that are a new poison, such as attempting to increase profits by reducing the work force and thereby adding to the ranks of the excluded.”

“Politics, though often denigrated, remains a lofty vocation and one of the highest forms of charity, inasmuch as it seeks the common good. We need to be convinced that charity “is the principle not only of micro-relationships (with friends, with family members or within small groups) but also of macro-relationships (social, economic and political ones)”. I beg the Lord to grant us more politicians who are genuinely disturbed by the state of society, the people, the lives of the poor! It is vital that government leaders and financial leaders take heed and broaden their horizons, working to ensure that all citizens have dignified work, education and healthcare. Why not turn to God and ask him to inspire their plans? I am firmly convinced that openness to the transcendent can bring about a new political and economic mindset which would help to break down the wall of separation between the economy and the common good of society.”

“Any Church community, if it thinks it can comfortably go its own way without creative concern and effective cooperation in helping the poor to live with dignity and reaching out to everyone, will also risk breaking down, however much it may talk about social issues or criticize governments. It will easily drift into a spiritual worldliness camouflaged by religious practices, unproductive meetings and empty talk.”

Concern for the Vulnerable

‘It is essential to draw near to new forms of poverty and vulnerability, in which we are called to recognize the suffering Christ, even if this appears to bring us no tangible and immediate benefits. I think of the homeless, the addicted, refugees, indigenous peoples, the elderly who are increasingly isolated and abandoned, and many others. Migrants present a particular challenge for me, since I am the pastor of a Church without frontiers, a Church which considers herself mother to all. For this reason, I exhort all countries to a generous openness which, rather than fearing the loss of local identity, will prove capable of creating new forms of cultural synthesis. How beautiful are those cities which overcome paralyzing mistrust, integrate those who are different and make this very integration a new factor of development!’”

“I have always been distressed at the lot of those who are victims of various kinds of human trafficking. How I wish that all of us would hear God’s cry: “Where is your brother?” (Gen 4:9). Where is your brother or sister who is enslaved? Where is the brother and sister whom you are killing each day in clandestine warehouses, in rings of prostitution, in children used for begging, in exploiting undocumented labor? Let us not look the other way. There is greater complicity than we think. The issue involves everyone! This infamous network of crime is now well established in our cities, and many people have blood on their hands as a result of their comfortable and silent complicity.”

“Doubly poor are those women who endure situations of exclusion, mistreatment and violence, since they are frequently less able to defend their rights. Even so, we constantly witness among them impressive examples of daily heroism in defending and protecting their vulnerable families.”

“Among the vulnerable for whom the Church wishes to care with particular love and concern are unborn children, the most defenseless and innocent among us. Nowadays efforts are made to deny them their human dignity and to do with them whatever one pleases, taking their lives and passing laws preventing anyone from standing in the way of this.”

“Precisely because this involves the internal consistency of our message about the value of the human person, the Church cannot be expected to change her position on this question. I want to be completely honest in this regard. This is not something subject to alleged reforms or “modernizations”. It is not “progressive” to try to resolve problems by eliminating a human life. On the other hand, it is also true that we have done little to adequately accompany women in very difficult situations, where abortion appears as a quick solution to their profound anguish, especially when the life developing within them is the result of rape or a situation of extreme poverty. Who can remain unmoved before such painful situations?”

The Common Good and Peace in Society

“Peace in society cannot be understood as pacification or the mere absence of violence resulting from the domination of one part of society over others. Nor does true peace act as a pretext for justifying a social structure which silences or appeases the poor, so that the more affluent can placidly support their lifestyle while others have to make do as they can.”

“Let us not forget that “responsible citizenship is a virtue, and participation in political life is a moral obligation”. Yet becoming a people demands something more. It is an ongoing process in which every new generation must take part: a slow and arduous effort calling for a desire for integration and a willingness to achieve this through the growth of a peaceful and multifaceted culture of encounter.”

4 Principles Building a Good and Just Society

The Church’s social doctrine helps us evaluate present social realities to see if they are producing peace, justice and fraternity.

1. Time is greater than space

“Broadly speaking, “time” has to do with fullness as an expression of the horizon which constantly opens before us, while each individual moment has to do with limitation as an expression of enclosure. People live poised between each individual moment and the greater, brighter horizon of the utopian future as the final cause which draws us to itself.”

“This principle enables us to work slowly but surely, without being obsessed with immediate results. It helps us patiently to endure difficult and adverse situations, or inevitable changes in our plans.”

Are people concerned with only a quick fix which does not produce lasting results? History will ultimately be the judge.

2. Unity prevails over conflict

“In the midst of conflict, we lose our sense of the profound unity of reality.”

“When conflict arises, some people simply look at it and go their way as if nothing happened; they wash their hands of it and get on with their lives. Others embrace it in such a way that they become its prisoners; they lose their bearings, project onto institutions their own confusion and dissatisfaction and thus make unity impossible. But there is also a third way, and it is the best way to deal with conflict. It is the willingness to face conflict head on, to resolve it and to make it a link in the chain of a new process. “Blessed are the peacemakers!” (Mt 5:9).

“In this way it becomes possible to build communion amid disagreement, but this can only be achieved by those great persons who are willing to go beyond the surface of the conflict and to see others in their deepest dignity.”

“The message of peace is not about a negotiated settlement but rather the conviction that the unity brought by the Spirit can harmonize every diversity. It overcomes every conflict by creating a new and promising synthesis. Diversity is a beautiful thing when it can constantly enter into a process of reconciliation and seal a sort of cultural covenant resulting in a “reconciled diversity”. As the bishops of the Congo have put it: “Our ethnic diversity is our

wealth... It is only in unity, through conversion of hearts and reconciliation, that we will be able to help our country to develop on all levels”.

3. Realities are more important than ideas

“There also exists a constant tension between ideas and realities. Realities simply are, whereas ideas are worked out. There has to be continuous dialogue between the two, lest ideas become detached from realities. It is dangerous to dwell in the realm of words alone, of images and rhetoric. So a third principle comes into play: realities are greater than ideas. This calls for rejecting the various means of masking reality: angelic forms of purity, dictatorships of relativism, empty rhetoric, objectives more ideal than real, brands of ahistorical fundamentalism, ethical systems bereft of kindness, intellectual discourse bereft of wisdom.”

“What calls us to action are realities illuminated by reason.”

“Realities are greater than ideas. This principle impels us to put the word into practice, to perform works of justice and charity which make that word fruitful. Not to put the word into practice, not to make it reality, is to build on sand, to remain in the realm of pure ideas and to end up in a lifeless and unfruitful self-centeredness and gnosticism.”

4. The whole is greater than the part

We need to consider the local and the global so that we do not fall into either of 2 extremes. One tends to dreaming of a perfect universe and the other to trying the same things that have failed in the past.

“We can work on a small scale, in our own neighborhood, but with a larger perspective. Nor do people who wholeheartedly enter into the life of a community need to lose their individualism or hide their identity; instead, they receive new impulses to personal growth. The global need not stifle, nor the particular prove barren.”

“There is a place for the poor and their culture, their aspirations and their potential. Even people who can be considered dubious on account of their errors have something to offer which must not be overlooked. It is the convergence of peoples who, within the universal order, maintain their own individuality; it is the sum total of persons within a society which pursues the common good, which truly has a place for everyone.”

“Its fullness and richness embrace scholars and workers, businessmen and artists, in a word, everyone. The genius of each people receives in its own way the entire Gospel and embodies it in expressions of prayer, fraternity, justice, struggle and celebration.”...” The Gospel has an intrinsic principle of totality: it will always remain good news until it has been proclaimed to all people, until it has healed and strengthened every aspect of humanity, until it has brought all men and women together at table in God’s kingdom. The whole is greater than the part.”

Social Dialogue as a Contribution to Peace

“Evangelization also involves the path of dialogue. For the Church today, three areas of dialogue stand out where she needs to be present in order to promote full human development and to pursue the common good: dialogue with states, dialogue with society – including dialogue with cultures and the sciences – and dialogue with other believers who are not part of the Catholic Church.”

“The new evangelization calls on every baptized person to be a peacemaker and a credible witness to a reconciled life. In a culture which privileges dialogue as a form of encounter, it is time to devise a means for building consensus and agreement while seeking the goal of a just, responsive and inclusive society. The principal author, the historic subject of this process, is the people as a whole and their culture, and not a single class, minority, group or elite. We do not need plans drawn up by a few for the few, or an enlightened or outspoken minority which claims to speak for everyone. It is about agreeing to live together, a social and cultural pact.”

“In her dialogue with the State and with society, the Church does not have solutions for every particular issue. Together with the various sectors of society, she supports those programs which best respond to the dignity of each person and the common good. In doing this, she proposes in a clear way the fundamental values of human life and convictions which can then find expression in political activity.”

“Whereas positivism and scientism “refuse to admit the validity of forms of knowledge other than those of the positive sciences”, the Church proposes another path, which calls for a synthesis between the responsible use of methods proper to the empirical sciences and other areas of knowledge such as philosophy, theology, as well as faith itself, which elevates us to the mystery transcending nature and human intelligence.”

Ecumenical dialogue

“Commitment to ecumenism responds to the prayer of the Lord Jesus that “they may all be one” (Jn 17:21).” ... “We must never forget that we are pilgrims journeying alongside one another. This means that we must have sincere trust in our fellow pilgrims, putting aside all suspicion or mistrust, and turn our gaze to what we are all seeking: the radiant peace of God’s face. Trusting others is an art and peace is an art.”

“If we really believe in the abundantly free working of the Holy Spirit, we can learn so much from one another! It is not just about being better informed about others, but rather about reaping what the Spirit has sown in them, which is also meant to be a gift for us.”

Interreligious dialogue

We begin with what we have in common, especially in the areas where we seek to make life better for humanity and a search for the truth.

Our relationship with the followers of Islam has taken on great importance, since they are now significantly present in many traditionally Christian countries, where they can freely worship and become fully a part of society. We must never forget that they “profess to hold the faith of Abraham, and together with us they adore the one, merciful God, who will judge humanity on the last day”. The sacred writings of Islam have retained some Christian teachings; Jesus and Mary receive profound veneration and it is admirable to see how Muslims both young and old, men and women, make time for daily prayer and faithfully take part in religious services. Many of them also have a deep conviction that their life, in its entirety, is from God and for God. They also acknowledge the need to respond to God with an ethical commitment and with mercy towards those most in need.” This is different than what can be portrayed in our media or common conversations among people where hatred is sown rather than respect.

Social dialogue in a context of religious freedom

Religious freedom is a fundamental human right and neither a majority nor minority should impose this on others, even those without a religion.

Chapter Five - Spirit-Filled Evangelizers

Fearless evangelizers follow the Holy Spirit even despite opposition. “Let us call upon him today, firmly rooted in prayer, for without prayer all our activity risks being fruitless and our message empty. Jesus wants evangelizers who proclaim the good news not only with words, but above all by a life transfigured by God’s presence.” This shows the need for piety to precede action.

“Whenever we say that something is “spirited”, it usually refers to some interior impulse which encourages, motivates, nourishes and gives meaning to our individual and communal activity.” Spirit-filled evangelization is not just emotional or enthusiastic, but especially faithful to the Holy Spirit.

We can’t just say we have the Holy Spirit; it must be evident in our actions and in our words. It must be in harmony with Church teaching and with utmost respect for those we encounter. And the pope before deciding or trying to explain something to us reminds that praying to the Holy Spirit is essential. We pray often, hopefully daily to the Holy Spirit to help us be evangelizers.

I. Reasons for a Renewed Missionary Impulse

“Spirit-filled evangelizers are evangelizers who pray and work. Mystical notions without a solid social and missionary outreach are of no help to evangelization, nor are dissertations or social or pastoral practices which lack a spirituality which can change hearts.”

What is needed is the ability to cultivate an interior space which can give a Christian meaning to commitment and activity. Without prolonged moments of adoration, of prayerful encounter with the word, of sincere conversation with the Lord, our work easily becomes meaningless; we lose energy as a result of weariness and difficulties, and our fervor dies out. The Church urgently needs the deep breath of prayer, and to my great joy groups devoted to prayer and intercession, the prayerful reading of God’s word and the perpetual adoration of the Eucharist are growing at every level of ecclesial life. Even so, “we must reject the temptation to offer a privatized and individualistic spirituality which ill accords with the demands of charity, to say nothing of the implications of the incarnation”. There is always the risk that some moments of prayer can become an excuse for not offering one’s life in mission; a privatized lifestyle can lead Christians to take refuge in some false forms of spirituality.”

Personal encounter with the saving love of Jesus

“What kind of love would not feel the need to speak of the beloved, to point him out, to make him known? If we do not feel an intense desire to share this love, we need to pray insistently that he will once more touch our hearts.”

“The best incentive for sharing the Gospel comes from contemplating it with love, lingering over its pages and reading it with the heart. If we approach it in this way, its beauty will amaze and constantly excite us. But if this is to come about, we need to recover a contemplative spirit which can help us to realize ever anew that we have been entrusted with a treasure which makes us

more human and helps us to lead a new life. There is nothing more precious which we can give to others.”

“Jesus’ whole life, his way of dealing with the poor, his actions, his integrity, his simple daily acts of generosity, and finally his complete self-giving, is precious and reveals the mystery of his divine life. Whenever we encounter this anew, we become convinced that it is exactly what others need, even though they may not recognize it: “What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you” (Acts 17:23). Sometimes we lose our enthusiasm for mission because we forget that the Gospel responds to our deepest needs, since we were created for what the Gospel offers us: friendship with Jesus and love of our brothers and sisters. If we succeed in expressing adequately and with beauty the essential content of the Gospel, surely this message will speak to the deepest yearnings of people’s hearts: “The missionary is convinced that, through the working of the Spirit, there already exists in individuals and peoples an expectation, even if an unconscious one, of knowing the truth about God, about man, and about how we are to be set free from sin and death. The missionary’s enthusiasm in proclaiming Christ comes from the conviction that he is responding to that expectation”. Enthusiasm for evangelization is based on this conviction. We have a treasure of life and love which cannot deceive, and a message which cannot mislead or disappoint. It penetrates to the depths of our hearts, sustaining and ennobling us. It is a truth which is never out of date because it reaches that part of us which nothing else can reach. Our infinite sadness can only be cured by an infinite love.”

I think the Pope is saying that the spirit of missionary should be our understanding of evangelization and trying to draw out or recognize what is naturally within the other person; and recognize that supernaturally there are needs that were created by God and can only be satisfied by an encounter with God. Friendship with Christ is something that endures beyond the experiences. We believe that Jesus accompanies us along this path as we try to bring his love to others. (treasure in Habitual Grace Rollo)

In union with Jesus, we seek what he seeks and we love what he loves. In the end, what we are seeking is the glory of the Father; we live and act “for the praise of his glorious grace” (Eph 1:6). If we wish to commit ourselves fully and perseveringly, we need to leave behind every other motivation.

The spiritual savor of being a people

“Once you were no people but now you are God’s people” (1 Pet 2:10). To be evangelizers of souls, we need to develop a spiritual taste for being close to people’s lives and to discover that this is itself a source of greater joy.”

We need to see Jesus’ people as our people. This is expressed in a great way in the multi-cultural aspect of our Church and of our Cursillo. Beginning with Pentecost the Church began to reach out to other languages and cultures so that all might come to know Jesus Christ and receive the grace of salvation.

“Jesus, looking upon him, loved him” (Mk 10:21). We use this in the meditation for Thursday evening of the Cursillo weekend, and we are to look upon others we love as we try to evangelize. “Sometimes we are tempted to be that kind of Christian who keeps the Lord’s wounds at arm’s length. Yet Jesus wants us to touch human misery, to touch the suffering flesh of others.”

“It is true that in our dealings with the world, we are told to give reasons for our hope, but not as an enemy who critiques and condemns. We are told quite clearly: “do so with gentleness and reverence” (1 Pet 3:15) and “if possible, so far as it depends upon you, live peaceably with all” (Rom 12:18). We are also told to overcome “evil with good” (Rom 12:21) and to “work for the good of all” (Gal 6:10). Far from trying to appear better than others, we should “in humility count others better” than ourselves (Phil 2:3).”

What a great teaching for leadership, friendship and evangelization for our church ministers and all who would claim that they are serving Christ.

Loving others is a spiritual force drawing us to union with God. When we live out a spirituality of drawing nearer to others and seeking their welfare, our hearts are opened wide to the Lord’s greatest and most beautiful gifts. Whenever we encounter another person in love, we learn something new about God. Whenever our eyes are opened to acknowledge the other, we grow in the light of faith and knowledge of God. If we want to advance in the spiritual life, then, we must constantly be missionaries.”

The Pope reads from Scripture that the reason each of us are in the world is because we have a mission.

“God created that person in his image, and he or she reflects something of God’s glory. Every human being is the object of God’s infinite tenderness and he himself is present in their lives. Jesus offered his precious blood on the cross for that person. Appearances notwithstanding, every person is immensely holy and deserves our love. Consequently, if I can help at least one person to have a better life, that already justifies the offering of my life. It is a wonderful thing to be God’s faithful people. We achieve fulfilment when we break down walls and our heart is filled with faces and names!”

The mysterious working of the risen Christ and his Spirit

The Pope cautions us that a lack of spirituality leads to pessimism and quitting due to lack of results.

“Because we do not always see these seeds growing, we need an interior certainty, a conviction that God is able to act in every situation, even amid apparent setbacks: “We have this treasure in earthen vessels” (2 Cor 4:7). This certainty is often called “a sense of mystery”.

The missionary power of intercessory prayer

“One form of prayer moves us particularly to take up the task of evangelization and to seek the good of others: it is the prayer of intercession. Let us peer for a moment into the heart of Saint Paul, to see what his prayer was like. It was full of people: “...I constantly pray with you in every one of my prayers for all of you... because I hold you in my heart” (Phil 1:4, 7). Here we see that intercessory prayer does not divert us from true contemplation, since authentic contemplation always has a place for others.” For us in Cursillo this is Palanca.

II. Mary, Mother of Evangelization

Our lady of Guadalupe, pray for us - our patroness in Cursillo.

“At the foot of the cross, at the supreme hour of the new creation, Christ led us to Mary. He brought us to her because he did not want us to journey without a mother, and our people read in

this maternal image all the mysteries of the Gospel. The Lord did not want to leave the Church without this icon of womanhood. Mary, who brought him into the world with great faith, also accompanies “the rest of her offspring, those who keep the commandments of God and bear testimony to Jesus” (Rev 12:17).

“Mary was able to turn a stable into a home for Jesus, with poor swaddling clothes and an abundance of love.”

Star of the New Evangelization

“There is a Marian “style” to the Church’s work of evangelization. Whenever we look to Mary, we come to believe once again in the revolutionary nature of love and tenderness. In her we see that humility and tenderness are not virtues of the weak but of the strong who need not treat others poorly in order to feel important themselves.”