



STEWARDSHIP IN THE CURSILLO

Source: Presented by Hoang Tran (National Cursillo Service Administrator) at the National Cursillo Encounter held at Chapman University in Orange, CA - August 1, 2014.

It took me several months to prepare for this talk with lots of prayers to Jesus - my Lord and my best friend!

I asked Him to make it simple and allow me to deliver it by a language of Love as usual. I hope it will go straight to your hearts without hearing my accent. ☺

I must confess: I used to be allergic to the word “stewardship” before I became a Cursillista. I was asked to provide time, talent and treasure to my parish through the Annual Diocesan Appeal (ADA) program and I viewed it as a burden to me because I was too busy at work then. When I saw the usher with the ADA envelopes in his hand approaching me on the right, I looked to the left until he passed by ☺. That was me 10 years ago. I was truly an outsider! Sometimes I paid my ADA dues so that I wouldn’t be bothered anymore for at least 1 year.

Since I encountered Christ in the Cursillo Weekend 7 years ago, I have experienced continuous conversion and re-assessed my relationship with God. I gradually learned how to see things through the eyes of God.

Then I fell in love with the Cursillo charism and read many books. I’m so amazed about the richness of our Cursillo materials with almost 100 titles in 3 languages. If I were asked “What’s Cursillo?” I would quote one sentence on page 26 of the “How and the Why” by Eduardo Bonnin that struck me so deep that I would use it as a motto for my spiritual life and a summary of all Cursillo books I have read. It states “the Cursillo is to **live** the Mystical Body of Christ”. The action verb “**live**” leads me to a series of questions: “How do I **live** the Mystical Body of Christ?” For how long? Half an hour, 1 hour or 24 hours? To what extent? 10% of my talent and treasure, 20% or 100%? Let me share the identification of a steward by the USCCB definition:

What identifies a steward? Safeguarding material and human resources and using them responsibly are one answer; so is generous giving of time, talent, and treasure. But being a Christian steward means more. As Christian stewards, we receive God's gifts gratefully, cultivate them responsibly, share them lovingly in justice with others, and return them with increase to the Lord.

... The life of a Christian steward models the life of Jesus. It is challenging and even difficult, in many respects, yet intense joy comes to those who take the risk to live as Christian stewards. Women and men who seek to live as stewards learn that "all things work for good for those who love God" (Rom 8:28).

Indeed, stewardship is simply the fruit of love. I do it because I love God, because I want to please the one I love. Not because I have to, but because I'm willing to ...

I believe God assigned me some homework right after I accepted this rollo: that is, my relocation from California to Texas with the whole family! In my talk from last year's encounter in New York, I said I wanted to move to Texas so that I could be present at the National Cursillo Center (NCC) even though I didn't have to. It was just wishful thinking because I knew it was a "Mission Impossible". My wife is an introvert-type of person and she was so bonded to her Most Holy Trinity parish in San Jose for more than 10 years as a lector and Eucharistic minister. My sons served as altar boys there 7 days a week and most of all they're teenagers with lots of friends. No way my wife and my sons would want to relocate to Texas. Mission impossible! So I asked Jesus: "Lord, if it's your Will, please let my wife and my sons know" and it did happen. Now we are Texans! To tell you the truth, what He told my wife and my sons so that we can reach 100% consensus still remains a mystery and a miracle to me. However, I know one thing for sure, Jesus is a great negotiator. Nothing is impossible for God!

I still remember vividly the day I first saw the National Cursillo Center in Jarrell, TX after the interview with the Executive committee for the National Cursillo Service Administrator position. The date is March 13, 2013 and it marked a new chapter of my life. I didn't see the warehouse but I saw Jesus instead and felt His heartbeats. The NCC is alive. The NCC is the Mystical Body of Christ! It's exactly like "Love at first sight" feeling. I've felt this kind of feeling twice in my life: when I first saw my wife of course ☺, and when I saw this center. It struck me like lightning, so powerful and intense that I told myself: "That's it! Here I am, Lord. I'm here to serve You!" I still remembered the sacred moment when I was holding the bottle of holy water for Bishop Elizondo and Fr. Peter as they prepared to bless the center. I asked Bishop Elizondo to bless me too. Since then the National Cursillo Center has attracted me like a magnet. Below is a photo of the National Cursillo Center.



For Him:

Today, I will not talk about the responsibility or accountability or integrity or perseverance of a steward. I just want to talk about the call to be a steward in the Cursillo, and the mindset of a steward. It's truly an utmost honor that I was called to be Christ's steward. Why? Because I was called to work for Christ, King of kings, to work with Him and to work in Him. If we are truly aware of this blessing and honor, accountability, integrity, responsibility, and perseverance of a steward will follow nicely to a great extent and highest standard. You and I are so blessed when we are chosen to work for Jesus and serve our brothers and sisters in the Cursillo movement.

We're called to be Christ's disciples and therefore we automatically became Christ's stewards. Discipleship and stewardship are inseparable, like both sides of a paper. Discipleship is a call of love, and stewardship is a fruit of love.

Are we aware that we're working for the King of kings? Yes, He's my big boss! The National Cursillo Center opens at 9am but I always start my work 45 minutes earlier so that I can have a 1-on-1 meeting with my boss Jesus from 8:15am – 8:45am during morning Mass, rain or shine. So don't call me during this period, otherwise you will receive my text message "I'm in a meeting with Jesus." ☺ I start my work with morning Mass and end it with an evening Mass together with my family. Do you know how hard it is to be promoted to the president's cabinet members? You will have to go through lots of background checks and so many interviews. You have to show off your credentials, degrees, experiences etc. Working for Christ is the opposite. You promote yourself to whatever position you desire. It's your love that decides your position. The more you love Him, the closer you are to Him. Christ doesn't count how many years you've been a Cursillista, how many Cursillo de Cursillos you attended, how many Cursillo Weekends you helped, or how many Cursillo books you read. Without love, these will amount to nothing! It's love that he measures and it's fair to everyone for the race of love toward Jesus!

With Him:

Being Cursillo stewards, we are never alone. We're not only working for Jesus but also working with Jesus!

I've been at many Cursillo Weekends and I noticed one thing: the Weekend is exactly the Love symphony where Jesus is the conductor and each of us are His instruments of Love. You must know how closely a conductor is working with each musician. Likewise, Jesus is conducting the Love Symphony #24 right here, right now at this National Encounter. We're His instruments. Can you guess how many there are in His orchestra? More than 100 volunteers from Orange County Cursillo? Yes, but still missing a lot. All of us here? Yes, but not close. The correct answer is thousands and thousands of Cursillistas who can't be present but are connecting with us through their palancas. They are also part of the orchestra playing the Love Symphony #24. Jesus is willing to work with each one of us if we allow Him. I'd like to share a secret with you: don't just ask Jesus to help you with important things but, ask Him to help you with little things as well. He's working with you on daily life things as a best friend. When I'm driving, I will invite Jesus to sit next to me. When I lost my keys one day, I asked Him for help and I found the keys as if He put them in my hands.☺ I often tell Him "I'm stuck, Jesus! Help me, please!" and I got His answers or aids beyond my expectations. Last year, when I searched for candidates to replace an office support position, I asked Jesus to send me a Cursillista because this position is not simply a job, but a vocation to serve our brothers and sisters with love. Actually I was looking for a Cursillo "steward". Unfortunately, we couldn't find any. Then we hired Liliana Recio and I thought God didn't grant me my request but I was wrong. Liliana lived her Cursillo Weekend that very first week of employment and I bet she got the best orientation from Jesus.

The Lord is good all the time!

Following Christ and working with Christ is really a fun journey and full of surprises! I learned 2 big lessons out of the relocation to Texas. The first lesson is I need to surrender my own will so that I can discern God's Will. Moving to Texas is totally our own voluntary decision with our own expense after 3 months of discerning God's Will. It's a costly interstate relocation with a lot of uncertainties but we just did it no matter what. The reasons to stay in CA outweighed the

reasons to move to TX from a “logical thinking” point of view. However, when we said “yes” to Jesus, miracles happened. We sold our house within 1 week for more than the asking price and that more than covered for our moving expenses. My sons were accepted into a charter school nearby that usually requires a lottery to get in. Although we have no family or relatives in TX but we always have Christ and about 170,000 Cursillista friends there. Everything is bigger in Texas! ☺ The second lesson I learned is, I need to step out of my comfort zone to follow Jesus and see things differently. I lived in my San Jose house for 10 years but the moment I felt Jesus’ ultimate presence is the last night before I handed the keys to the new owner. I packed and put away everything: my degrees, my decorations, my furniture etc. and the only item left in my house is the Cross. Being exhausted with packing and cleaning up, I stood in my prayer room and looked at the Cross. That’s my closest moment with Christ and I discerned that only God is my focus, nothing else is important. When I empty myself and my worldly attachments, Christ will fill in with His Love and Grace one hundredfold! Sometimes our lives are full of busy agendas, plans, schedules, tasks etc. and we just put God aside without realizing it. Now I’m not afraid of relocating anymore because I learned how to pack my luggage light and follow Christ wherever He wants me to go: Africa, Cambodia, Vietnam etc. Stewardship is a fruit of Love ... **to want what God wants and to do what God wants.**

In Him:

Working with Jesus will eventually lead us into an intimate relationship with Him. We’re ONE, we are in Him and He is in us. How? The Eucharist! I like the following paragraph in the Fundamental Ideas about the Eucharist:

The Eucharist is the center of life throughout the three days of the Cursillo. Everything in the Cursillo tends to create in the cursillistas a realization that afterwards, on the “fourth” day, the Eucharist must be center of their lives, of their encounters with the Lord, and of their encounters in community with their brothers and sisters. Eucharistic celebrations should be prepared daily and diligently so that they can be lived intensely. (FI #338)

Yes, the Eucharist must be the center of our lives and must be celebrated daily and **lived** intensely. If we love someone so dearly, the first thing we would do is to stay close to that person by all means.

I used to work at a high tech company with a hectic schedule. One day I couldn’t attend the 8:30am Mass as usual so I searched and found a 6am Mass at the church pretty far from my house and it took me 35 minutes to get there. So I got up at 5am and prepared to attend the early Mass. On the way back home, I heard Jesus talking to me “Thank you for visiting me!” and I just realized Jesus so loves me that He wants to be with me and in me from dusk till dawn. I had to pull my car over and I burst into tears. My heart was filled with His intimate love. Since then I vowed not to leave Him alone for any single day. It’s been a great joy to be in Him through the Eucharist. Jesus so loves us that He doesn’t want to stop being with us or working with us. He wants to **live in** us! That’s an intimate relationship with Christ that exists not only in the Mass but also in our daily activities. When we’re aware of His presence, we will act accordingly. Being in the Mystical Body of Christ, I felt His pains and sufferings caused by anything that is not love: hatred, division, anger etc. It’s so emotional for me to say this, but I must let you know that I visit Christ in the Emergency Room (ER) or Intensive Care Unit (ICU) every day. He suffers a great deal from our sins, from our indifferences, from our selfishness; from our ego ... they are all like thorns piercing through his sacred Heart!

When I was informed of issues or conflicts at some diocesan movements, my heart sank and I felt a sharp pain in my heart no matter who's right or wrong. It is Jesus who is suffering and maybe He let me feel just a bit of His suffering. I don't blame you, my brothers and sisters, but I blame Satan who let you fall into his traps of division. Please remember that we all belong to the Mystical Body of Christ and we must live this sacred Body accordingly with love, friendship and humility. That's Cursillo! When I send a greeting to you as "My brothers and sisters in Christ", I really mean it. When we live the Mystical Body of Christ, we will take ownership and become **insiders** instead of **outsiders**. We cannot say: "Oh, it's a national issue. It's none of my business because it's not in my diocese or my region". Or "I'm done with the Cursillo Weekend. Now I can pass it to the Postcursillo chairperson. It's not in my scope of responsibility anymore".

I want to share a real-life story with you. I received an email from Fr. Mario Krizanac from Croatia, asking if he can attend the National Encounter and have places to stay overnight along route 66 from Chicago to California. He is a total stranger to me. My head told me "No, it's none of my business" but my heart told me "Yes, it's the right thing to do because Fr. Mario is the best friend of my best friend Jesus, and so he is my best friend too!" Then I listened to my heart and spent a lot of time coordinating the lodging for my best friend. I called and texted him at every stop to make sure he was well taken care of. I never met him but Christ made him my best friend in no time. That's so amazing! I was touched by the hospitality of Cursillistas who welcomed Fr. Mario along his road trip even though they've never met him before. That's true friendship and stewardship!

Christ has changed my mindset about ownership in light of stewardship. Now every church I go to is my church, no matter whether it is in California, Texas, US, Europe, Africa ... I told myself: "Wow! My Lord has a lot of houses for me to stay around the world". I felt so blessed and honored to be called as Christ's steward. Even though I left San Jose, I still make contributions to parishes where I served. Now I won't look to the left when the usher waving the envelope approaches me on the right. But I will look to the right and look right into his eyes waving my ADA envelope: "Here it is. Come and get it!" ☺

That's the same sense of belonging I felt at the National Cursillo Center (NCC).

Regarding the NCC, I'd like to share some photos with you of our center

We just installed a kitchen sink and cabinet so that we won't have to wash our dishes in the bathroom anymore. The new fridge is a gift from a volunteer. Why are there different colors of stain on the kitchen cabinet? Because we got them from different sources (garage sale, Craig's list, etc.) ☺ We saved every penny for the center.



When we receive your order at the center, we will wrap your books with love and send them by Palanca. So when you receive the package, please open it with love and send back your “return receipt with palanca”. Is it a deal? 😊

I'd like to provide you with some quick updates about our center:

- The office staff personnel increased 100%, surpassing any fast growing companies including Apple, ... from 1 to 2 😊
- \$3 campaign: we have received ~\$40K from about 1000 donors. We gave back \$6,800 in the forms of 58 vouchers for Lay Directors (LDs) to redeem at the National Encounter. Thanks to your generosity, we were able to offer 2 free tickets to Lay Directors who are working hard to revive or establish the Cursillo in their areas. We also provided 3 \$200 bookstore vouchers for 3 dioceses who are in the process of re-establishing Cursillo, but whose representatives couldn't make it to the National Encounter. That's all we can offer for this year although we have a longer list of dioceses that are establishing and reviving Cursillo that need your help. We have about 1 million Cursillistas in the US so the percentage of Cursillistas who donated is 0.1%. If I count only 100,000 active Cursillistas, the percentage is 1%. Someone told me this campaign failed because only 1% responded, but I see a huge potential here. Why? If the 99% donate the same amount as the 1%, the total amount will be \$3,960,000! That can fulfill my dream of:
 - Inviting all Regional Coordinators and service teams, Spiritual Advisors, Lay Directors, School of Leader chairpersons to the Encounter for FREE! They are servant leaders and faithful stewards. They deserve it.
 - Providing support to reviving or establishing Cursillo in terms of materials, workshop, financial aid
 - Lowering book prices by 50%
 - Lowering National Encounter registration fee to \$150 - \$200.
 - Getting a decent office building for the National Cursillo Center (NCC)

Some Cursillista gave me another title, which is shorter and easy to remember: “**3M**”. It’s not that I’m working for the company 3M but it stands for “**3**-dollar **Man**”! I don’t know whether I am worth \$3 or not but from now on if you want to talk to me, you must have at least \$3 in your pocket. ☺

However, I’d to like to change it to “3-dollar Multiplier”. This title is not for me, it’s for all of us. If each of us plays the role of a Cursillo steward and \$3 Multiplier, our beloved Cursillo Movement will definitely be in a very good shape. Each of us must be a Multiplier of love, faith, hope, peace and unity as well!

Stewardship in Cursillo is not a term contract. When a Lay Director finishes his or her term, can he or she say “Yeah, I’m done, now I can retire from the Cursillo.” No! It’s a lasting covenant between God and each Cursillista until we finish our fourth day.

I found the concept of the fourth day very interesting! The fourth day could last 80 years, 3 years, or 1 day or even less. Can you guarantee that you can live till tomorrow or next week? No, only God can. Therefore we must live the “present” fully as if we have only 24 hours to live. Thinking about your 24 hours to live, what should you do? Seriously! For sure you will go to confession, go to Mass and receive Communion and other sacraments. Can you do it every day now? Will you prepare for your Encounter, Weekend, Ultreya, Group reunion as if it’s your last one? With joy? For Christ, with Christ, and in Christ?

I must confess I used to forget God easily during the day even though I go to Mass every day. I lost count of how many times I failed Him, how many “Oops!” I said to Him. But God is so patient. He taught me to live my “fourth day” as if I have only 24 hours to live. Laser focus on Christ! Don’t be afraid. Don’t hold back anything. One day at a time. The next day is just a bonus!

I’d like to share with you some inspiring quotes from the book “The Road of Hope: a Gospel from Prison” by Cardinal Nguyen Van Thuan, Servant of God, who lived his Cursillo in Manila, Philippine in 1967 and then established the Cursillo movement in his diocese in Vietnam:

- *A Straight line consists of an infinite number of little points joined together. Similarly, a lifetime consists of millions of minutes and seconds joined together. If every single point in the line is set correctly, the line will be straight. If every minute of a lifetime is well used, the life will be holy... (The Road of Hope, #978)*
- *You have only one moment and it is a most beautiful moment: the present moment. Live it completely in the love of God. And if you build up your life like a crystal from a million such sparkling moments, what a beautiful life it will be! Do you not see how easy it is? It is not so difficult! (The Road of Hope, #997)*

Each of us is a priceless and unique diamond in the eyes of God. It’s an ideal-cut C-color, LHF rating:

- C-color: Christ/Cursillo
- L (Love), H (Humility), F (Friendship)

Let's fill it with Love, shield it with Humility so that we can reflect Christ through our Friendship! If we can do that, all the C-color, ideal cut diamonds will add up and for sure make the future of our beloved Cursillo movement much brighter. You've heard about the "moveable square meter", right? Now we have "moveable stewardship diamonds" that can reflect Christ wherever and whenever we go.

In the spirit of Cursillo stewardship, let's celebrate this evening Mass wholeheartedly as if this is our only Mass, participate and enjoy the Fiesta as if this is our last one, and hug our brothers and sisters in the Love of Christ as if we will never see them again. Don't hold back anything! Live the Mystical Body of Christ fully and joyfully at every moment! That's Cursillo! That's Love. Love never fails (*1 Cor 13:8*). Cursillo never fails!

Love you all!
De Colores!