



National Cursillo® Movement

National Cursillo® Center • P.O. Box 799 • Jarrell, TX 76537 • 512-746-2020 • Fax 512-746-2030 • www.natl-cursillo.org

Unity in Diversity

Presented by Hugo Valverde, President of the NACG, at the 28th National Cursillo Encounter held at Seattle University in the Archdiocese of Seattle – August 17, 2018.

Good morning. First of all, I would like to introduce myself.

My name is Hugo Valverde. Immigrant from Chihuahua, Mexico and a naturalized citizen. I arrived in the United States more than 36 years ago as a student at the University of Texas (UTEP) in El Paso, TX. I did not finish my studies, but I found what God had in store for me. I met my girlfriend of 5 years, and after so much praying we decided to get married. We have been blessed with five children, two girls and three boys, Arantxa, Hugo, Rogelio, Mariana and Máximo. We are a family like the Holy Father says, there is no perfect family, but nevertheless we do everything possible to keep walking together.

Currently they are all studying, Arantxa will begin studying for her Masters in St. Ignatius of Loyola in Chicago IL, Hugo Andrés is in Lubbock TX, Rogelio is at Texas A&M, but will return to UTEP, Mariana is in High School with the Nuns of Loretto, and Maximo thank God, is in public school.

I would like to say that I am extremely proud to be Mexican; however, I'd like to thank the United States for giving me the opportunity to fight and work hard to achieve my family dreams. Let us continue asking God to bless this country for its liberty and diversity; it should not be taken for granted.

When Hoang Tran extended me the invitation to speak at this event, I agreed, but don't know why I did. He was probably relieved that he didn't have to find another speaker. He mentioned that the title of the Rollo was "*Unity in Diversity*" and the central focus of the topic, "*The Body of Christ*".

And so, from here we begin this rollo.

The challenge of preparing the rollo was huge for me, I did not know where to start. I was getting books from everywhere, references here and there, I listened to comments from my friends and even took my iPad to mass to take notes during the homily. On one occasion the priest looked at me in an unpleasant manner, and at the end of Mass I had to explain what I was doing. My objective was to give a rollo without going into something very theological, since I have no basis for being a theologian.

The first thing I did was to look up the meaning of the word "*unity*". From the Latin word: *unitas*, the word facilitates us with the state or fact of being united or combined into one, as of the parts of a whole; unification; it is related with the impossibility of division or separation. It is therefore, not possible to divide or separate a unity without modifying its integrity or its essence.

Later, I looked up the meaning of the word “*diversity*”, and I didn’t like what I read. The term diversity refers to the inclusion of individuals representing more than one national origin, color, religion, socioeconomic stratum, etc.

It was really frustrating trying to combine these ideas to include them in a rollo. On the one hand, I understood that I could not disengage something and on the other hand, that the disengaging was allowed, and the difficult part was that the title had only two words. We, Cursillistas proclaim to the four winds to always keep things simple. But they never told me that this was going to be a complicated puzzle.

Then, I thought about what Hoang Tran said about the Mystical Body of Christ and about what Juan Ruiz said: simple and lived experience.

I asked myself; why didn’t they do the rollo?

A light bulb went on in my head and the puzzle began to make sense. This title is like a marriage, like cats and dogs, but then I reflected on this and thought, this may get me into trouble. And then, my head lit up again and I thought, this title is like Cursillos, we are not always on the same path, a few will say National Secretariat, others Diocesan, others’ Ideas and others’ Charism. A few even go to Europe and others to Central America. But at the end, I reflected and asked the Holy Spirit to guide my steps, to put my mind in order and to save my tongue, since the last thing I want do, is to divide a movement that has given so much, has changed the lives of so many men and women, and one of them is definitely me.

The Second Vatican Council has left us with the following thought:

“God has made from the disperse humanity one family, one organism, one body, one heart. Division contradicts openly the will of Christ, it is a scandal for the world and damages the most holy cause of praise of the gospel to all creatures.” (Unitatis Redintegratio)

“If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, yet one body.” (1 Corinthians 12: 15-19)

When meditating about the theme “*Unity in Diversity*”, it came to my mind the teaching of the Apostle Saint Paul to the Corinthians. He presented a theme about diversity and the spiritual gifts, using the human body as an example. Being the body of the Church, and Christ the head. For Paul, the town of Corinthians was a town that he loved very much, but he always told them, that because they were divided, they believed that they had all they needed, including the holy gifts, and did not need each other, so they believed they were above each other.

We come together every year at the National Encounter with the purpose of meeting, giving encouragement and sharing our faith, through the lay and spiritual rollos. Paul spoke to the Corinthians, now he speaks to us with that same love and affection, and he surely asks us to open our minds and hearts.

Using the same example, we should resolve our differences and problems in our environments, whether at home, work, entertainment, or in the Cursillo Movement always having the desire and the attitude that we can be in the same harmony to avoid division. It is so easy to divide! Pope Francis makes this comment: “the life that we live today tells us that it is easier to place our attention on what divides us, on what takes us apart”. Believing in the same Christ we can live united.

We follow a Christ that died for us, and we also proclaim that He can “Count on Us” and we go our separate ways when we try to follow his footsteps. In our attitude towards life. Our own opinions. And instead of coming closer to one another in Jesus’s heart, we are divided. We create groups that separate us from the fraternal unity. You belong to Paul or I belong to Apollo.

Has your Cursillista brother been the reason for division at some time in your family, work or in the Cursillo Movement? Well, yes, and I painfully admit it. I could not hide the pain it caused, my face burned from shame, but nevertheless the fact of having faced my own mistakes in front of the group did not make me less of a person. I believe the lesson I received was just and having apologized to the whole group and to a particular person, it made me grow more as a Christian. I understood that being honest with oneself, admitting one's mistakes and accepting the consequences of my actions led me to join the group. From then on, that person and I began to cultivate a true friendship in Christ.

Knowing this, I understood that not everyone has the same skills, the same gifts or talents, or same tastes, but that does not mean we cannot belong to the same Movement, and that despite being different, we are the Church that constitutes the Body of Christ. We were blessed with a Movement where we can complement each other. God has placed us where He wanted and gave each one of us different gifts for the common good.

All of this has a purpose and we should learn to live in community, to respect each other with the understanding that God created us with different gifts, but He also places us where He wants, if we listen to his call.

The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our un-presentable parts are treated with greater modesty, which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together”. (1 Corinthians 12: 20-26)

However, we all belong to Christ. He is the one who calls us. And starting from that faith, that must have been the case of how the international group, NACG, was selected, which I preside over with unmerited honor. We were selected, surely through prayer by the Executive Committee of the National Secretariat. I was informed who the members of the committee were: Marisela Garcia, Vice-President; Jacquelyn De-Mesme Gray, Secretary; Jim Santos, Treasurer; and Fr. Alex Waraksa, Spiritual Advisor. As you can see, this is a totally heterogeneous group of different races and ways of thinking. I can say that all of them have more education than me. We have already gone through some situations where we have not been in the same mindset, but nevertheless, through the guidance of our Spiritual Adviser, and the fraternal dialogue, always with respect and friendship, we have crossed those challenges, that in many occasions, would have divided us. Thank God, open dialogue has prevailed.

Our group works so well that I can attest to how well each of us has put our best effort so that we can reach the same goal. We have been supporting everything, but above all, we have seen the brotherhood despite the distances that divide us.

For example, Jim Santos lost two close friends not long ago, and in one way or another we showed him that we are with him during his grief. We know that Marisela is fighting against Multiple Sclerosis, which is why we normally send her our love and prayers. We also know that her grandmother went through appendix surgery and her beloved grandfather is very ill. Jackie has also expressed her personal and difficult challenges. Her daughter has gone to a better home, heaven, a year and a few months ago and I have no doubt about the pain that losing a daughter can cause, but she also knows that her daughter is enjoying the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ. Jackie shared her experience with me because I told her about my sister Martha, who is currently in a delicate health condition: cancer in the lungs, liver and brain. We have a friendship based entirely on Christ, I never thought how much she would help me understand and cope with the illness of my sister Martha, and they all ask me about her. Something that touched me about Jackie, was that, despite not having her daughter here, her attitude is full of great faith and without hesitation says God is Good! Fr. Alex, although he is always praying for us, offers the Holy Eucharist for our intentions and is always concerned about us.

We have experienced the sacrifice and the work of each member. We are also part of the Mystical Body of Christ and in the same way: I cannot say to Marisela: I do not need you, nor can Jackie tell Jim, I do not need you, and vice versa to each one of us, much less to Fr. Alex, we cannot tell him we no longer need him, or he cannot say I do not need them anymore. We have people in this team that are going through very difficult times, but we still help each other, offer advice which means that we are all necessary.

In this way, just as all the members are necessary in the Mystical Body of Christ, each and every one of us are important for the growth and sustainment of this group, having understood how important each one's participation is for the advancement of this work of God. Placing our gifts and talents into practice, so that the work of the Lord may advance. The idea is to achieve the task that God has entrusted us to bring the Good News of God's love to all corners of the world, so that when we have to admire each other, we admire each other, and when there is anguish, we all worry, always keeping the unity in the midst of diversity.

Dear Cursillistas, uniformity is not the same as unity. Uniformity is to impose a unique thought. But that is not the same as unity in diversity. It is possible to be united in the diversity of opinions. Although the points of view are not the same. Discuss with openness of heart without condemning. Accept other opinions as valid. Recognize other's points of view.

The beauty of the Church is in unity, even within diversity. Where there is division there is deformity, there is no beauty. Saint Augustine tells us that beauty is a gift of the Holy Spirit and we are united by the Holy Spirit. And not separated from it.

I want to be more merciful in the judgment I make. Recognizing that others are not the same as me in everything. They do not have the same experiences stored in the soul. They have not stepped on the same paths or been in the same shoes.

"Now you are the Body of Christ and individually members of it. And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? But earnestly desire the higher gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way." (1 Corinthians 12: 27-31)

There are three concrete ideas we can learn from this:

- We all need each other.
- God has put us where He wanted us.
- Each one is unique; no one has been denied a gift.

How can I restore unity? From the respect of the heart. Without condemning. Without judging. Respect welcomes that which is different. Look with admiration at the one who is not like me. It does not condemn. It does not prosecute. That attitude is what I need to face life. To build unity from humility. Without separating, without dividing. I follow Christ on the streets. Each one contributes his own. I contribute my own charism. I have my way of living, of loving, of thinking. I want to respect and contribute. Sometimes I try to silence my different points of view through rejection.

Today, there is a lot of talk about being tolerant. But tolerating is not the same as accepting. H. Maturana said: *"Tolerance is the negation suspended temporarily"*. Meaning, I tolerate many times, but I accept only a few. Accepting really leads me to avoid convincing the other of my point of view. However, it allows me to express freely what I am thinking. Accepting involves looking at the difference without fear, without viewing it as a threat.

Recognize a truth in your life, look at it head on and be willing to live with it. I want to have a free and open heart. This does not mean giving up my own viewpoint or beliefs. This does not mean I assume the other person's posture because I accept his originality. I just accept it in my life and I integrate it in my heart. But I do not renounce my position. That sacred respect. I remain faithful to my principles because they are what sustains my path. However, to affirm myself, does not mean to ignore the other person's point of view.

And finally:

To learn to live with difference is more difficult than eliminating it. And more difficult than changing my posture. As the American comedian, Groucho Marx said: “These are my principles, if you don’t like them, I have others.”

To accept does not mean to renounce what is yours. It means respecting different opinions without scandalizing myself. Without rejecting, with gestures and words, those who do not agree with my ideas . . . disqualifying them.

I don't just tolerate, I want to accept those who do not think like me, but without losing my essence. Without giving up my contribution, my originality. Without generalizing, for fear of rejection.

De Colores!