



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 our lives, the description of the Visitation of Our Lady Saint Elizabeth. (Lk 1, 39-56).

The path the Virgin of Nazareth took through Ein Karem, is the same path that David used to carry the Ark of the Covenant from Judah to Jerusalem (2 Sam 6, 2). Jesus also traveled the same path to Jerusalem in order to fulfill the will of the father, offering his life to save humanity (Lk 9, 51). As Saint Luke relates, Jesus made the firm decision to ascend to Jerusalem as “servant of Yahweh”, the “Lamb of God who came to take away the sins of the world”.

There are three pilgrimages that follow the same path of allegiance to the Father’s will: The Ark of the Covenant, Mary and Jesus Christ. If we look deeper, we will understand that in each pilgrimage, is God Himself who moves towards humanity, who was in need of salvation. In the Ark the tablets of the law are kept, sign of the Covenant that God held in Sinai with his people, through his servant Moses. In Mary, the “Ark of the New Covenant”, the savior of the world is present, in response to the call of the old humanity, who comes as Emanuel, God with us. The Virgin of Nazareth, pregnant with the “New Humanity”, carries the “New Man”, who, by the joy of the salvation already forthcoming, makes John jump with jubilation in his mother’s womb, the last prophet of the Old Testament and the precursor of the New alliance, the one who anticipated the Father’s promise to the present history of humanity: “That he grows and I diminish”.

On the way to Jerusalem, Jesus, the Son of God, goes on the most decisive pilgrimage of Humanity. At Calvary, the perfect sacrifice for the liberation of all men and of every Man, who, for the definitive victory of life over death, would become the Paschal People, the seed of a New Humanity.

In these three pilgrimages, God is Love-First who makes the decision to come to the encounter of Humanity in its concrete existential periphery, it is a nuptial Love for its People, made love of Good Shepherd by each member of His People, for each person and each face with concrete history. In Ein Karem, the encounter is not generic or abstract, but rather a joyful missionary announcement and concrete service: Mary goes to meet Elizabeth bringing the Good News: the “Joy of the Gospel” of the Incarnate Word and remains with her in humble service and generosity. Jesus is in her presence, the presence of which is the decisive motive for the joy of the most intimate of the two mothers and their fidelity to the mission to the last consequences of the demands of Love, united by a unique Hymn of praise to God.

For Our Lady, the great motive of this meeting is her natural desire to communicate the great event that she knows and lives, and to give help, serving the one who is in need. Elizabeth in her pregnancy, already in advanced age, is the sign of confirmation announced by Gabriel, messenger

of Heaven. In this way, Elizabeth is inserted forever in the plans of God, as a sign that Mary visits and recognizes.

In Mary, we encounter the One who understands and acts. Their adherence to God's plan and obedience translates into their joy and their decision. In fact, he who follows God and is filled with his Spirit walks with a cheerful heart and an open mind, even in demanding and fatiguing ways.

The mystery of Mary's divine motherhood reveals to us her personal greatness, which, through faith in the strength and power of the Word of God, is fully prepared to serve her, thus conceiving the Son of God in faith and virginity. With Mary, we learn how the Word of God that encourages and gives, calls and benefits, generates and creates.

2. It was in this context that, whoever listens to the call of God, as Eduardo Bonnín encountered the speech of Pius XII to the parish priests of Rome on February 6, 1940. It was the concern of the Bishop of Rome to reach the existential peripheries of each parish of his diocese in order to bring Christ to every baptized, removed or indifferent to the beauty of the gifts of God. Pius XII taught: *«It's duty of the vicar to have a quick 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 from the practice of Christian life. They are sheep too, belonging to the parish, derailed sheep; and you are guardians of them as well, 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 a home, life and joy, coming back to the fold of Jesus Christ».*

This first message addressed to the priests echoed in the heart of the Church, in the heart of a layman: Eduardo Bonnín Aguiló, as he himself says: "This text had an unusual effect on me and led me to the determination that the most important thing to begin with was to be able to count, as the Pope advised, a "detailed study" of each situation, a conclusion that led me to study each of the constellations of individuals in the world, in my world and in the Church that I knew and frequented."

Pius XII, in the above-mentioned speech, indicates two dimensions of the peripheries: a temporary, geographical, parochial ("street by street", "sheep belonging to the parish") and another personal, relational and existential ... those who are far from the Christian life, "... beloved children," in particular, "... you are guardians", "... you must not skimp on work", "... so that all may find life and joy in returning to the fold of Jesus Christ"). If we want to find a foundational root, we can say that we are before the speech that caused the seed of the Cursillos to emerge. This speech of Pius XII must be very present in us. Eduardo Bonnín was the person who understood it better, and who put it into practice, giving birth to this magnificent work of God, which are the Cursillos of Christianity. "You are Peter and on this rock, I will build my Church." It is from this speech of the successor of Peter, that Eduardo transported us, in this preconconciliar period towards a "Church on its way", towards the peripheries of the Church and the world, towards a new reality: that of the laity as Church in the world.

Blessed Paul VI, in his speech during the I World Ultreya, in Rome on May 28, 1966, already post-conciliar, again indicates the ways of the Cursillos, saying: *"The laity's permanent task will*

continue with insertion of Christianity in life through the encounter and personal friendship with God and communion with the brothers". "...The laity must strive themselves, as far as their strength allows, to re-organize the structures and environments in the world". The Pope of the II Vatican Council left us a question and an exhortative affirmation which we quoted: "Will you try, with your testimony, 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 knowing it, are already walking towards God." Paul VI affirms, in this text, the insertion of the Christianity in the real life, touching the person, through encounters and personal friendship: reviewing the relationships with ourselves, with Christ and with 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 laity that, through their testimony "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 those whose are far away. It will be "the way of the men that, maybe without knowing it, already are walking toward God". Later, Paul VI would have to say in the II World Ultreya in Mexico, on May 21, 1970: "*Cursillistas in Christianity, you know very well that you made Christ your Friend, your Master and your Lord.*" In 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, on May 20, 1985, reminds the *Cursillistas* of the Magna Carta of Evangelization - "*Evangelii Nuntiandi*" - of Paul VI: "*Evangelizing means bringing the Good News into all levels 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, Saint John Paul II describes to the *Cursillistas* their field of action: "*this humanity, represented in the Gospel, reveals itself every day in your apostolic thirst: there are the ones who are far away from truth and grace, ... they are the restless and insecure ones who, with zeal, look for existential meaning and for the foundation of all the universe...*". He exhorts too: "*I encourage you in your effort to always go "beyond" - Ultreya -, as real servants of the Gospel, for Man, for all Men.*" Saint John Paul II places us in front of the Man's concrete reality, his being a person and his inner transformation as the ultimate purpose of Evangelization, and he directs our apostolic plans towards "the ones far away from truth and grace", the ones who with zeal, look for existential meaning". The value of the human person, of his existence, is raised to transcendence and 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 as children of God, redeemed by the Word of the Father. To demonstrate this vocation through witness and dignity in our lives and in others is the appeal that Benedict XVI has left us.

In the European Ultreya in 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 go out, without fatigue, to find those who are far away!”*; 3) *“From the beginning, it was understood that only by developing genuine relationships of friendship that makes it possible to prepare and accompany people on their way, a path that starts from conversion, and which results in the discovery of the beauty of a life lived in the grace of God, and arrives at the joy of becoming apostles in everyday life.”*

Pope Francis reinforces the path of friendship, *“this ardent desire for friendship with God”* and tells us *“it is about going out, but without fatigue, towards the encounter”* extending the relations of friendship, which can result in evangelizing 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, and it is preserved as a historical and providential document: *“Reference has been made to evangelization. It is the reason of being Church. The sweet and comforting joy of evangelizing.”* It is the same Jesus Christ who drives us from our inner being. 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 ill. 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 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 goes outward, for others and the worldly Church that goes inward, 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 go beyond itself to the existential peripheries, to help it become the fruitful mother who lives from 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 go beyond ourselves, our self-reference, to encounter the person in existential peripheries.

In the European Ultreya held in Rome, Pope Francis reminded us of the joy and attraction 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 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 an environment of intimacy and trust to share 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 Gospel of Saint Luke that we heard few moments ago, we encounter Mary in Her song of the Magnificat, the jubilant celebration and summary of all the Story of Salvation. Mary sings the wonders done by the Lord in Her and from generation to generation until the origins, always emphasizing the fidelity of the Lord to His promises. The Story of Our Lady sings and exalts in its different steps is uninterruptedly lead by God, following always the criteria of Mercy where the poor and the humble are exalted.

How much thanks must we give God, together with Mary, in Her Magnificat!

In this National Encounter, we thank God for the founder of the Movement, Eduardo Bonnín. We also thank Sebastián Gayá and Monsignor Juan Hervás as well as all those who took the charism to the nations and people. We thank God for the millions of men and women who lived three-day experience and encountered themselves, encountered God and encountered 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 self: My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my Savior for He has looked with favor on his lowly servant. From this day, all generations will call me blessed; the Almighty has done great things for me and holy is his Name!

Encounter with God: He has mercy on those who fear him in every generation. He has shown the strength of his arm and he has scattered the proud in their conceit. He has cast down the mighty from their thrones and has lifted up the lowly.

Encounter with the others: He has filled the hungry with good things and the rich he has sent away empty. He has come to the help of his servant Israel for he has remembered his promise of mercy, the promise he made to our fathers, to Abraham and his children forever.

Bishop Francisco's Personal Testimony

I lived my cursillo in February 1986, in the Archdiocese of Évora, Portugal. I was a Deacon with the idea to become a priest. I was ordained a priest a few months later, on June 29, 1986. 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?"

Like everyone else in the cursillo, I went to confession and experienced a deep conversion. It was the EMBRACE of Christ that was revealed as a vital reality of life and not as a set of 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 building of a church renewed and credible; that there was a great need of specific 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 newly created parish, without any physical structure or spirit. Everything began from nothing. Nearly 13,000 people without a parish 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 and the help of Cursillos, that everything began. The 28 years of work that built an exemplary community in the context of the Archdiocese of Évora, resulted in 2 young priests, 2 cloistered sisters, 1 missionary and 2 consecrated laywomen.

The parish serves 20,000 meals to children on a monthly basis. It serves the 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 that I believe in the value of evangelization and humanizing of Cursillos. Thank you for the opportunity you have given me by inviting me to this important encounter. Thank you, Juan Ruiz!

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

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

Magnificat! for the growth of Cursillos in America, for the growth throughout Latin and North America.

Magnificat! for the richness of Spanish Cursillos in this vast host country, the USA.

Magnificat! for Cursillos in English, Korean, Vietnamese, Filipino, Chinese and Portuguese.

Magnificat! for this wonderful encounter and all the group meetings, the Ultreyas, and the School of Leaders.

Magnificat! for each one of you, dear brothers and sisters, for your work in Precursillo in your environments, and your conviction in making the Precursillo the Postcursillo for others.

Let us always "go beyond", let us go on the high seas with our tripod of piety, study and action.

De Colores!