



National Cursillo® Movement

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Christianity and Christians

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Source: Cursillos in Christianity National Newsletter – February 2016



Christianity begins with Jesus of Nazareth, a Jew who was born in a small corner of the Roman Empire. Little is known of his early life, but around the age of 30, Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist and had a vision in which he received the blessing of God.

After this event, he began a ministry of teaching, healing, and miracle-working. He spoke of the Kingdom of God, condemned religious hypocrites, and interpreted the Mosaic law in new and profound ways. He spoke before crowds of people, but also chose 12 disciples whom he taught privately. They eagerly followed him, believing him to be the long-awaited Messiah, who would usher in the Kingdom of God on earth.

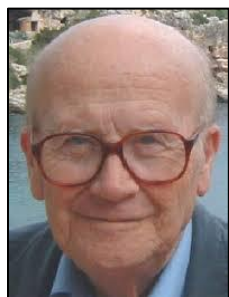
After just a few years, however, opposition mounted against Jesus, and he was ultimately executed by crucifixion at the hands of the Romans. Most of Jesus' followers then scattered, dismayed and disillusioned at such an unexpected and horrific outcome. But three days later, women who gathered to anoint his body reported that the tomb was empty and an angel told them Jesus had risen from the dead. The disciples were initially skeptical, but later came to believe. They reported that Jesus appeared to them on several occasions and then ascended into heaven before their eyes.

The remainder of the first century AD saw the number of Jesus' followers, who were soon called Christians, grow rapidly. Instrumental in the spread of Christianity was a man named Paul, a zealous Jew who had persecuted Christians, then converted to the faith himself after experiencing a vision of the risen Jesus. Taking advantage of the extensive system of Roman roads and the time of peace, Paul embarked on numerous missionary journeys throughout the Roman Empire. He started churches, and wrote letters regularly to them to offer further counsel and encouragement. Many of these letters would become part of the Christian scriptures, called the New Testament.

In the second and third centuries AD, Christians suffered persecution from outside the church and struggled with doctrinal debates from within the church. Christian leaders, who are now called the church fathers, defend the false claims made against Christians (apologetics) as well as arguments against false teachings spreading within the church (polemics). Doctrines were explored, developed, and solidified, the canon of the New

Testament was formed, and the notion of apostolic succession established a system of authority to guard against wrong interpretations of Christian teachings. (www.religionfacts.com/christianity/history)

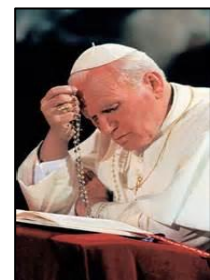
On February 6th, 1940, in Rome, Pope Pius XII acknowledged that there were a great number of people who had moved away from Christian life. He challenged Church leaders to make every effort possible to bring others back to Christian values. The Pope's address inspired Eduardo Bonnín to implement a thorough and deep study of the scenario and atmosphere in a more systematic way, and memorialize it on paper in a most concrete way possible (Leaders' Manual of the Cursillo Movement in the USA, Chapter One). The OMCC's Executive Committee in its Foreword of the Fundamental Ideas, September 2014, stated, "The search for holiness in the normality of everyday life creates the desire to evangelize person-to-person through friendship, enabling the discovery that God, in Christ, loves us, creating enthusiastic evangelists in his 'square meter', transforming thereby the environments."

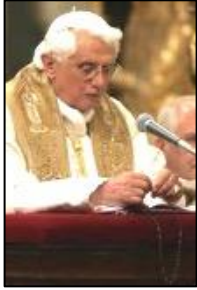


The Founder of the Cursillo Movement, Eduardo Bonnín, has showed us a path to individual holiness that is both simple and challenging through Piety, Study and Action, which should be constantly practiced and shared in our Friendship Groups. He keeps reminding us of "being Christian rather than doing Christian things", which come naturally and automatically. We must learn to be on a journey, to be always on pilgrimage, to feel happy, but never complacent. It is a shame not to have the joy of being Christian. The Cursillo Movement is precisely the joyful communication of being Christian. God in Jesus Christ loves us. Being Christian is to be loved by God and to live astonished by this.

In the Cursillo Movement, the Cursillistas - the conscientious Christians - have proudly and joyfully acknowledged this marvellous coincidence: our contemporary beloved popes fittingly represent our Cursillo Tripod, each in a mysterious way. Pope Saint John Paul II represents Piety, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, Study, and Pope Francis, Action. In their encyclicals, pastoral letters, homilies, weekly audiences, remarks, etc., they have continually urged Christians to be self-transformed thanks to their on-going conversion through Piety, Study and Action in order to become true witnesses of Christ to others through acts of friendship.

Eduardo Bonnín used to exhort us to keep our three encounters with Self, with Christ and with Others every day. Pope Saint John Paul II, in his Message to the Cursillistas at the 3rd World Ultreya in Rome, on July 29th, 2000, affirmed: "You who have generously opened your hearts to Jesus are being asked by Him to proclaim His name untiringly to those who do not yet know Him. He is calling you to his service, to





the service of His truth, the truth that makes us free... You have experienced that true happiness is found in following the Lord. This personal and community experience must be passed on to others. Many men and women of our time, who unfortunately turn away from God, expect from you the light of faith that will help them rediscover the colors of life and the happiness of feeling loved by God.” Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI has taught us to “walk in Christ’s light daily through fidelity to personal and liturgical prayer, nourished by meditation on the inspired word of God. Make the daily celebration of the Eucharist the center of your life.... You are called to exercise the Spirit’s gifts amidst the ups and downs of your daily life. Let your faith mature through your studies, work, sports, music and art. Let it be sustained by prayer and nurtured by the sacraments.” In his response to Peter Seewald’s question “*How is a good Catholic different from other people?*”, then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger said, “Catholics are human beings like everyone else. Among Catholics there is every degree of good and evil - just as, conversely, in all religions there are men of interior beauty [Lauterkeit] who through their myths somehow touch the great mystery and find the right way of being human. I think that we shouldn’t try to calculate where the best men are. One thing, however, we do dare to say “Whoever lives the faith in real patience and lets himself be formed by it is purified through many setbacks and weaknesses” (“Salt of the Earth”, 1997).

St. James gave us this warning in his letter, “Be doers of the Word and not hearers only. Faith of itself, if it does not have works, is dead” (James 1:22 & 2:17). Pope Francis, at the 3rd European Ultreya in Rome, on April 30th, 2015, asked the attendees and the Cursillistas throughout the world, “Are all of you able to recite the seven Works of Corporal Mercy and the seven Works of Spiritual Mercy?” Feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, shelter the homeless, visit the sick and the imprisoned, and bury the dead; instruct the ignorant, counsel the doubtful, admonish sinners, bear wrongs patiently, forgive offenses willingly, comfort the afflicted, and pray for the living and the dead. He urged them, “*Challenge yourself to do this at home: search for them, study the works of mercy. Why? To put them into practice.*”



Personal transformation is essential to apostolic works and good deeds. At a well-known cemetery in London, England, many visitors are interested in the following inspiring inscription on an unknown tombstone: “When I was young, fully enjoying much personal freedom with my limitless ambition and imagination, I dreamed of transforming the world. When I grew up, then a little wiser, I found out that I would not have been able to transform the world, so I narrowed my dream and decided to transform only my country. But it remained the same, and seemingly unchangeable. When I reached my old age, in one last attempt of mine, I decided to transform only my family, my immediate kin, closest to me. But, alas! This endeavor failed miserably, too. And at the present time, lying in bed, closer to death, I suddenly realized this: If I had started to transform myself

first, being a good example, I might have successfully transformed my own family, then with my family's exhortation and encouragement, I could have achieved the transformation of my country, and I bet I could have transformed even the entire world”.



In the Asian astrology, the year 2016 is represented by a monkey. The three wise monkeys are a pictorial maxim. Together they embody the proverbial principle “See no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil”. The three monkeys are Mizaru, covering his eyes, Kikazaru, covering his ears, and Iwazaru, covering his mouth. They fittingly caution us Christians against lack of our custody of the eyes, against listening to impure or vulgar jokes or stories, and against speaking unkindly to or about others, especially during the Lenten Season this year.

As a suggestion of prayer for our Cursillo Movement, during this Extraordinary Year of Divine Mercy, we will commit ourselves to recite this special prayer composed by Pope Francis:

Lord Jesus Christ, you have taught us to be merciful like the Heavenly Father, and have told us that whoever sees you sees Him. Show us your face and we will be saved. Your loving gaze freed Zacchaeus and Matthew from being enslaved by money; the adulteress and Magdalene from seeking happiness only in created things; made Peter weep after his betrayal, and assured Paradise to the repentant thief. Let us hear, as if addressed to each one of us, the words that you spoke to the Samaritan woman: “If you knew the gift of God!” You are the visible face of the invisible Father, of the God who manifests his power above all by forgiveness and mercy: let the Church be your visible face in the world, its Lord risen and glorified. You willed that your ministers would also be clothed in weakness in order that they may feel compassion for those in ignorance and error: let everyone who approaches them feel sought after, loved, and forgiven by God. Send your Spirit and consecrate every one of us with its anointing, so that the Jubilee of Mercy may be a year of grace from the Lord, and your Church, with renewed enthusiasm, may bring good news to the poor, proclaim liberty to captives and the oppressed, and restore sight to the blind. We ask this through the intercession of Mary, Mother of Mercy, you who live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit for ever and ever. Amen.