



The Evangelization in the Environments – Mission of Cursillo

Source: Presented by Bishop Francisco Senra Coelho at the 27th National Cursillo Encounter held at Trinity University in the Archdiocese of San Antonio – July 28, 2017.

1. We just received in our hearts and lives the description of the Visitation of Our Lady to Saint Elisabeth. (Lk 1, 39-56).

The way that the Virgin of Nazareth went through Ein Karem is the same that the Arc of Alliance went through when David carried it from Judah's lands to Jerusalem (2 Sam 6, 2). By the same way, Jesus wended to Jerusalem in order to fulfill the Father's will, giving His life to Humanity's rescue (Lk 9, 51). Like referred by S. Luke, Jesus took the decision to move up to Jerusalem as "servant of Yahweh", the "lamb of God who came to take away the sins of the world".

These three pilgrimages follow the same way of fidelity to the Father's will: the arc of Alliance, Mary and Jesus Christ. If we look deeper these three journeys, we realize that in each one of them, God Himself is who peregrinates in the way to the humanity who need salvation. In the Arc, there are the Tables of the Law, Sign of the Alliance that God celebrated with His People, through His servant Moses. In Mary, the "Arc of the New Alliance", is already present the Savior of the world, as answer to the calls of old humanity, who comes like Emmanuel, God with us. The Virgin of Nazareth, pregnant of the "New Humanity" carries inside Her the "New Man", who, with the rejoice of close Salvation, may John, the last prophet of the Old Testament and precursor of the New Alliance, jump of joy in the womb of his mother.

In the way of Jerusalem, Jesus goes, the Son of God, in the most decisive pilgrimage for the Humanity. In the Calvary, it would have to consummate the perfect sacrifice for the deliverance of all the human beings and of each Human being. With the final victory of life upon death, the humanity would start to be the Paschal People, seed of New Humanity.

In these 3 pilgrimages, God is "First Love" who decides to meet the Humanity in its concrete peripheral existence, God is Spousal Love for his People, God is done love of Good Shepherd for each member of his People, for each person and each face with concrete story. In Ein Karem, the meeting is not generic or abstract, but it is a joyful missionary announcement and concrete service: Mary goes to meet Elisabeth, bringing the "Good News", the "Joy of Gospel" of the Incarnated Word and she stays with her to do a humble and generous service. Jesus is going inside Her, and His presence is the decisive reason of the joy until the more intimate of the human wombs of both mothers and reason of their faithfulness to the mission till the last consequences of the requirement of the Love, united by a unique Hymn of praise to God.

To Our Lady, the great motive of this meeting is Her natural desire to communicate the great event she is knowing and living, and to give help, serving who need. Elisabeth, in her well along in year's pregnancy, is the sign of confirmation announced by Gabriel, Heaven's messenger. In that way, Elizabeth is, in the plan of God, like a sign for Mary who visits and recognizes her.

In Mary, we met with the One who understands and acts. Her adherence to God's plan and Her obedience are translated by Her joy and Her decision. In fact, who follows God and who is full of His Holy Spirit goes with a joyful heart and an open mind even through tiring and demanding ways.

The mystery of divine maternity of Mary reveals Her personal greatness, which, by the Faith in the force and power of the Word of God, is totally available to serve God, conceiving, in Her faith and virginity, the Son of God. With Mary, we learn how the Word of God gives life and gift, He calls and He benefits, He generates and creates.

2. In the context of who listens God's calling, Eduardo Bonnín found the discourse of Pius XII to the vicars of Rome in 6th February of 1940. The preoccupation of the Bishop of Rome was to arrive to the existential peripheries of every parish of his diocese in order to bring Christ to every oblivious or indifferent baptized people to the beauty of God's gifts. Pius XII taught: *«It's duty of the vicar to have a quick and deft look, a clear and meticulous picture, we can say topographical, street by street, of the loyal people and pointedly of its members who could be elements of promotion of the Catholic Action; and in the other side, the groups who moved away of the practice of Christian life. They are sheep too, belonging to the parish, derailed sheep; and you are guardians of them too, and maybe of them more specifically. As good shepherds, you cannot save work and effort to search for them, to win them again, neither rest before all of them find home, life and joy, coming back to the fold of Jesus Christ».*

This first message to the priests echoed in the heart of the Church, in the heart of a laic: Eduardo Bonnín Aguiló, as himself says us: «This text had on me an unusual effect and led me to the resolution that the most important to start was to be able to count on a “detailed study” as counseled the Pope, of every situation. This conclusion led me to study each existent constellation of individuals in the world, in my world and in the church that I knew and went to.».

Pius XII, in his discourse we already taught, shows us two dimensions of the peripheries: a time, geographic, parochial dimension (“street by street”, “sheep belonging to the parish”) and a personal, relational, and existential dimension (“who moved away of the practice of Christian life” and specifically those which “you are guardians”, “you cannot save work” for “them to find home, life and joy, coming back to the fold of Jesus Christ). If we want to find a foundational root, we can say that we are in front of the discourse that made sprout the seed of the Cursillos. This discourse of Pius XII must be very present in us. Eduardo Bonnín was the one who better understood it and led it to practice, giving start to this wonderful work of God, the Cursillos in Christianity. “And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church”. It's beginning with this discourse of Peter, that Eduardo drives us, in the pre-conciliar period, to a “Church on the move”, going to the peripheries of the Church and of the world, for a new reality: o laic, be Church into the world.

Blessed Paul VI, in the I World Ultreya, in Rome on May 28, 1966, in his speech, already post-conciliar, shows again the ways of the Cursillos, saying: “The laics' permanent task will continue with insertion of christianism in life through meeting and personal friendship with God and communion with the brothers”. “...The laics must strive themselves, as far as their strength let, to

re-organize the structures and environments in the world”. The pope of the Vatican II Council let us a question and an exhortative affirmation we quote: “Will you try, with your witness, that the Church seems beautiful to the world, like Christ saw her, wanted her and loved her?” “Be your post-conciliar time a spring of Christian flowers which rejoices the landscape of the world, and an aurora of new lights to enlighten your way and the way of the men that, maybe without to know it, are already walking through God.” Paulo VI increases, in this text, the insertion of the christianism in the real life, touching the person, through meeting and personal friendship: review the relationships with ourselves, with Christ and with the others. He touches too a temporal reality: he sets us in front of a new approach and he adds that we reorganize the structures and environments of the world, and with a question, he puts this responsibility upon the laics that, through their testify “ the Church seems beautiful to the world, like Christ saw her, wanted her and loved her”. For blessed Paul VI, it was this spring, this aurora which will enlighten whose are far away. It will be “the way of the men that, maybe without to know it, already are walking through God”. Later, Paul VI would have to say in the II world Ultreya in Mexico, the 21th May of 1970: “*Cursillistas* in Christianity, you know very well that you made Christ your Friend, your Master and your Lord.” On fact, the same year, Paul VI remembered the personal relationship between the *cursillista* and Christ: “You know very well that you made Christ your friend.” It’s by the friendship that we announce the Good News; the Evangelization in the *cursillos* is to make friends and to make them friends of Christ. The Pope concludes: “... This is the task you have to engage from your friendship with Jesus.”

Saint John Paul II in the Italian National Ultreya, in Rome, in 20th May of 1985, reminds to the *Cursillistas* the *Carta Magna* of Evangelization - “*Evangelii Nuntiandi*” - of Paul VI: “*Evangelizing means bringing the Good News into all the strata of humanity, ... But there is no new humanity if there are not first of all new persons renewed by Baptism and by lives lived according to the Gospel. The purpose of evangelization is therefore precisely this interior change*”. From this quotation, John Paul II designates to the *cursillistas* their field of action: “*this humanity, represented in the Gospel, reveals itself every day in your apostolic thirst: here we are the ones away of truth and grace, ... they are the restless and insecure ones who, with zeal, look for existential meaning and for the foundation of all universe...*”. He exhorts too: “*I encourage you in your effort to always go “further” - Ultreya -, as real servants of the Gospel, for the Man, for the whole Man.*” John Paul II puts us in front of the concrete reality of the Man, of the person and the inner change like ultimate purpose of Evangelization, and he points our apostolic planes for the “the ones away of truth and grace”, the ones who with zeal, look for existential meaning”. The value of the human person, of its existence, is raised to transcendence; it is the goal of all evangelization, of our *cursillista* Movement too.

Our most esteemed Pope emeritus Benedict XVI exhorted us in his message for 50 years of *Cursillos* in Portugal: “*The Cursillos in Christianity instill the constant witness of the event of Jesus Christ in the fullness of His humanity and divinity, as Savior and Head of the Church and of all Creation.*” It is this Jesus who becomes Earth and elevates Man to heaven in his fullness of children of God, redeemed by the Word of the Father. To show by the witness this vocation and this dignity in our lives and in others, this is the appeal that Benedict XVI has left us.

In the European Ultreya of Rome in 2015, Pope Francis reminded us of three aspects of our mission: 1) “*The method of evangelization of the Cursillos was born precisely from this ardent*

desire for friendship with God, from which springs the friendship with the brothers"; 2) "It is necessary to leave, without fatigue, to find those who are far away!"; 3) "From the beginning, it was understood that only by narrowing genuine relationships of friendship was it possible to prepare and accompany the people on their way, a path that starts from conversion, goes through the discovery of the beauty of a life lived in the grace of God, and arrives to the joy of becoming apostles in everyday life."

Pope Francis reinforces the way of friendship, *"this ardent desire for friendship with God"* and tells us "it is to go out without fatigue to the meeting narrowing the relations of friendship, which can evangelize the faraway.

In his speech, as Cardinal Jorge Maria Bergoglio, written by his own hand, and in the end, he gave it to the Cardinal of Havana, where it still is today and it is preserved as a historical and providential document: *"Reference has been made to evangelization. It is the reason of being of the Church. The sweet and comforting joy of evangelizing."* It is the same Jesus Christ who drives us from inside of us. 1) *Evangelizing presupposes apostolic zeal. Evangelizing presupposes in the Church the bravery of the departure from itself and to go to the peripheries, not only to the geographical ones, but also to the existential peripheries: those of the mystery of the sinner, those of pain, those of injustice, those of ignorance and religious exclusion, those of thought, those of the whole misery;* 2) *When the Church does not go out of itself to evangelize, it becomes self-referential and then becomes sick. The evils which, over time, take place in ecclesial institutions have roots in self-reference, a kind of theological narcissism;* 3) *The Church, when it is self-referential, without realizing it, believes that it has its own light; it stops to be the *mysterium lunae* and gives place to the huge evil that is the spiritual worldliness. Living to give glory to each other. Simply put, there are two images of the Church: the evangelizing Church that leaves itself and the worldly Church that lives in itself, for itself. This should illuminate the possible changes and reforms that are to be made for the salvation of souls;* 4) *Thinking of the next Pope: a man who, from the contemplation of Jesus Christ and the adoration of Jesus Christ, helps the Church to leave itself to the existential peripheries, to help it be the fruitful mother who lives the "sweet and comforting joy to evangelize"».*

This teaching of Pope Francis applies perfectly to the Cursillos: **"the time has come for the Cursillos"**. We must leave ourselves, our self-reference, to meet the existential peripheries.

In the European Ultreya held in Rome, Pope Francis reminded us of the joy and seduction of the first moments of our Movement and of our personal discovery of the beauty of the Love of God for us and in us. To be reborn in this Love of the first hour and to return continually and ever again to the sources of our charism in order to renew ourselves in Friendship was the great appeal of Francis. In this same European Ultreya, the Pope reminded us that in our evangelizing actions it is important to walk the path of true friendship in order to generate in an environment of intimacy and trust the sharing of the "treasure" of faith, the "pearl" of God's grace. Only in true friendship can we share the great secret of our happiness - Jesus Christ.

Without petition to proselytism, but always with freedom, it is the hour of Cursillos!

3. In the text of the Gospel of Saint Luke that we heard few moments ago, we meet with Mary in Her sing of Magnificat, the jubilant celebration and resume of all the Story of Salvation. Mary sings the wonders done by the Lord in Her and generations by generations until the origins, always emphasizing the fidelity of the Lord to His promises. The Story Our Lady sings and exalts in its different steps is uninterruptedly lead by God, following always the criteria of Mercy where humbles and poor are exalted.

How many graces have we to thank God together with Mary in Her Magnificat!

In this World Ultreya, we thank God for the pioneer of the Movement: Eduardo Bonnín, Sebastián Gayá and Monsignor Hervás, like all of those who lead this charism to lot of dozens of nations and people. We thank God for the millions of men and women who, someday, lived these three days experience and rediscovered themselves, rediscovered God and the others.

With Mary, let us recite the Magnificat for the three encounters celebrated in our Cursillos in all the nations where we live:

Encounter with yourself: My soul glorifies the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God, my Savior. He looks on his servant in her lowliness; henceforth all ages will call me blessed. The Almighty works marvels for me. Holy his name!

Encounter with God: His mercy is from age to age, on those who fear him. He puts forth his arm in strength and scatters the proud-hearted. He casts the mighty from their thrones and raises the lowly.

Encounter with the others: He fills the starving with good things, sends the rich away empty. He protects Israel, his servant, remembering his mercy, the mercy promised to our fathers, to Abraham and his sons forever”.

Bishop Francisco's Personal Witness

I lived my cursillo in February 1986 in the Archdiocese of Évora, Portugal. I was Deacon with the idea to become a priest. I was ordained priest a few months later on June 29 of 86. What impressed me the most about the cursillo was the testimony of the team, the lay leaders: their dedication, their unity and joy. They touched me very much with their testimonies. I was a student in the sixth year of theology at a good College, but a question started to worry me, "do you live all that you know?"

Also, like everyone else in the cursillo, I went to confession and lived a deep conversion, it was the EMBRACE of Christ that was revealed as a vital reality of life and not as a set of developed theories, scientifically presented, rather an experience of an encounter with Him. In those three days, I discovered that He is alive and loves me personally; that I could count on a group of laity to work together in the construction of a church renewed and credible; that there was a great need of concrete (real) individuals and not only of Church structures.

I was then appointed parish priest at age 25. I was to be the first pastor of a young newly created church, without any physical structure or spirit. Everything began from nothing. 13,000 people without Church and priests began to have a priest without a church, only with people, some filled

with good will. It was with these men and women of good will that with the help of cursillos for adults and for the youth that everything began. The 28 years of work that built a Community issue in the context of the Archdiocese of Évora, resulted in 2 young priests, 2 cloistered sisters, 1 missionary and 2 consecrated laywomen.

Monthly, this parish serves 20,000 thousand meals to children, youth, adults and families in need with the help of 60 employees. This was essentially the work of cursillos and our cursillista brothers.

For all that I have lived, I have to say I believe in evangelizing and humanizing value of CCM. Thank you for the opportunity you have given me by inviting me to participate in this important event. Thanks, Juan Ruiz!

Magnificat! for our Cursillo Movement's pioneers: Eduardo Bonnín Aguiló's fidelity to the charism he received. For Sebastián Gaya's fidelity to the mission he received as the first spiritual director of Cursillo. For Monsignor Hervás who, as Bishop of Mallorca, discerned, blessed and promoted cursillos with both hands. For Father Juan Capo, first theologian of cursillo and first one responsible for the mystical rollos.

Magnificat! for the unity of these men of God and of the Church. Lord, give us the unit that Bonnín, Gaya and Hervás always knew how to live.

Magnificat! for the expansion of cursillos throughout the America. Their expansion in Latin America and North America.

Magnificat! for the wealth of cursillos in the Spanish language in this vast welcoming country, the United States.

Magnificat! For cursillos in the English, Korean, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Chinese and Portuguese languages.

Magnificat! for this wonderful encounter and each of its group reunions, for each of its Ultreyas, for each school of leaders.

Magnificat! For each one of you, dear brothers and sisters for your work in precursillo in your environments, in the certainty that your precursillo is the Postcursillo of others.

Always beyond, let's go on the high seas with the tripod of piety, study and action.

De Colores!