



## ROLE OF SPIRITUAL ADVISOR IN CURSILLO

*Source: Workshop presentation by Fr. David A. Smith (Archdiocese of Miami) at National Cursillo Encounter, Hofstra University, Hempstead, New York - July 27, 2013.*

To learn about the Role of the Priest (Deacon, Religious) it is necessary to know what the Cursillos in Christianity are.

The greatest human instrument, which received the Foundational Charism, Eduardo Bonnín, defines the Cursillos this way; *“The Cursillos in Christianity is a Movement that by means of their own method, attempts from within the Church, to ensure that the realities of Christianity are brought to life in the uniqueness, the originality, and in the creativity of each person. From their deep conviction their freedom finds the right direction and they discover their potential and accept their limitations, thus their will is strengthened. Friendships are developed by virtue of their decision and perseverance in their daily, personal and community life”*

Let's examine the definition phrase-by-phrase:

1) "They are a movement seeking through their own method, from within the Church make the realities of Christian life"

"method" - what is particular of the cursillos, what distinguishes our movement and its own charism from other movements and particular charisms.

"from within the Church" - not "of the Church", the Church discerns and approves the charism, but it is not the "owner"

"brought to life"--incarnation and appropriation of the charism

(2) "the uniqueness" - it is necessary that each person embodies the charism

"in originality" - according to the beauty that is the unity of each person

"creativity" - the way of embodying the charism is according to the gifts of each person

3) - "discover their potential and accept their limitations" - are made in the light of understanding and living more deeply what was received in the meditation "Know yourself".

(4) "from the deep conviction their freedom strengthened his will with his decision and conducive to friendship under his perseverance" - always respecting the freedom of the person. We must be guided by standards, not laws, without any imposition, or authoritarianism. Criteria (the "because" are more important and above "the how" (the what").) Friendship is provided and lived where ever we are, in every circumstance.

(5) "in their daily, personal and community life" see #4

When I was still unaware and neither supported the Fundamental Charism, as the then National Chaplain, I was invited to participate in the II Conversations of Cala Figuera in Mallorca. A group of priests and laity (12 people) went to visit Eduardo Bonnín at his apartment in April 2002. I left discouraged when Eduardo began our meeting saying, "priests have hijacked the movement". 6 months after having read "Stories and Memories of the Cursillos" (Francisco Forteza) and "Going back to the Sources" (several articles by different authors in a volume published by Alberto Monteagudo), I agreed with that shocking statement by Eduardo.

On the part of the Mallorcan clergy, they demonstrated resentment by the fact that it was a secular who received the charism, and also many jealousy ("I studied many years and these laymen imagine that in 4 days know as much as us"). The history of the evaluation and dissemination of the movement is full of obstacles put by clerical and paternalistic attitudes. The clergy opposed the heterogeneity (ages and social classes) of Cursillos and banned them (until 1962 in Mallorca) for women. The clergy was afraid of any initiative coming from the laity because they felt they wouldn't be able "to control them". Many were shocked by the language not very pious and the secularism (laycity) of the music. How could the sublime truths of theology be communicated in the Street Language?... They also tried to impose clerical spirituality to the laity.

Clerical control spawned other demotions. Several imposed their pastoral schemes or tried to steer the conversation towards their pastoral projects preferred without reference to the Foundational Charism. They claimed that Cursillos has a formative character rather than friendly. In the 1970s the clergy spread "mixed cursillos (males and females together) and two day "cursillos". The greatest final deflection was to divert the focus of the cursillos to facilitate structural changes by the "agents of change" promoted by the theology of liberation.

In the definition of the Cursillos, I mention that they are from within the Church. The first time that the phrase "of the Church" was pronounced was in Bogotá in 1968 - 24 years after the first cursillo. In a book of interviews with 7 founders of movement of Cardinal Paul Cordes (Pontifical Council for the Laity), "Signs of Hope", Eduardo Bonnín said that "Cursillos in Christianity is a movement in the, not for the Church, but for the world as it is the same church... it needs priests and laymen, who, maintaining a constant dialogue, they have to be faithful and not straight away from the Foundational Charism.

The Cursillos are in communion with the Church through the "ecclesiastical signs noted by Pope Juan Pablo II in "Christifidelis Laici":

- 1) The primacy given to the vocation of every Christian to holiness
- 2) The Catholic faith proclaiming the truth about Jesus Christ, the Church, and the man as is the Magisterium exhibits the confession.
- 3) The communion with the Pope and the Bishop, which includes the recognition of the plurality of associated forms and availability for mutual collaboration.
- 4) Participation in evangelization and sanctification of humanity, which requires a missionary spirit and from within the Diocesan Church.
- 5) The commitment to a presence in society, especially the case of lay associations, since the peculiar Christian layman is its secular character.

On my part, I recognize a double aspect of the relationship between the Church and the Cursillo Movement, emphasizing the bonds of communion.

- a) The movement exists and acts in a diocese only by the approval of the ordinary Bishop of the diocese.
- b) Having said that, the Cursillos must remain faithful to the Foundational Charism without ecclesiastical taxation, with the exception of serious theological mistakes, pastoral or moral.

Who or whom have the right to interpret the Foundational Charism and discern what is alien to true to the Charisma? This is important because it helps us to choose between two options that have been made; should the Foundational Charism be reinterpreted according to the "signs of the times? or "should read", the signs of the times in the light of the Foundational Charism? Thus, who has "authority" in the Cursillos?

The word "authority" comes from 2 words in Latin "auctoritas" (authorship) and "angere" (aumenbar). The word "authority" is linked with the mythological founding event of the city of Rome. According to the myth, since the gods had facilitated the creation of Rome, it was mandatory that your wishes concerning the welfare of the people be respected. The authority covered, according to what was thought, had the ability to increase or to interpret the wishes of the Roman Gods in reference to all decisions affecting the life of the city.

Those who exercised authority, senators and elders, didn't do it in their own name but only by the wishes of the Gods. "Parents" were witnesses and participate in events and were the first who received the authority to carry out the divine will. They were not the "authors" of the city (it was believed that the Gods were the authors) but believed that they had been chosen to "re-present" the intentions of the Gods." They could not contradict the will of the "authors".

I think the parallel with the Cursillos is obvious. It is necessary to align with the Foundational Charism in light of the historical genesis in which it was received by the human founder/author of Cursillos, Eduardo Bonnín. John Paul II addressed these words to the Pontifical Council for the Laity in 1998; "A movement is... a concrete ecclesiastic reality, whose membership is of secular majority, who share a pilgrimage of faith and Christian witness, based on his own pedagogical method, rooted in a particular charism given to the founder in circumstances and specific ways." The Pope continued, "the pass of the original charism to the movement is done by the mysterious attraction that is communicated by the founder to all those involved in his spiritual experience".

We must prevent all clericalism in our movement. In 1998 Cardinal Ratzinger in his address to the Pontifical Council for the Laity said, "the institutional and charismatic dimensions of the Church are co-essentials", 3 years later (2001), Pope Juan Pablo II shared, "the tendency of clericalizing movements would be a great loss, the participation of priests in the movements should not promote neither the clericalization of the lay movements or the "laicalizacion" of the priests". Bothe roles complement each other.

In December 1981, the Pontifical Council of the Laity enacted a document, still very little-known, "The identity and the Mission of the priests between the associations of the laity". What follows are several quotations from this document.

(The term used by the spiritual advisor in this work is "Ecclesiastical Assistant")

- "It is recommended that the priest, named as Ecclesiastical Assistant, has some personal experience working with the associations... share your life with the members of the Association and identify with the values of that life which promotes and allows its pastoral aims to be more specific and thus increasing their persuading ability".

- "For the mission that has been entrusted to him by the hierarchy to be fruitful, must have the ability to be incorporated in the Association, work with respect and loyalty with lay leaders, with understanding of the purpose and the educational strategy of the association located in the context of the Mission of the Church, with a particular application for the environment in which the Association performs its action".

- The assistant promotes awareness of promoting the bonds of communion with the Church and must "promote unity intra-associational and its local expansion Regional, National (and worldwide)

- The Ecclesiastical Assistant is also the "architect unit" when it helps others responsible for the pastoral care of the Church (or they are priests, Laity, pastoral, or at parish or diocesan level advice) to deepen their understanding of identity, purpose, and the performance of the associations so that they can share and reflect on their particular experiences. It should facilitate communication between the associations and the pastors of the Church.

- The Ecclesiastical Assistant must learn the art of spiritual direction (I was certified in 2008) and should engage with the ways of Holiness and strive to penetrate the mystery of the Trinity and to live according to the criteria of Scripture...As a man of prayer, you should guide all the members of the Association to the encounter with God's presence.

In light of this document, it is worth mentioning the title of monthly articles of Fr. Antonio Perez Ramos (the Advisor of the movement in Mallorca) in the magazine "Manantial" - "With Galileo accent ". Reminds us of the meeting of the town with St. Peter: "You are also Galileo"(it was noticed by his accent); it is to say, "you also are one of those followers of Jesus". Let us also remember S. Augustine: "for you I am Bishop; with you I am Christian". The Advisor of Cursillos should say, "for you I am the Advisor (Diocesan, Regional, National, International, episcopal) but with you I am a Cursillista".

In the September 1991 National mailing, we had a good summary of the distinction and complementarity of the roles of Lay Leaders and Spiritual Advisors:

- 1 Lay Director is always Lay (there is history in some Nations, including United States from clerical encroachment), responsible for organizational and methodological issues.
2. The Spiritual Advisor (necessary to be or priest, deacon or religious) is the one responsible for doctrinal and conscience issues.
3. The entire Secretariat (and not just an individual) is accountable to the Bishop - all members must have episcopal approval.

4. It is necessary for Lay Director and Spiritual Advisor to be leaders of the movement and not "imposed from the outside".
5. The two must have ability and willingness for cooperation and mutual support and make effort to work together with spirit of Group Reunion. Sharing their visions of the movement and of the spiritual life. This sharing is not to be limited to formal meetings.

### **What the Cursillos Spiritual Advisor should know:**

1. The main and primary focus of Cursillos is The Person. (S. Irenaeus said, "the glory of God is the human person fully alive, it is to say "realized") Eduardo Bonnín always noted: "Jesus Christ did not become a structure but a person".
2. The Cursillos were thought of, prayed and structured, not to evangelize / save the world, but to the person in the world.
3. The person gets "fully alive" (see above - S. Ireneo) through the grace of God, channeled by 3 encounters - with oneself, with God in Jesus Christ and others.
4. The Cursillos facilitate these three encounters and it provides the means to deepen them throughout life, which is the purpose of the "4th day".
- 5 While we become more "fully alive", we are attracting others in our environments through friendship.
6. These relationships of friendship and grace changed the course of history and thus, the world becomes more human and divine.
7. The Cursillos message comes from the heart to the mind.
8. The basic proclamation of Cursillos is
  - a. the best news, which is that in Jesus Christ God loves me/us.
  - b. communicated by the best means which is friendship.
  - c. addressed to the best of each one, his person.
  - d. beginning with "the Jerusalem of our self".
- 9 We proceed from the conviction to the fellowship and not backward.
10. The Cursillos instill concern for the person
  - a. to be more and better
  - b. to search for all the means to be
  - c. to try to remove impediments that prevents the realization to be.
- 11 To reach for the far way is the purpose of Cursillos (personal testimony if time permits...)
12. The charism does not change according to "the signs of the times" but rather the signs of the times are interpreted in the light of the charism.
13. The Christ proclaimed in Cursillos is alive, normal and nearby.

### **Role of the priests (deacons, religious or nuns) in the 3 phases of the Cursillo"**

1. Pre-Cursillo
  - a. To promote the criteria of those who can go to the Cursillo (almost all with sufficient maturity to understand, live, and share the message)
  - b. Who should go to the Cursillo (especially, but not exclusively, the far way)
  - c. Who should not go
  - d. Do not use the cursillo as a "terajera" or "panacea" (one that can fix all).

- e. Maintain the spirituality of leaders preparing for the 3 days.
  - f. Ensure real witness life of grace of the leaders.
  - g. Make effort to meet and become friends with the leaders.
2. Cursillo (3 days)
- a. To be available as much as possible; (Grace stops in the least expected moments)
  - b. **Follow outlines** of meditations and rollos! (It must follow the sequential development of the 3 days)
  - c. The rollos are not theological treatises of encyclopedias.
  - d. Ensure that there are enough confessors.
  - e. **Follow liturgical norms!** (I have witnessed many errors and liturgical abuses in cursillos and even in National Encounters)
3. Postcursillo
- a. Ultreya
    - 1 Make the spiritual overview promoting secular spirituality
    - 2 Be available for confession and spiritual direction
    - 3 Ensure that all Ultreyas have "spiritual covering"
  - b. School of Leaders - doctrinal talk and facilitation of the spirituality of leaders.
  - c. Identify and "certify" training, maturity, orthodoxy, and relational capacity of spiritual directors who cursillistas can be referred to. This is the true role of lay spiritual directors in the Cursillo. Spiritual Directors may or may not be ordained, religious or religious professed. The laity is not suited for the other roles listed here; your service is the spiritual direction for Cursillistas who take their experience and coexistence seriously on the 4th day and is of great value.

We have to be aware that our role is not controlling but advice and facilitate the spirituality of Cursillos.

### **Some writings that can clarify the identity of the movements and Cursillos in Particular**

1. Speaking at the 1st Congress of the Apostolic Movements and New Communities in 1998, Cardinal Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI) gave a talk on "the theological Locus of Apostolic Movements. Recognizing the tendency of certain Bishops of confuse the energy of the movements for having a diocesan approach and not Universal, the Cardinal said that "the papacy didn't create the Movements, but if their main point of reference in the structure of the Church was, ecclesiastical support... spiritual awakening can engender an absolutization of the movement which may cause the movement to be understood as the only way for all, this can be communicated in various ways by the Bishops (have to) to avoid making an ideal of uniformity of pastoral planning and organization and should not make their pastoral plans criteria to discern what the Holy Spirit can do; an obsession of planning can ensure that churches are waterproof". This was reinforced by an intervention of Mgrs., Miguel Campos (episcopal Advisor of the movements of the CELAM, the Latin America Episcopal Conference) in the 2nd Congress of the Movements in 2006, in which I participated, "on the part of the Bishops of CELAM, I apologize because we have not respected their particular charisms. They have tried to accommodate their charisms within our particular schemes,"(for something more detailed about this topic, I recommend my writings on "Estudio del Carisma". pp. 48-58 or in English.) "Study of the Charism", pp. 48-57).

2. The contribution of Cursillo in Christianity on the renovation of the parish" (Eduardo Bonnín intervention in the Assembly General of the Council Pontifical of the laity - Rome, 78 September 2006"). "The parish structure is shown at the same time too straight to meet the needs of the pastoral and the formation of the Assembly of the faithful, in terms of the "recruitment" of Cursillistas, especially those that recently made the Cursillo, on the part of certain parish priests. In order to incorporate them into various specific tasks or parish apostolate fields, as of catechetical, social action, attention to patients or other ministries; I believe that such requirements if not going to constitute a step forward in the Christianity of the Cursillista. In other writings Eduardo calls him "Apostolic transportation", in question, especially when the new ecclesial channels take time for their basic Christian action within their everyday live, which is to give testimonies of Christ in the place where they were planted. The most novel of Cursillos is to send the lay person into an apostolate in their specific track and normal peculiar style, his or hers, that God has given them, driving it to the joyful simple adventure of finding the way to one self and from itself, discover that the encounter with Christ and brothers can be discovered and turned into friendship, as it becomes a reality in the Group Reunion and in the Ultreya",
3. The last writing annotated here is from the then "chaplain", is to say, National Episcopal Advisor of the Cursillos in El Salvador, but does not date of promulgation, "Historical evolution, Foundational Charism. Identity and Liberation in the Pastoral within the Pastoral of the Church in the world" (Bishop, Miguel Angel Morin Aquino).
  - a. "The Cursillos in Christianity have an identity that clearly places them in the pastoral of environments, as a Diocesan parish supra pastoral work, can be made to fertilize the Gospel, even in the parish realities provided that its action is understood as the result of a mission that projects you in your environment where God has planted you".
  - b. That you are not used to respond to special interests. Possibly well-intentioned, wanting to use the same wrong identity of Cursillo in Christianity.
  - c. Fundamental principles of identity (Fundamental Charism, fundamental ideas, its true and authentic history) should precede any rule and we must be subjected to consensus in order to avoid deviations,
  - d. We urge all the leaders that you deepen in your true and authentic history and entity, which is only possible if we go back to the sources"

DE COLORES

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