



National Cursillo® Movement

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Precursillo and Kerygma

Source: Presented by Ceferino (Cef) Aguillon at the National Cursillo Encounter held at Lewis University in the Diocese of Joliet – August 5, 2016

Introduction

God is good . . . all the time! All the time . . . God is good!

I've been invited to speak about Precursillo and Kerygma. As Cursillistas we may not be too familiar with the word kerygma. For some of us, it may be the first time we hear this word. I feel it is important to recall a couple of key points provided in the Keynote Address offered by Bishop Sevilla. I also believe it is important to place the purpose of Cursillo in front of us so we can refer to it throughout this encounter.

During the Keynote Address delivered by Bishop Sevilla on Kerygma and the Cursillo Movement, he mentioned that the word's original meaning is proclamation, declaration or announcement. He went on to say that Kerygma is a dynamic, impassioned preaching; something that takes into account the fact that doctrine can have its full meaning only as a way of life [personal witness of life] and that Kerygma is an appealing proclamation, directly and constantly linked to conversion.

It is also important to understand that Kerygma is closely linked with Cursillo. When I travel to visit with Cursillistas in the different dioceses, I always remind them of the importance to always keep the purpose of Cursillo in the forefront. Simply stated, the purpose of Cursillo, particularly in the field of evangelization, its aim, is to communicate the Good News of God's love to the person, especially, but not exclusively, to those who are far away from Christ and his Church, since the experience of the love of God is the basic element in living and sharing what is fundamental to being Christian. Cursillo encounters the 'what for' of its existence, its own specific purpose, as something which characterizes and defines it.

Another important fact to recall, is that from its origins, Cursillo has always followed a kerygmatic approach for communicating the Good News of God's love to the person in its three phases, Precursillo, Cursillo, and Postcursillo. The form of Kerygma followed in Cursillo to communicate the love of God is through the method of friendship and a personal witness of life. Therefore, Kerygma is an essential element in Cursillo and in life. One cannot communicate the Good News of God's love to the person without offering a personal witness of that love. This form of expression, Kerygma, is what convinces the person to move towards a personal friendship with self, Christ, and others.

This weekend, we will live and share our Christian life with one another in a kerygmatic manner through friendship and a personal witness of life lived and experienced.

Precursillo and Kerygma

Let us move now to the topic of Precursillo and Kerygma.

To the extent the Precursillo is more kerygmatic, not to be confused with the word charismatic, the more perfect it becomes, as presupposed in the witness of life on the part of the sponsor and on the part of the community.

With regard to the witness of the sponsor, the ideal disposition of the candidate should come from the astonishment, the admiration of the change of life of his sponsor, which should awaken in him an openness and a willingness to change. The witness of the change caused by the encounter with Christ is kerygma and a silent proclamation that the Kingdom of God is within me.

With regard to the testimony of the community, the disposition of the candidate may develop from a collective witness at the Ultreya, at an encounter, in some celebration where the candidate actually witnesses and experiences how the community loves one another, etc.

Christ himself, before giving the 'Cursillo of his preaching', considered necessary a Precursillo and therefore, sent us a 'precursor' to 'prepare the way of the Lord'.

The Precursillo should resemble the preaching of John the Baptist, who sought to 'prepare the way of the Lord and make straight paths for him' (Mt. 3:3); to encourage the candidate towards a disposition to conversion and the encounter with Christ.

A Pre-evangelization is necessary, as a state of preparedness for the kerygma. This calls for accepting the person as he is and where he is in order to bring about a dialogue for awakening in the person an awareness of God and to open his heart to the message.

Today my friends, more than ever, we must take seriously the words of John the Baptist, 'prepare the way of the Lord'! Today, we are the precursor, today we are the 72 called to 'prepare the way'. Why? Because Jesus Christ is coming again!

A Kerygmatic Approach to Spreading the Gospel

The word kerygma would be quite common to the early Christians. It simply meant telling your friends about the most important part of your life; the new life that you discovered when you became a Christian and how happy it made you. We should strive to become Christ-like storytellers.

In the early years of the Church this was done with such authenticity and enthusiasm that others naturally wanted to hear more. This was and still can be one of the most powerful ways that the Holy Spirit works in the Christian community. Telling your story . . .

People wonder what happened to you. You seem so joyful. People often say, wow, I wish I could get some of that in my life. How did it happen? Authentic sharing of your personal story of encountering God is considered kerygmatic evangelization.

Personal Witness – A copy of the audio file of this talk which includes the my witness will be posted in the near future at My Resource Center on the [National Cursillo Website](#).

The Vivencial Character of Cursillo and Christianity

There are two Spanish words that are key elements of kerygma and Cursillo, they are, *vivencia* and *convivencia*. The word *vivencia* translates to *an experience that someone is living* and the word *convivencia* translates to *sharing and witnessing to what one lives and experiences*.

Therefore, in Cursillo the announcement and the witness that is being proclaimed is the living and sharing of what is fundamental to being Christian. The key words are living (*vivencia*) and sharing (*convivencia*) because in order to be considered kerygma, one cannot only live a Christian life, one must *be Christian* and therefore, share and give witness of one's Christian living with others. And . . . this is done best in the company of friends!

During the Precursillo and the 3-Day Weekend, we are not trying to form our friends instantly into mature Christians. Rather we are trying to motivate them into wanting to imitate a Christ-like lifestyle of the sponsor or team members, who are presumably well formed Christians.

For the Church and [Cursillo], the first means of evangelization is the witness of an authentically Christian life, given over to God in a communion that nothing should destroy and at the same time given to one's neighbor with limitless zeal. You've probably heard this quote by Pope Paul VI many times, "Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses."

Living and Sharing What is Fundamental to Being Christian

The Movement's basic orientation is provided by its charism: to bring the love of God to all people, enabling people to encounter Christ, thereafter living in a new way, by being Christian, and therefore transforming their environments.

This means that the intention of the Movement is to bring the Good News of God's love to every person, especially to those who are far away, since the experience of the love of God is the basic element in living and sharing what is fundamental to being Christian. Every person can discover how to be Christian in his ordinary life, in his environment, sharing this life with others through friendship and therefore, transforming the environments with the light of the Gospel.

The Movement proposes a new way of life for the person that results from the encounter with self, with Christ, and with others and continues in the living and sharing of what is fundamental to being Christian.

How does the living and sharing of what is fundamental to being Christian apply to us as sowers, evangelizers, leaders and how is this associated with kerygma?

The Movement understands what is fundamental to being Christian lies in:

The Great Commandment (Matthew 22:37-39) – Jesus says: "The first is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and

with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”

The Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) – “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and behold, I am with you always, to the close of the age.”

Is the purpose of Cursillo to make disciples or to make Cursillistas? The mindset is that if we don’t have more Cursillistas, we don’t have a Movement. No, not at all. If we don’t have disciples who live and share what is fundamental to being Christian through friendship, then we do not have a Movement, and all we are left with are Christian or Cursillo practices! Here’s the reality: if there is no friendship, there is no Cursillo!

Jesus Christ – our life must be centered on Christ since He is the essential, the foundation and expression of the personal love of God.

Grace – is the gift of God in Christ offered to each one of us fully so that we may live in communion and friendship with Him. In Grace the whole conversion, the whole encounter with God and with the Christian community is realized.

Faith – is our free response, our ‘yes’ to God revealed in Christ, a response of love to a personal invitation that excites and encourages us to follow Him and bring others to follow Him.

Church – is the place where we encounter Christ and in Christ the Father. The encounter with Christ, the life in Grace, the road of faith . . . all are lived in the Mystical Body of Christ.

Sacraments – in the Sacraments God encounters us. Each sacrament reveals the double dimension constituting human existence. The vertical dimension is communion or friendship with God and the horizontal dimension is communion or friendship with our brothers and sisters.

Living and sharing what is fundamental to being Christian is about sharing it in friendship, because Christian living is shared living. This supposes we are:

- Living the triple encounter: with self, with Christ, and with others.
- Living the process of a conscious, constantly growing and shared conversion.
- Living an experience that develops around the method of Friendship.

Friendship and Kerygma

Applying a kerygmatic approach during Precursillo is not as difficult as it may seem. The important thing to remember is that we are called to *make a friend, be a friend and bring our friends to Christ*; not necessarily to Cursillo! Study this phrase carefully, it’s about bringing your friends to Christ.

When our evangelizing efforts focuses only on bringing others to Cursillo that’s when pressure and anxiety set in especially when people turn down our invitation. Kerygma is about telling your story about your relationship and friendship with Christ and why others find who you are as

a person and what you live as a Christian attractive. The purpose of Cursillo was never to bring everyone we know to a Cursillo, but to communicate the Good News of God's love to ALL people. And . . . we can communicate God's love from where we are at this exact moment!

The Sower and Precursillo

In Precursillo, for the most part, we think in terms of who we plan to invite to the 3-Day Cursillo, but the 'sower' or the Cursillista doing the inviting is of crucial importance. One of the first things the Founder did for us, is to teach us how to 'study the environment', in other words 'how to win the person over to Christ'; therefore, he left us a practical method or plan of action of how this is accomplished.

There are three fronts (areas) to consider in this plan of action: *Ourselves, Our Companions, and The Environment*. And yes, many Cursillistas struggle with the military language used in some Cursillo books, but that was the reality the Founder lived. Is that our reality today? We may not be in the military, but we are definitely engaged in battle. Yes! We are literally in a battle for our lives and our souls! That is why evangelization is urgent!

The first front is *ourselves* (refers to us who are here):

- The *Will*: First we must turn our will up to the highest setting. If we do not have a strong and determined will, we will accomplish nothing.
- The *Knees*: We will find all the courage we need at the foot of the Tabernacle. We should do everything through him, with him, and in him.
- The *Mind*: It is necessary that we apply our intelligence fully in our apostolic work. Give the same attention to Christ's things as we do our own.
- The *Heart*: Show charity and respect when dealing with people. All persons seek to love and be loved.

The second front are our *companions* (refers to those who accompany us in life):

- The *Heart*: If we do not win over the heart first, not much will happen.
- The *Intelligence*: from the heart, go to the mind. This is not as difficult as it seems because as Christians, we all have the seed of Grace received at Baptism.
- The *Will*: We must draw our companions along with us as if by 'magnetism' and then on to follow Christ.
- The *Knees*: And by the grace of God, the person will fall to their knees.

The third front (area) is the *environment* (refers to the consequence of implementing the first and second fronts):

- Ferment the environment with the Good News of God's love and friendship.
- Infect those who compose the environment with God's love and friendship.
- So that all find joy through grace and through grace all find joy.

The Four Movements of Apostolic Action: To Know, To Place, To Enlighten, To Accompany

The Founder left us a technique to follow for bringing others to Christ.

1. *Know* your friend – How can you help your friend if you don't know him? Only in knowing your friend will you know how he thinks (mind), what he wants (heart), and how he acts (will). Sharing of each other's *inner self* is what leads to friendship.
2. *Place* your friend – only in knowing the person, can you know where to place him. All too often and probably with good intentions, we begin telling the person what he needs to do and where he needs to be without ever knowing his circumstances. Consider the following steps for placing your friend in Truth:
 - Help your friend recognize his talents and place them in the service of Christ. **(Self)**
 - Help your friend look towards Christ in every circumstance of life. **(Christ)**
 - Help your friend live life with enthusiasm and to live in grace so he attracts his friends to Christ. **(Others)**
3. *Enlighten* your friend – the goal is to help your friend align his will with the will of God. Easier said than done, right? Enlightening is about making your friend aware and being present to the realities and responsibilities where God places him or is calling him to: family, work, a life centered on Christ, being Christian, to love God and to love our neighbor, etc.
4. *Accompany* your friend – To accompany your friend is not only important, but essential. No matter if your friend is a Cursillista or not, your responsibility is to accompany him especially after he establishes a friendship with Christ. And if he goes to Cursillo, you must accompany him in his Fourth Day experience. Your responsibility is to accompany your friend in the Precursillo, the 3-Day Cursillo, and the Postcursillo. Friendship does not end after the Cursillo Weekend; rather it is intensified through *metanoia*.

The entire process begins with oneself so that each one of us may have something to offer our friend and therefore become apostolic through knowledge of oneself, by placing oneself where one needs to be at the precise time, and by being enlightened through the realities in which one already lives. The consequence is that of becoming an alive, near, and normal Christ to the friend you are hoping to lead to Christ.

Personal Contact, Authentic Witness of Life, and Real Palanca

There are three other elements that are crucial in all phases of the movement. A couple of these elements are actual quotes from Pope Paul VI's exhortation, *On Evangelization in the Modern World* which still apply today, especially in our movement.

The three elements are Indispensable Personal Contact, Authentic Witness of Life, and Real Palanca.

1. *Indispensable Personal Contact* – For this reason, side by side with the collective proclamation of the Gospel, the other form of transmission, the person-to-person one, remains valid and important. The Lord often used it (for example, with Nicodemus, Zacchaeus, the Samaritan woman, Simon the Pharisee), and so did the apostles. In the

long run, is there any other way of handing on the Gospel than by transmitting to another person one's personal experience of faith? (Pope Paul VI exhortation, On Evangelization in the Modern World, #46)

2. *Authentic Witness of Life* – Let us now consider the very persons of the evangelizers. It is often said nowadays that the present century thirsts for authenticity. Especially in regard to young people it is said that they have a horror of the artificial or false and that they are searching above all for truth and honesty. These ‘signs of the times’ should find us vigilant. Either tacitly [quietly] or aloud, but always forcefully [compelling], we are being asked: Do you really believe what you are proclaiming? Do you live what you believe? Do you really preach what you live? The witness of life has become more than ever an essential condition for real effectiveness in preaching. (Pope Paul VI exhortation, On Evangelization in the Modern World, #76)
3. *Real Palanca* – Simply stated, this is referring to prayer, sacrifice, and works of mercy.

Conclusion

The centrality of the kerygma calls for stressing those elements which are most needed today: it has to express God's saving love which precedes any moral and religious obligation on our part; it should not impose the truth but appeal to freedom; it should be marked by joy, encouragement, liveliness and a harmonious balance which will not reduce preaching to a few doctrines which are at times more philosophical than evangelical. All this demands on the part of the evangelizer certain attitudes which foster openness to the message: approachability, readiness for dialogue, patience, a warmth and welcome which is non-judgmental. (Pope Francis, The Joy of the Gospel, 164-165)

As Cursillo leaders, as Christians, we have to rediscover the fundamental role of the first announcement or kerygma, which needs to be the center of our evangelizing activity and efforts. On the lips of the Cursillista the first proclamation must ring out over and over: Jesus Christ Loves You; he gave his life to save you; and now he is living at your side every day to enlighten, strengthen and free you.

In Precursillo, 3-Day Cursillo, and Postcursillo, God is only asking that we be ourselves, no matter the situation. God, in his mysterious wisdom, places you, places me in my moveable square meter, with my talents and my skills, as well as my possibilities and limitations. And there is where He gives me the opportunity to encounter the person who needs to know and believe that God loves him.

GOD LOVES YOU!