



## Popes, Cursillo and Charisms

*Source: Presented by Gail Terrana at the 27th National Cursillo Encounter held at Trinity University in the Archdiocese of San Antonio – July 29, 2017.*

Please pray with me. *Come Holy Spirit . . .*

My topic today is, “Popes, Cursillo and Charisms”. What do the Popes have to say about Cursillo (or Movements in general), and Charisms, well plenty! Pope John Paul II explained the phenomenon of Movements in the Church; he said that the Church had forgotten its charismatic dimension! The Church is both institutional and charismatic, and for years, hundreds of years, the Church lost sight of its charismatic side.... But with the Holy Spirit, all that was about to change!

I love this topic and I am so excited to share my own journey of discovery regarding Popes, Cursillo and Charisms. I have served in many areas of Cursillo – diocesan, regional, national, international and world. For many years I wondered how Cursillo was serving the Church. This was an interior prayer, a desire and a cry from my heart. I was searching for more, and in my heart, I knew there was more to Cursillo. Through my group reunion, my study, my friendships and the witness of others, I was on a road to discover the gift of Cursillo’s charism.

I was invited to my first National Encounter which was in Denver in 1995, and it was there, that I met Eduardo Bonnín for the first time. I heard his presentation entitled, “Keep Cursillo Simple” and I wondered what he meant by that! I was hooked on attending these national gatherings once I experienced the friendships, the sharing and the enthusiasm of others.

I found myself attending the World Ultreya in Rome in 2000 where again I met Eduardo Bonnín. I also forged a friendship with Tom Sarg our National Executive Director at that time, and I served with Tom for three years and became his Administrative Assistant.

It was in 2003, that our National staff (Tom Sarg, Jorge Barcelo, Joachim Le, Victor Lugo) went to Mallorca, Spain and had a one-week visit with Eduardo Bonnín. They met with him each day asking questions about Cursillo and how it started. Some of their sessions were video-taped. The holiness of Eduardo touched all of them, and when they shared their visit with our National Secretariat, they too, joined in this excitement and our national was on a path to discover our Foundational Charism. A charism that was given to one person, our founder Eduardo Bonnín.

That same year our National Encounter presented the ten topics from the 1<sup>st</sup> Conversations of Cala Figuera. These ten topics are the foundational core of our movement. Person, Freedom, Criterion, Conviction, Friendship, Sincerity, Love, Normality, Life, and Joy. It was an exciting Encounter and many were invigorated to study our charism. We had something that resonated within us for we were focused on studying from the person who was given this Original Charism. I think we were all seeking to know and live the charism, we just did not know where to go to find it. We (our National) had begun our journey of discovery of our movements charism!

There is a book on these ten topics from the First Conversations of Cala Figuera --- Cala Figuera is the name of the villa, in Mallorca where the first Cursillo took place. The book was just recently updated this year in a REVISED translation!!! And It is in our Bookstore today.

In 2006, I was asked to serve in the World Cursillo Movement, as Vice-President of their Executive Committee! I remember thinking, “Really Lord? I don’t know anything about the workings of the world movement.” However, I knew as soon as I took this to prayer for discernment – it was a YES – God was calling me.

At my first meeting in Los Angeles, I met two cursillistas: Juan Ruiz, who was serving as President, many of you may know him; and Maribel Gomez who was serving as Secretary. I did not know she would become my forever friend. At this meeting, I had my notepad and pen ready to take notes. Juan started the meeting and said:

*“The first thing we have to do is become friends, for if we become friends, we can accomplish anything.”*

What did I just hear? Become friends! How refreshing! No four-year plan, no timetable, no lecture on the World Cursillo, just become friends. I immediately felt at ease, and I knew I could do this for I knew I could be a friend.

Our first assignment in serving the World Cursillo Movement was an invitation to attend the 2<sup>nd</sup> World Congress of Ecclesial Movements at the Vatican in June 2006. It was scheduled to coincide with Pentecost and 123 World Movements were represented. Juan Ruiz, Maribel Gomez, Fr. David Smith, our Spiritual Advisor and myself were representing the World Cursillo Movement in St. Peter’s Square, Rome.

The Congress held major presentations from Cardinals, Archbishops, and there were several workshop sessions with the other Movements. The Pontifical Council for the Laity distributed books from their “Laity Today” series. The books were the documented proceedings pertaining to *Movements in the Church*.

Going to the Vatican and discovering these books on *Movements in the Church*, were a gift to me in my journey of discovery. Within the pages of these books I discovered what a movement is, what a charism is, and how it serves the Church. And more importantly, how a movements charism is transmitted through its founder.

### **What is a charism?**

A **charism** is a free gift from the Holy Spirit, given to an **individual person**, and given for the good of the whole Church.

### **Why is the charism important?**

- The original charism **gives life** to a movement.
- The charism is the source of every movement's **spiritual strength and character**.

### **Where do we go to find our charism?**

To find a movement's charism, we need to go to its FOUNDER.

In the words of Pope St. John Paul II, "the **FOUNDER** is the bearer of the original charism". He said: It is the person of the **FOUNDER** from which the charism is born. It is Through the **FOUNDER** that the charism lives.

After hearing the Pope and the Cardinals talk about a Movements charism and its founder, we departed Rome and flew directly to Mallorca, Spain and we spent one week with Eduardo Bonnín our founder.

As God knows all the desires of our hearts, He answered my prayer in a special way by bringing me to the Vatican and to our founder in Mallorca.

### **How did Eduardo come to develop our charism?**

#### **Here is a little history:**

Studying Eduardo's life, we see his strong Catholic upbringing. His family were devoted Catholics with one sister who became a nun and one brother that was a priest.

Eduardo's time in the military had a significant impact on him. The men in his barrack lived a life very different from his. In quoting Eduardo, he stated, "... I realized that God loved them. Then, I became interested in making this reality known to them."

And then in 1940 Eduardo heard the words of Pope Pius XII that spoke about reaching out to people who are in the parish boundaries but who are not in the church pews. Something touched Eduardo's heart.

I want to point out the significance that the Pope's address is dated February 6, 1940 and Eduardo passed away on this exact date – February 6, 2008. Certainly, this is not a "coincidence" but a providential sign.

Eduardo prayed and studied and put together these three experiences: his life with the soldiers, the message he heard from the Pope and his friendship with others. These became the three pillars in Eduardo's study. Eduardo knew psychology, the study of man, Man wants to be loved, and he knew Theology, the study of God, God loves man. He brought these two together in a powerful and spiritual way. Man can find happiness in knowing he is loved by God.

Eduardo wanted to find a simple way for others to know God's love. The structure of the Church was not reaching those "far away" a term he used to reference those who are: uninformed, misinformed, or not informed. And so, he developed a method that was not about teaching, it was about living and sharing - through living witnesses and genuine friendship - God's love would reach the heart of an ordinary person. Through his study he wrote the *Study of the Environment* rollo.

This “rollo” became the cornerstone of the Cursillo Movement. For it is from this one “rollo” that all the others come from.

I want to point out some essential elements in this rollo:

First, it is not structures in society we want to focus on, but communication between people in everyday life.

Second, it involves three (3) levels:

First ourselves – how we think and what we say,

Then, the condition of others, and our relationships with them

And finally, the surroundings in which this communication takes place, whether it is sporadic, or it only takes place collectively (with others around).

Simply put - We take a warm approach by concerning ourselves with the person. This all takes place “person to person”. Through friendship we show the love of Christ and offer a way to live this life, by sharing and encouraging one another as we freely journey together. You can find this in the booklet, “The Manifesto” in the Bookstore today!

From all this, the first Cursillo was held in August 1944 in Mallorca.

In 1966, there was the First World Ultreya in Rome, and Eduardo gave a presentation on the Purpose of Cursillos. Pope Paul VI was the first Pope to give his blessings on the Cursillo Movement. This is what he said:

*“Cursillos in Christianity! Christ, the Church, the Pope, are counting on you!” (Pope Paul VI, First World Ultreya, Rome, May 28, 1966)*

The Church is experiencing the flourishing of Movements as a “providential response” for our times. As the Church was catching up with this phenomenon of LAY movements, Pope John Paul II was open and accepting. For he, himself was involved in a LAY movement as a young adult.

And so, it was Pope John Paul II who called together the first Congress of World Movements in 1998; and he helped us understand the movements – giving a definition, explanations, and details. One quote from “The Person of the Founder” states:

*“As the **founder** gradually discovers the various dimensions of the charism, he indicates the goals to be reached and defines methods and organizational structures.” (The Ecclesial Movements in the Pastoral Concern of the Bishops, Laity Today, Volume 4, p. 29)*

I want to outline these three discoveries of a founder: goals, method, structure.

Eduardo prayed, studied and reflected and discovered the **goals** to be achieved and the method to accomplish it. The **goals** are to make Christianity alive in a person, to offer the occasion for a personal experience of living a life of Grace to the fullest and for the person to know God loves them through Christ. (*The How and Why*, p.26)

The **method** he found was for the Cursillo to be an instrument of the truth and life of the Christian. A place where one could encounter himself, Christ and others, having a mutual communication by listening to one another, getting to know, understand, respect and value one another, and to

transform the encounter into friendship through the **method** of **Group Reunion and Ultreya**. The person discovers that his life has meaning and that Christ and His Grace is the only thing that can give him the feeling of being alive and leading a meaningful life. (*Foundational Charism* presentation, 5<sup>th</sup> World Encounter, Seoul, Korea, *Study of Charism II: Source Documents* book, p. 144)

The **structure** was given to us by Eduardo in his book “*Structure of Ideas*”.

Another quote from the Vatican documents states:

*“From the founder’s **special** position springs his **spiritual paternity** and the **authority**—unique of its kind—that he exerts over the movement’s members.”* (*The Ecclesial Movements in the Pastoral Concern of the Bishops*, *Laity Today*, Volume.4, p. 29)

I love the term spiritual paternity – Eduardo is our spiritual father! For he not only was given this charism but he has **lived** this charism. We see the charism lived when we look at his life. And because we live the method of Cursillo, we can look at our own life and see how we are living the charism, and how we can live it more fully.

The Pope tells us the founder has **AUTHORITY** that he exerts over the members of his movement. And he identifies this authority as being “**unique of its kind**”.

It is the founder who gives details of its structure, and in doing so, we the members have a roadmap, a “way” to follow to discover our charism.

Speaking as a member of the Cursillo Movement for 30 years, I have had a hunger and a longing for this Original Charism. To me the authority is important. I want to know more about our method, the weekend, the phases of Precursillo and Postcursillo, the Essence and the mentality of our movement and its purpose... and it helps to know there is a person to go to where I can find MORE. All this study helps me to BE more Christian.

I discovered from the Vatican documents that the *founder* has an irreplaceable role in communicating a movements **charism**. No one else can fill this role but the person who received the original charism.

St John Paul II explains:

*“The passage from the original charism to the movement happens through the mysterious attraction that the founder holds for **all those who become involved in his spiritual experience**”.* (John Paul II, “*Address at the Meeting with the Ecclesial Movements and the New Communities*”, *Laity Today*, Volume 2; p. 222.)

Eduardo wanted all of us to become involved in this spiritual experience of Cursillo. He wrote books, for example: *Structure of Ideas*, *The How and Why*, to name a few. He wrote many papers, articles and letters about the Foundational Charism of Cursillo one example *Rediscover the Vision*, etc. He developed a weekend for leaders to assist with a better understanding of the charism calling it: *Cursillo de Cursillos*, which we have been experiencing throughout the United States.

He traveled to five continents to meet Cursillistas and give presentations. One important presentation was on the *Foundational Charism* given at the 5<sup>th</sup> World Encounter in Seoul, Korea, another presentation, *Evangelization Through Conversion*, given at a Canadian Cursillo Conference. He organized the 1st Conversations of Cala Figuera which I spoke of before. He wanted us to know and understand the deeper truth of the Cursillo – that the real encounter with oneself is what makes possible the encounter with others and with the Gospel. He was attracted to us in a special way and we are attracted to him as we journey to discover the Original Charism of our Movement.

Going back to my own journey and discovery, I continue to read and study the books from the Pontifical Council for Laity. They clearly emphasize the place of movements and their importance throughout our Church's history.

I want to share a special discovery for me from Cardinal Ratzinger's presentation on the history of movements entitled, *"The Ecclesial Movements: A Theological Reflection on Their Place in the Church"*. In it, he recounts the Movement of the Orders in the Middle Ages including St. Dominic, and St. Francis, and others. While I was reading, my head is thinking, "is he comparing the Cursillo Movement to one of these Movement of Orders?" And as I continued reading the answer was YES!!! YES!!! YES!!! The significance of the Cursillo Movement and all movements in the Church are as important as the Movement of Orders of St. Francis, and others. What a discovery – I was filled with AWE! In making this connection, I realized our Movement **IS important** to the Church.

It is no wonder that Pope John Paul II called the Movements in the Church "**providential**" for **our time**, for it was a re-discovery of the charismatic dimension of our Church.

Our own Pope Francis is a beacon for Movements. He calls us again and again to live our faith with JOY! I love how Pope Francis describes a Movement:

*"You are not simply a small group. No! You are rather a **movement**, always on the way, always in movement, always open to God's **surprises** which are in harmony with the **first call** of the movement, namely the **founding charism**."* (Pope Francis Address at the Third World Congress of Ecclesial Movements, Nov. 22, 2014)

He is encouraging us to go back to our beginnings. And now we know how to do this – by going to our founder.

I knew my discoveries from our Popes on Movements, Charism and Founder needed to be shared with others. After serving in the Executive Committee for the World Cursillo, I then had an opportunity to continue serving in the International Group - North America Caribbean Group. My first thought was to put information together on the charism for others to read. So, I asked permission to reprint articles from our World Cursillo mailings that were written by Eduardo Bonnín on our charism. The World Cursillo approved and our International Group NACG supported this project and published a book titled, *"The Cursillo Movement: Study of the Charism"*. In the book's Preface, it states: *"May this book enkindle your desire and hunger to continue your journey of DISCOVERY of this great gift of our charism."*

Also, during this time, we planned an International Encounter for the North America Caribbean Group, meeting new friends from Canada, Cuba, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, Trinidad and Tobago. With the leaders from all these countries, this was another opportunity to share this information from our Popes about the charism, the founder, and the movements. Again, our NACG group put together a SECOND book which includes some of the presentations on “Movements in the Church” and three presentations from our founder.

This book is titled, Study of the Charism II: Source Documents and is not available in print, but it is available “online”. If you are interested, please see me after this presentation.

Going back to our Popes, Pope John Paul II explains that:

*“A movement ... is a Christian witness that bases its own instructive method on a **precise charism** given to the **person of the founder** in specific circumstances and ways.”* (Movements in the Church, “*Message to the World Congress of the Ecclesial Movements*”, Laity Today, Volume 2, p.18)

Providentially, our founder was putting together a comprehensive “instructive method” in a document he referred to as his, “Spiritual Testament”. He did not complete it before he died, but his work has been taken up by the leaders in Mallorca, following Eduardo’s directives. In another year, the Foundation for Eduardo Bonnín Aguiló – known as FEBA, will have completed the entire contents of our founder’s “Spiritual Testament”.

This will include:

- A Rectors Guide for a Three-Day Weekend. Eduardo calls it: “Step by Step”
- Appendixes to the Step by Step, (16 Total, including: “This is the Way”)
- Lay Rollo Outlines
- Precursillo and Postcursillo Details

This work is an answer to what the Pope stated, that a movement “*bases its own instructive method on a precise charism given to the person of the founder in specific circumstances and ways*”. Our National Secretariat has a committee who is studying, praying and reflecting on the English translation of this Step by Step section of his Spiritual Testament. You will hear more about it in the coming months. Please pray with us.

## **Conclusion**

When I began, I shared my heart’s desire to know how Cursillo serves the Church. I discovered that a movement serves the Church **when it lives** its charism.

After all this, you may be asking yourself, “What is our movement’s charism?” My friend asked me this same question. And I told her, “you have to discover it for yourself.” And so, I say to all of you, “you have to discover it for yourself.” I have given many clues throughout this presentation. I shared my journey, and I know you can share your own journey. I want to read a quote from Eduardo in the Manifesto.

*“We know that people today want to be able to ask questions more than to find answers to everything, and to do it in an atmosphere of **hope** and with the possibility of **finding the answers for themselves**. A person feels more like a person when they ask questions and **discover** things*

*than when they accept answers from others.” (Manifesto: Cursillos in Christianity, A Reality Not Yet Realized, p.31.)*

Your presence at this Encounter is an indication that you, too, want more – to share with others, to make discoveries, to go deeper into our charism...

We all need Eduardo’s words so we can study and reflect on them to make our own discoveries. And speaking as an English Cursillista, we have been lacking the English translations of Eduardo’s writings. I have personally been asking - begging, for these translations at every opportunity in any of my meetings and especially with FEBA in Mallorca. At the beginning of this year, my conviction led to an inspiration, to ask for, work on, and complete “four” English translations in time for this 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration. Truly an inspiration from the Holy Spirit because three came to fruition.

At this encounter, we now have 3 new books:

**Manifesto** – it makes a strong statement for the Original Foundational Charism.

**Reflections II: In Search of Oneself** - It is a study that goes deeper into ourselves from Eduardo.

**First Conversations of Cala Figuera, FEBA edition** – this book of the ten topics has been revised with a better translation.

**The Thinking of Eduardo Bonnín 1** – this book will be available very soon. It is the first in a series, of a collection of articles written by Eduardo and this will be Book Number One.

I hope this sounds exciting to you!!!! It is exciting to know we can be more **effective** when we understand the “why” of our movement. Cursillo provides a method and a way to understand and discover for ourselves that our life can be a “perpetual” Cursillo. This means it is ongoing – lived in our daily lives – using our unique method of “**Group Reunion**” and “**Ultreya**” that keeps us on a **continual conversion**, and helps us to **grow in friendship** with Christ and others.

Eduardo is with us as we continue to GROW in the GRACE of this Gift from the Holy Spirit, so that our lives are a LIVING witness of the Charism, through which we can faithfully serve The Cursillo Movement and serve our Holy Mother Church. LIVING the Charism is SERVING the Church.

I will end with this quote from Fr. Fernandez, one of the presenters at the Vatican:

*“The person who receives this **grace** [of the original charism] communicates it during his mortal life and, once he has entered into the glorious communion of saints, **continues** to act with his **power of intercession**.”* (“Charisms and Movements in the History of the Church”, Laity Today, Volume 4, p. 73) **I personally believe that Eduardo is interceding for us in heaven!**