



# The Cursillo® Movement

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## Role of the Cursillo Leader

*Source: Workshop presentation by Jim Santos (Archdiocese of New York Cursillo) at National Cursillo Encounter, Hofstra University, Hempstead, New York - July 27, 2013.*

Since this talk is entitled Role of the Cursillo Leader, I imagine the best place to begin would be by asking ourselves who is a Leader in Cursillo? You might say that all those who are members of your Secretariat are the Cursillo Leaders. Or maybe you might say all those who attend the School of Leaders are Cursillo Leaders. You would not be wrong in either case, but you would not be completely correct either. What if I made a slight change to this phrase “Make a friend, be a friend, and bring that friend to Christ”. What if instead I said “Make a friend, be a friend, and lead that friend to Christ”? Would you then recognize that all Cursillistas are Cursillo Leaders, because all of us have experienced the three fundamental encounters of a weekend and all of us know that this is what we are called to do? We are called to lead others to Christ.

This talk then is about how to make a friend, be a friend, and **lead** that friend to Christ; we’ll even talk a little about what we do if our friend makes a three-day Cursillo weekend.

All Cursillistas who have gone through the journey of the Precursillo, the Cursillo Weekend, and the Postcursillo have acquired two things.

More than likely, we do not even realize that we have made these acquisitions. So what is it that we have managed to acquire? The first thing we acquired was a system. This system was provided by Eduardo Bonnín and consists of the message of the rollos, the Cursillo method, and the purpose of Cursillo.

The three components of this system (message, method and purpose) are things which we are all attempting to bring about in our lives, because if we can incorporate the message of the rollos, and live the method of Group Reunion and Ultreya, and understand the purpose of Cursillo, then we will truly be living Cursillo.

The second thing we have acquired is something known as Spirit and Criterion. By Spirit we mean that as Cursillistas we want to live our ideal in a more conscious and ever-growing Grace. By Criterion we mean that our focus will always be to keep this spirit in rhythm with the Spirit of God. In other words, we see the need to keep our will in alignment with the Will of God.

Eduardo Bonnín tells us that every human being thinks, wants, and acts. This of course corresponds to the mind, the heart, and the will. This internal tripod is what gives us our focus that we call criterion and helps us measure our effectiveness as a Cursillo leader in our environments.

We need to recognize that we are all on a spiritual journey; a journey that we travel together with the Holy Spirit as our Guide in our effort to follow Christ. And if our knowledge of Cursillo and

being Christian is nothing more than what we hear on the Cursillo weekend, without it becoming a part of our lives, then our effectiveness during this journey, as well as the distance we will travel on this journey, will not be close to our potential. If, however, our knowledge of Cursillo and being Christian truly becomes a part of us in and through Jesus Christ, then our effectiveness increases and the distance we travel will be great. Spirit is what gives the trip momentum; that is how effective we will be on the journey. Criterion will always measure the distance we travel.

To sum up what criterion and spirit are then, they are those things that motivate and move us on our journey.

There are of course more than one criterion and spirit; in essence these are what we review in the Ideal Rollo on the Cursillo Weekend.

We must always be aware of what ideas or criterion affect us and what spirit is moving us.

For example, if emotions are what move us, chances are, we will not be as effective on our journey or travel as far as we could.

However, if we utilize the system provided by Cursillo and move according to Christ's criterion and His Spirit, we will experience great productiveness and evangelize many people within our moveable square meter. This, of course, is the purpose of Cursillo.

The system, spirit and criterion are what we use to keep ourselves centered on Christ. Once we are centered on Christ, it is natural to want to bring others along with us on this magnificent spiritual journey.

Is there some system we can use to bring others to Christ? You betcha!

In Structure of Ideas, Eduardo Bonnín refers to a technique known as the *four movements of apostolic action*. Yesterday, Michael Ciccocioppo told us about them; To Know, To Place, To Enlighten, and To Accompany.

These are essentially the steps of making a friend, being a friend, and bringing that friend to Christ.

Being a Christian means to follow Christ. Being a Cursillo Leader means not only to follow Christ but to bring others along on the journey. Yet asking someone to evangelize without giving them the tools to do so is like asking a bus driver to pick up passengers without having wheels on the bus.

It would be wrong for Cursillo to ask a person to evangelize in their one square meter without giving the Cursillista the tools to do so. Unfortunately most of us are uninformed or misinformed regarding this.

Many walk away from the three-day Cursillo with a desire to spread the Good News but without the tools to do so. The realization that we have Cursillistas who do not have the essential understanding of just how to evangelize needs to be imparted at our School of Leaders so that the School may give as many Cursillistas as possible the tools that they need to succeed.

We're going to take a look at each of the four movements of apostolic action in a little more detail because it is these four movements, which are the true function of a Cursillo Leader.

The first of these is To Know.

How can I help you if I don't know you? The first Rollo Eduardo Bonnín developed is Study of the Environment. This Rollo proposes a practical method to win the person and bring them to Christ. It is not so much about studying your own environment as about studying the environment of this other person. If we study this Rollo closely, we will see that it is leading us to the three essential encounters discovered on the Weekend but realizing these are not encounters that should take place solely on the weekend. It is the daily reality of self, Christ, and the world. It tells us that winning others for Christ is not necessarily about educating the person intellectually, but about winning their heart.

I work in a public high school about two hours from here in Port Jervis, New York. One might think that standing in front of a class is an excellent opportunity for evangelization, and on a rare occasion an opportunity to evangelize does present itself. But that is not where the evangelization usually takes place. Usually, it takes place in the faculty dining room.

Each day we have lunch, and we talk about all sorts of things; sports, politics both national and school district, students achievements and failures, travel, recipes, you name it. Each day gives me an opportunity to know my colleagues better. I listen to their stories, and I learn about their lives. Little by little, I learn where they are in their relationship with God. Let me give you one example, whom I'll call Joe.

Joe is about twenty years younger than I am, and he has been teaching for about fifteen years. He is married, with no children. Joe is one of the nicest persons you ever want to meet; the kind of guy that will give you the shirt off his back.

Joe does have a problem with self confidence and tends to over compensate for it by trying to do too much in order to please everyone. I know, from our talks that this lack of confidence reflects in his own self worth. In addition, Joe lost his mother a year and a half ago. They were very close, and he still has a very difficult time with the death. Joe knows, I think, that we are friends and that I can be trusted in things that he tells me.

I think this is where we separate real evangelization from the preacher on a soapbox concept of evangelization. We will not truly win anyone over by telling them about Christ; not initially. First, we must win the person's heart, and then help them to open their mind so they can engage their will. We must first get to know the person, only then can we begin to understand how he thinks, what he wants, and how he acts. We can then move to the second movement, which is To Place.

By placing we mean helping the person to know how to go about their journey. Once we know the person, and only in knowing the person, can we know where to place this person.

All too often and probably with good intentions, we begin telling the person what they need to do and where they need to be without every really knowing the circumstances; of how they think, what they want, or how they act. Only once we have come to know our friend, are we in a

position to help them with life decisions. We can feel free to give advice and our friend will feel free to take it.

If I had started to give advice to Joe after my first few conversations with him, he would have turned away. But over time we have become close friends; my wife and I even go out together with Joe and his wife. This has allowed me to speak freely with Joe about elements of his life and even to give him advice on decisions he needs to make. We are just beginning to reach a point where I can start to talk to Joe about his faith journey.

There are three elements to consider in placing our friend in the truth of Christ.

We should guide our friend to look towards Christ in every circumstance of their life and feel that Christ is always present in this life and to learn what Christ wants of them at this precise moment.

We should help our friend to live life enthusiastically and to strive to live in grace so that our friend will in turn attract others to Christ.

We should remind our friend to put all of their talents (those recognized and those still to be discovered) in the service of Christ.

It takes time to know and place the person because sometimes it takes time to build trust within the friendship and sometimes it takes time for them to tell us who they are and what their circumstances are. As I said, after a couple of years it is only now that I can begin to really place Joe in the context of Christ.

The third movement is To Enlighten.

We will enlighten the person of the four realities that all Cursillistas have. How many people here know that you have four realities? Well, let me enlighten you!

In Structure of Ideas pages 205-207 we read that God places us in four different zones throughout life. These zones are interconnected and make up parts of a complete whole.

1. The Zone of Responsibility embraces all the sectors of life where we may have a specific and determined influence. In our family, in our workplace, in our recreation; essentially in our environments.

When we speak of our one square meter, we are really speaking of the Zone of Responsibility. We must avoid the tendency to engage in apostolic action outside our own zone of responsibility and in doing so to neglect our God-given environments. If we look too far outside of our square meter we may miss something going on within our square meter.

2. The Zone of Being Centered is about our Piety, Study, and Action. These three legs of the tripod, as we all know, are what helps us to keep our heart, mind, and will in alignment and in harmony with God's will. If or when we stop praying, or we stop studying, or we stop surrendering our will to God, this zone is no longer complete. If that happens, then we cannot be effective in our zone of Responsibility.

We must live what is fundamental to being Christian through a life of piety, study, and action in order to be responsible and stay centered on Christ.

3. The Zone Arranged by Providence is what God allows so that we may become more holy. This zone embraces all the sectors of life that are beyond our will and over which we can have influence only through prayer.

For example, when God allows an illness in the family, we have no control other than to pray and accept that reality. However, if our tripod is not centered on Christ, it will be difficult to accept the reality.

4. The Idealized Zone or what I like to call The Idea Zone. Eduardo Bonnín states that this Zone includes those ideas, aspirations, and preferences that we project on the infinite field of God's providence.

In other words, these are the parts of our life that we attribute to God's call. However, whether or not these ambitions are truly God's will for us must be carefully discerned.

We all move by ideas whether they are essential; meaning a part of God's plan, important; meaning a part of our own plan, or accidental; meaning nobody's plan.

For example, we may aspire to be the next Rectora, or Lay Director, or even Regional Coordinator! Seriously, we may aspire to get a doctorate in Theology, or to become a member of the Clergy.

In my life I recently spent two years studying for and receiving my Administrative Certifications so that I could become a school administrator.

Of course if we are in harmony with God's will, then these aspirations are really recognition of our being called. However, if these aspirations are not in harmony with God's will, more than likely we will not be enlightened to discover God's call in our life.

I still don't know if getting my certification is God's will for me or if I just did it out of arrogance to see if I was capable of the challenge. I have left this in God's hands. I know that if he wants me to be a school administrator, he will make the path known. If not, I can readily accept that it is not to be.

When a person moves by ideas that are accidental, that is, when he or she makes plans without discernment, he or she will become de-centered, which Eduardo would call: out of orbit. This is what happens on occasion to my friend Joe. He attempts a project solely to please someone.

When the project is finished he finds himself unhappy either because the project went well and he is now sad that it is over, or more frequently he did not get as much thanks for the work he did as he had hoped. He keeps pinning his own worth on the recognition from others instead of the realization that he is loved by God.

When a person moves by ideas that are important to them, but without regard for the will of God, the consequence is to choke the Spirit.

However, when the person is moved by ideas that are essential to the will of God, then they are actualizing Christ; they are being Christian.

When our internal tripod becomes off balance, the four zones can become cloudy and the Zone of Responsibility turns into the impossible, the Zone of Being Centered turns into the unattainable, the Zone of Providence turns into hopelessness, and the Idealized Zone turns into the unreachable.

The entire process of the function of a Cursillo Leader begins with our self. We must first have knowledge of our self and we must place our self where we need to be, and we must be enlightened by the four zones in which we already live. Only then can we become apostolic and ultimately have something to give to our friend. If we wish to introduce our friend to Christ we must first become as alive, normal, and near Christ as we possibly can.

In Structure of Ideas Eduardo Bonnín explains that the only way you and I can define ourselves as being Christian is to actualize Christ, that is, to live Christ.

It is more important to live Christ than to do Christian things. Doing Christian things is to do things in the name of Christ.

This is not the Christianity we should seek. The Christianity we should seek is not to do Christian things, but to be Christian; to be motivated in our hearts to be as much like Christ as humanly possible.

Trying to be like Christ helps us to continue living the four zones that I have been speaking about. It also helps us to live in grace in a constant and ever growing manner. It helps enlighten us and in so doing to place us in a relationship with ourselves, with Christ, and with others. And it helps to enlighten us on how we should think, what we should want, and how we should act.

Being enlightened also helps us to determine if our friend is in the essential frame of mind, or if he is in the important frame of mind, or the accidental frame of mind.

Therefore, the spirit and criterion are no longer something abstract; it is real and it is in us and we are now able to help our friend.

Before I knew this I did not know the proper way to help Joe to come to know Christ better. With this knowledge, a knowledge we must share at our School of Leaders, I can truly evangelize my friend.

So exactly how do we help this friend? Remember, we've been talking about the four movements of apostolic action.

We help the other person by knowing them, by placing them by enlightening them.

We have yet to speak of the last movement of apostolic action. The fourth movement is To Accompany.

To accompany these other persons, whom as you realize we now call our friends, is not only important, it is essential.

I now have a responsibility to accompany them, especially after introducing them to Christ. And if these friends go to Cursillo, I must accompany them in their on-going conversion experience. I will accompany them in the Precursillo, the Cursillo three day experience, and the Postcursillo.

Friendship does not end during the Cursillo weekend; rather it is intensified through conversion. As human beings and because God gave us a free will, we have a tendency to believe we are the ones who create friendships. Let us remember however that it is God who creates these people we call friends. And it is God who will grow our friendship following the conversion process.

Our mission in the world includes our dedication to Christ and our daily decision to share the Good News that God loves us. The best way to share this great news is through practicing friendship in our daily activities, in whatever time and place in which we find ourselves. It is through friendship that we will demonstrate to others our life in Jesus Christ.

Our life's purpose should be to live what is fundamental to being Christian. Our lives should embrace all three phases of our tripod of piety, study and action, keeping in mind always that this reflects our three relationships with ourselves, with God, with others.

We should be open to help each other through our friendships in order to be where each of us ought to be. We are in a constant search for God's mercy and healing. In our hearts we know that He is there, waiting to receive us and embrace us as. It was God who first sought us out in order for us to enter into this intimate relationship with Him.

In return we must open our hearts and minds to seek God's mercy and grace to be able to give to others that gift which we have received from God through His son Jesus Christ; the gift of unconditional love.

These functions I have just spoken about are what every Cursillista should have experienced in the Cursillo Weekend. But Eduardo knew there was more.

He said that after Cursillo; we should give the new Cursillista some time to settle in to their new reality. The leaders should then call them back and start giving them instruction in how to make a friend, be a friend, and bring that friend to Christ. Those who come back for this instruction are usually the ones living what is fundamental to being Christian.

They are the ones who will attend our School of Leaders. They are still hungry. This is when you begin to enlighten them with the rest of the story; that Cursillo has a criterion, and a system by which we function.

Cursillistas who take the Good News that God loves us to others have the best method known for encountering the other person and that method is friendship. It is through this friendship that the Grace of God and the love of Christ for His Church enable us to have a connection to the Gospel and to make continual decisions in our daily encounters to love our sisters and brothers. It is friendship that enables us to not only reach out to those whom we seek to have a relationship with but to all persons whom God has placed in contact to our one square meter. It is friendship

that makes it possible for us to live what is fundamental to being a Christian so that we may announce the Good News to everyone we meet and help them know and believe that God in Christ loves them!

During the Cursillo Weekend the person encounters a restlessness; a restlessness that is capable of resolving all problems.

This restlessness must always be kept alive, vibrant and active. The first days following a Cursillo are an important and exciting time for the new Cursillista. During these first days after the Cursillo, the luster of the Truth, recently discovered, hurls the Cursillista forward in their spiritual journey with a new-found courage.

During the Cursillo weekend we ask the candidate to contribute idealism, self-surrender and the spirit of charity. These three contributions do not end on the Third day, but continues with Cursillistas into their Fourth Day, in essence making life a perennial Cursillo.

In our Fourth Day we must contribute *Idealism* by accepting our circumstances joyfully because these are the means that God gives us to become holy. We contribute this idealism by looking with new eyes at the same things we have always looked at and we contribute this idealism by always seeking greater possibilities for ourselves, for others, and for Gods' kingdom here on earth.

We must contribute *Self-Surrender* by not letting our preoccupation with success or failure get out of control, by sharing our life in Christ with our brothers and sisters, and by asking for and assuming greater responsibilities. For example, each morning I recite this simple prayer based on the Prayer of Jabez; "Oh Lord please Bless me indeed and enlarge my territory. Lay Your hand upon me that I may be kept from all evil."

We must contribute a *Spirit of Charity* in our environments, even though they may be unfriendly at times, and by assuming responsibility for what others may not see clearly. We must be the moral compass in our environment.

The purpose of the material in Structure of Ideas is to help each one of us stay centered on living what is fundamental to being Christian in order that we may be in the right disposition before we go out to the world to transform it one person at a time, one friend at a time.

We must always remember to begin with ourselves by examining our tripod and then by aligning our zone of responsibility, our zone of being centered, our zone of providence, and our zone of ideas. We further must keep our idealism, self-surrender, and spirit of charity. This is the role of every Cursillo leader.

Just as the Catholic Church is more than just the Pope and Cardinals in Rome, so too is the Cursillo Movement more than the National Staff and National Secretariat. Just as we are the Church, so too we are the Cursillo Movement! It is our responsibility; yours, mine, and every Cursillista, to preserve the Charism of Cursillo and its simple profile.

Eduardo Bonnín passed the Movement on to us in its full Charism; it is up to us to pass it on to those Cursillistas who will come after us.



In conclusion, the role of the Cursillo leader, the role of each of us in this room, is to help our friends encounter Christ. In order to do so we must first study their environment. In order to know the person and their circumstances, we need to determine why our friends think the way they think, why they want what they want, and why they act the way they act so we can place them in the reality of their encounter with Christ, with self, and with others. This will lead them to live the normality of the four areas in which they function and therefore, live a life in grace; conscious, shared, and ever-growing.

They will truly be Christian vs. doing Christian things because they are moving by ideas that are essential in order to reach a friendship with self, with Christ, and with the others.

As we begin to understand and truly live the spirit and criterion and system of Cursillo, we will begin to see how we can Know, Place, Enlighten, and Accompany our friend so that simple phrase of “Make a friend, be a friend, and bring that friend to Christ” can be implemented in our daily lives, and in doing so, how we can be Christ to others.

My sisters and brothers, I know that each of us in this room have a love for our Christ and a love for our Movement. I beg of you to use that love to take your own local Movements beyond where they are now and bring them to their full potential. You and I can do this by continuing to study the Charism of our Movement, by being open to understanding our successes and failures, and by praying for guidance from the Holy Spirit.

Please take the messages that you are hearing at this Encounter back to your School of Leaders, and your Secretariats and your Ultreyas. I truly believe that after more than half a century, Cursillo has yet to come close to its full potential.

I also believe however that we in this room, in conjunction with the will of God, have the power to bring it to that full potential. May the Lord bless each of us on this magnificent journey!

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