



National Cursillo Movement

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Freedom

Source: 1st Conversations of Cala Figuera, Foundation Eduardo Bonnín Aguiló (FEBA).¹

The revised translation of the book describes *Days of reflection on the Founding Charism of the Cursillo held in “The Porciúncula” in Palma de Mallorca on the 50th Anniversary of the First Cursillo Weekend held in Cala Figuera in Santanyi, on the Island of Mallorca, Spain in August 1944.*

I am going to try to communicate with you on an important subject in such a way that at the end of this talk you may have a clear concept of one of the basic, and fundamental topics, although fairly unknown, in people’s lives.

I was assigned the topic of “Freedom,” perhaps because it is one of the fundamental themes of my life, although it may seem contradictory given my personal circumstance of being a priest.

I have discovered in Christianity the need and the possibility of being free and this is the topic that they have given me, and also the topic of one of my books. Also, I have to say, that without realizing it, I have already written more than fifteen books. I say without realizing it because it has not been either my interest or my aim in life. I am merely confiding to you that when in my twenties I found myself a priest I thought that my life was a mistake, because it was not what I was looking for nor was it the Church that I was hoping for. It is like when one gets married and it is to the wrong woman, then I thought that I had chosen the wrong woman, but later I have had to start my life over. In one of my books I wrote that the Church is a prostitute, but a prostitute that proclaims the truth. It is not my saying, but that of a third century saint.

Let’s say that I am married to the Church and in spite of that I determine that I have the need to preach the Gospel of Jesus with the same freedom that He did and, if we may say something, He began in this world, even though it is almost never put into practice, precisely the doctrine of the freedom of the soul, the freedom of conscience.

I think that Jesus is not a founder of religions, not even a new religion, but the authorized spokesman of the Eternal Mystery that became present in this world to show us the way that man needs to reach his fulfillment. Christianity has to help us all reach fulfillment in our existence.

What is the glory of God? The glory of God is the fulfillment of his creation and every being of this creation has a fulfillment according to characteristics of its own. The animals and the plants have fulfillment following their instinct without thinking.

What is the fulfillment of man? Fulfillment of man cannot be accomplished without a free decision from the person to be what he/she wants to be. Freedom in error is preferable to submission. Let’s say that the topic of freedom is for me one of the fundamental and principal topics of existence,

¹ <http://www.feba.info>

because the development of the person is never realized if man is not able to be free, however this question, currently taking our time, requires like all words some coloring.

When we talk about the important themes of life, be it love, beauty, etc. they cannot be reduced to just words. The word love will depend on who is living it and how it is being lived, to be understood this way or that way. The word love is not the same when said by Jesus as when said by a person who deals commercially with love; however, it is the same word. The important words in life are words that need clarification afterwards and the word freedom needs clarification because a person is free when wanting to care and to be free, is the same thing. If man does not care about things and does not love things he is not free. Our fulfillment depends on our capacity to love and our capacity to love depends on our capacity to be free.

I cannot talk about the freedom that everybody knows, we are politically free or, let's say that, when nobody is pressuring us externally Everybody knows if we have that freedom or not. However, the freedom that I am going to specify and the one that makes us a person is the freedom that each one acquires or not throughout his/her existence. One is not free because they want to be, but because he/she has acted to become free. When one is not free one does not become a person.

Everybody is interested in one important thing: we are interested in not failing in life; we are focused in the fact that at the end of our journeys we won't say: what a fool I have been! Or, how bad my existence has been! We cannot say that God is a cruel God that has created humanity to make fun of it. We have to accept that God has created us with the possibility of our reaching fulfillment, but man cannot become fully a man if he does not go from being a rational animal to a human being. To me, a person is the one that practices his freedom; the one that does not practice it is not able to become a person.

To be a person requires consciously exercising one's freedom to seek the truth. There is a sentence that I repeat constantly and it is the question that was asked of Jesus, before Pontius Pilate, in the last moments of his life "And you, why have you come to this world?" He could have said: "To found a new religion, to have friends." Jesus' sentence has been for me the catchword of my life, which is not easy but it is symbolic.

"And you, why have you come to this world?" "I have come to this world to be a witness to the truth" and he is asked: "What is the truth?" Jesus Christ has come to this world to be a witness to the truth because the truth is the foundation of our freedom. We cannot be free if we do not search for the truth. We can concentrate ourselves on many things in this world and afterwards realize that we have not been what we wanted to be. The triumph of a person's life consists in being what one wants to be, not what society expects, nor what others expect from us. Personal triumph consists in that I am what I want and because I want it. Undoubtedly this means for each one of us a constant discipline and a constant search for the truth.

Jesus told us: "This is my commandment, that you love one another." Why? Because I believe that the foundation of our existence lies in the capacity to love others. To love is to love everybody and it needs to be done, let's say, in freedom.

What does God expect from me? God expects my fulfillment and my happiness, my actualization in this world, my capacity to share my life without deceit, so that the footprint that I leave in this

world will be a luminous footprint. We have been sent to this world, we as persons, to make this world better and this is the fulfillment of creation.

I believe that what God expects from this world is for nobody to be a faithful worshiper of a religion. He expects religions and cultures to help humanity reach its fulfillment in the midst of errors, undoubtedly, but above all, through freedom.

What is freedom for me? Freedom is identified with the essence of the divine, that is to say, something that is important. Each one of us is part of the divine in a way that is so mysterious that we cannot know why we are capable of choosing. Man's capacity to choose is what characterizes us as beings called to fulfillment with God. The person who does not choose, who is not capable of choosing, will feel carried away by his/her instincts.

We are going to be concerned here with freedom of conscience because, in the end, freedom dwells with the conscience. We can never before God, in this world or in the next, blame anybody for what our life has become. Man is free in the measure in which he is responsible. We have to answer for our life, not before others or before the world but before our conscience, because the conscience is the place where the divine dwells. We are an image of God in as much as our conscience reflects something which is superior to our capacity for comprehension.

Nobody understands what we are. Why? Because we are all a desire for fulfillment, because we are the image of the divine incarnate. To me, Jesus' incarnation is precisely the reflection, of what each one of us is. Incarnation means, "The divine takes on human form." Since the divine is in each one of us, we are temples of the Holy Spirit, who takes on human form, becoming a person and this is what brings with it, to all of us, a drama too unendurable to live. Nobody can endure it, the divine living in our existence, and that's why humanity gets sidetracked, gets distracted, because the majority of people do not want to even think that we have a responsibility to be like God. We are part of God and this is what torments all of us. We are never content. We never know what this life is, and nothing satisfies us. We are the image of what we are looking for and everything that happens in our life and everything that we desire most: our love, freedom, feelings, everything that we most desire never ends here because it's always a reflection of that which we are and of that which we look for. Because of it, man reaches fulfillment in the measure of his freedom.

Freedom is the same as to want. I want freely and in this wanting freely one is being fulfilled. Liberty is not the same as licentiousness. People mistake these issues; I cannot do as I please: I can do it, no doubt, but I cannot confuse it with the word freedom.

I cannot confuse freedom and power because people believe that only he who has power has freedom. Those who want to have power are not free and those who want to dominate are slaves to their own passion. He who wants power is because he is not sure of himself.

Freedom and independence are not the same. I am free but I am not independent. I am totally dependent on air, food, and even people. We should not confuse it, one is free but is dependent. We need each other Nobody can live their life in complete freedom and independence.

Freedom is not tantamount to Independence. Independence is isolation and isolation always produces neurosis. I am free to make decisions, but I am not free in the sharing of my life in this

world, I have not chosen this world, or my family, or my Church. I have not chosen anything and I am where I am and in being there, I will be free to do one thing or another, but I am dependent. The strong person is not the one who is dependent on no one but the one who is dependent on others because he serves them. When we serve others, then we are depending on one another.

Freedom is necessary for the development of a person. Freedom is necessary even politically speaking. The countries that, in the course of their history, have not granted freedom to persons are countries that denigrate the person. Man can put up with anything except humiliation, and humiliation is precisely what takes our freedom away. We are all equal in dignity, unequal in behavior, in intelligence, in possessions.

We are unequal in almost everything and we don't ever have to pretend equality. Otherwise we make this world uniform and take away initiative and freedom.

Freedom is what characterizes each one of us and when they try to equalize everybody the capacity for initiative and the capacity for development disappears.

Freedom and predestination are not the same. We believe that they are philosophical doctrines that should be focused from another approach, if I am predestined to do what God wants, why my freedom? There is a universal process of this creative intelligence that we call God, but it is a creative intelligence. This world that has life that is intelligent, that we cannot make fun of, produces bad things because man believes himself the owner of this creation but in fact we are an integral part of a creative intelligence that has a purpose. Within this purpose man can determine few things: we can move within a small perimeter of our freedom and this is what characterizes us as persons, but we cannot change the universal projects of this creation. Therefore, there is no predestination for each one of us because if I am predestined no matter what I do, in the end, it is going to be what God wants. No, for one reason and that is because we are part of God and God wants, in the end, also what we want.

Freedom is tied to another important word, responsibility. Animals are not responsible and responsible persons are less animal, that is, logically because responsibility is the degree of response that man has to give before a superior court on his conduct in this world. This is logically tied up with ethics, morality.

I was thinking of a title "Ethics or Disaster?" for my last book because ethics is the base of our human condition and our responsibility. I don't believe there is a civilization that does not have ethics as a foundation. Ethics is the behavior of knowing how to respond. Before whom do we respond? If we do not respond according to our conscience, there will be a time when others will not matter to us because others go away.

What is the only thing left in this world? Each one's conscience. In one of his works Euripides says, "Everything is destroyed, nothing is left. What is left?" I am left. Each one of us when we speak of existence, if we think things over, we will realize that nothing remains, nothing is everlasting, and that things pass away. What remains?

What is left of this Movement organized here fifty years ago? Each one is left. It is not a matter of things left; it is a matter that each person is left with his/her own conscience. That's why the responsibility lies in the education of the conscience.

In the education of children there is not complete freedom because then to educate in freedom, is to educate one to be responsible. I cannot give freedom to the irresponsible; I cannot let the person who cannot be responsible for his/her actions be free. Let's say that everybody has rights, but we have the right to defend ourselves from those who do us harm by being irresponsible, even taking away their freedom because freedom is the way we have to live in mutual respect, and when somebody is disrespectful he/she does not have the same rights as everybody else in this world as a person.

I think aloud, but I never think that others will be in agreement with me. I dare to write what I think for one thing, to make myself clear. It has been a while that I haven't wanted to teach or convert; I want that persons be better, merely that each one be what he/she has to be. Then, if I can talk I say aloud what comes to me and how I see things. Thus, freedom is tied up with responsibility. If we are free we are responsible for the education of our freedom. We have freedom but we are not free to do whatever we want (kill or steal) Our freedom is tied up with the responsibility of educating our freedom and this, for example, the Church, making commandments, publishing her laws, has done nothing more than help the irresponsible, or those who don't know, to show them the way. Obedience to the Church is nothing more than a substitute for personal responsibility.

I think that one gets to know God when he disobeys after reflecting on what he is about to do, because he thinks it's going to be good for him and without a sense of guilt. One loves God when he/she is not afraid of Him, when one has no sense of guilt. He/she who feels guilty has not known God. I cannot feel guilty with a person I love. Making reference to a book that said that we cannot love the one who is going to condemn us, then, guilt is a feeling of having done things badly and this stays in our conscience. Now then, for what have we been given freedom? To do as we please, to live as we want? This is another one of the defects we may believe. Freedom is not useful to any person if is not focused towards a loving service. This is one of the things man must learn.

Man must learn that his life does not make sense if it is not projected, oriented towards the welfare of this world. The best project for each one of us towards the world is to want it, to love it, not to organize things because they all crumble, but to love it. The strong energy of this creation, the energy that made it possible for us to live is God's love, and God's love is a creative energy and we create when we love. We have been given freedom to love, not to make our own life, which is another of the defects we may have, when we may try to be free. We can be free, but we may fall into the individualistic selfishness that characterizes our society. We have reached, thank God, important levels of freedom at the point of living together in this world. For many, freedom has turned into their own tomb because, at no other time, has there been so much neurosis, so much depression, so much selfishness, and so much isolation. Why? Because if freedom is not a projection towards service, it is a tomb to the one who seeks it.

Another question that I am going to be analyzing is the difficulties. They are many and I have had to choose between these and many more. For example, there are people who think that we are conditioned by our past. It's true, we are all conditioned.

The only absolute freedom is God's, and then we participate in some way in that freedom. We are born into this world and live conditioned by our familiar environment, our nation, our education, our genes, etc. Man is a being conditioned by his past, but that cannot be an obstacle for a person to be free. We have a degree of freedom according to the degree with which we search for the truth

and of our responsibility. If someone has never wanted to be responsible, if someone has always lived by receiving, then, naturally, he/she cannot be free and will always complain about where he/she has come from, whom did I marry? What kind of children did I have? We can all complain about many things. That's why I started by saying that I was complaining against the Church, but I am in it, I want to live in it, and besides I don't think that there is a better one. Then, our external conditioning is not enough for someone to deny responsibility and freedom in the process of his/her existence. I am free to have discipline or not. I am free to go someplace or not to go, according to my freedom I will constitute my personality.

Freedom and obedience. Above obedience to someone or to some law is the freedom of conscience. All the laws are at the service of man and when one law enslaves, causes fear or neurosis, man needs to be free enough to say: I am not interested. Sometimes, to disobey is preferable to blind obedience, because blind obedience always leads to fanaticism, and a new society requires the capacity for understanding each other without killing each other. While men continue to desire everybody to be equal, there will be no peace in this world. Peace depends on the capacity we may have to mutually respect each other in our freedom.

Freedom and sharing life. We have a personal freedom, but we lose it when we trample others. Our freedom is conditioned. We are free to do what we want, but we lose our interior freedom, without realizing it, when we make it hard to share our life with others, because of our own self-interest, because I like it. Man's freedom is conditioned to his sharing with others because we are not isolated beings.

An idea that interests me is that we are children of some mechanizing philosophies of the past century that looked upon each of us as isolated beings, without any deep relationship between us. However, I believe that each one of us is a living atom of an intelligent creation and that we receive the strength of this creation when we have a unity between us. That's why man is not completely free. Man needs to learn to share his life through integration with the people of this society. We lose our (freedom) when we trample somebody else's.

Freedom and wisdom. Freedom does not mean to say what I want, do what I want to do, or live in this world as if everyone else is dumb. Jesus said that we have to be wise as snakes. The foolishness and the sense of power, of those who believe themselves in possession of the truth, humiliate the world. Very often all the religions of this world, including ours, humiliate the world when they believe that the truth has only one facet, one way of being expressed. Truth is the search by man in freedom towards the encounter with his full development to achieve his full potential, and this truth has many facets.

Freedom and religion. This is a theme that has caused me a lot of quarrels and will continue to do so, but neither can we quit thinking and saying with affection the things that come to mind.

Religion can become for the people of this world, and we can see it in this society of ours, a rejection of God. People have rejected God at the same time they have rejected the Church. They have rejected religious behaviors, and at the same time they have separated themselves from God and this, let's say, is a responsibility of ours. We cannot confuse the awesome image of God with our small way of presenting it in this world.

Freedom and religion is a controversial topic because the whole world has believed that the most important element in reaching God was obedience. Obedience yes, but obedience to our conscience, not obedience to some authority. People think that with this I am preaching anarchy or disobedience. I preach what Jesus wanted. Freedom of conscience is above submission to a law. If one is not capable, for example, of disobeying an ecclesiastical law without fear, he does not know who God is. If I am not capable of missing Mass on a Sunday and the following day not going to confession and continuing to tell God that I love Him, I do not know what freedom is. Maybe what I am saying is a little controversial, but it is simply to tell you that all the laws of this world, including religious laws; exist for our good and not for our submission.

Freedom and politics. There is no advancement in society if those in government are not able to provide man with the freedom that is his dignity.

Freedom and individualistic selfishness. These can be confused, one may say I do what I want and I am free. Yes, you will be free, but you will fall into the selfishness that separates you from the context of this creation.

Freedom and allowing freedom. This is one of the topics very dear to me and very dear because very often we have been persecuted, we, who were not within the traditional context or within what is customary. There was a Saint in the first centuries of Christianity who said: "Get away from customs like a vice." Customs are that which condition our behavior and, if we were to make an analysis of why we do things, many times we would see that it is because of customs, but not because they make us live. Many times, we have to change the customs to live in liberty.

One of the things that please me most about living in this century and in this moment in the history of humanity is precisely because we are reaching certain points in respect to freedom. There are still fanatical people who pick on others because they think in a different way, when the kaleidoscope of this world is what would make us all much more pleasant in sharing our lives. If I want to be allowed freedom I have to know how to respect those who think differently, who live differently, who behave differently, and those whom I don't understand how they behave, accepting that is their behavior. Freedom is preferable to any kind of submission.

Freedom of thought. Change in this world does not lie in changing structures; it lies in changing of minds. When someone wants to suppress someone else, forbid him/her to think, because thought is the vital energy that moves this world. We are not always heirs to thoughts of past philosophies, that's why what any dictator or any person who wants to command most fears, is that others think freely. Thinking in freedom is the road to the encounter with our fulfillment and with God. These have been some of the difficulties.

Freedom and truth go together. In the stage play Orestes says: "Because I am a man, Jupiter, and every man must create his own way." Let's say that each one of us with our risks and our mistakes, with our atrocities, with our character, we have to break new ground. Nobody has received it ready-made, each one of us, beginning with myself, has had to ponder on how to live in this world, but in this devising of life there are some sure roadmaps. One of those sure roadmaps is the search for truth.

If I search for truth above all else, if I love this world above all else, if my behavior is ethical above all else, and above what everybody else may think, these are the roadmaps of the encounter. Let's

say that others can make us err, obedience can make us err. Obedience is necessary for sharing life, but above sharing life is my personal peace following the saying of Jesus: "My peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you." When one does not have peace, he cannot share it with others.

We grow as persons in the measure in which we are free and we are free in the measure of our concern for truth and love.

We are free, but if we do not choose the truth we will be outside of life's energies. A free man is the one who has lost his fears. Not being afraid is the greatest assurance that can only be achieved through a constant decision for the truth.

One's fulfillment is when he says: "I am not afraid, not even of death," because then he becomes aware that the fulfillment of this life we carry within ourselves. The person has been born to discard fear and when he begins to lose fear he begins to be free. A religious or political society is sick when there is suppression or torture with power of the discordant voices, because there is fear of the person's only dignity:

TO SAY WHAT HE THINKS AND TO THINK IN FREEDOM.