



# National Cursillo Movement

National Cursillo® Center • P.O. Box 799 • Jarrell, TX 76537 • 512-746-2020 • Fax 512-746-2030 • [www.natl-cursillo.org](http://www.natl-cursillo.org)

## Conviction

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

The revised translation of this 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.* The following rollo is on Conviction given by D. Francisco Suárez.

Who are you and where do you come from? This is how Pope Paul VI began the first World Ultreya held in Rome. This is how he opened his speech addressed to the Cursillistas who came from different parts of the world.

Who are you and where do you come from? “Cursillos in Christianity, that is the word that sounds familiar through experience”, he said, “that today travels throughout the world with recognition and total acceptance”.

It was a big milestone because the Cursillos in Christianity Movement, which was born in Mallorca under a different name, had actually been started by the Majorcan people who carried the weight of the purple, one might say, for having found the method which gave rise to the Cursillo Movement.

The National Council of Young Men’s Catholic Action of Madrid, which was working on a national campaign in all the Spanish dioceses, did not have any idea what was going to happen in this small island, lost in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea or in Cursillo. In the rest of dioceses in Spain, workshops were being held with the goal of taking 100,000 young men who were living in the Grace of God, on a pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela. Grace was the central theme.

The theme was based on the encyclical of Pope Pius about the Mystical Body of Christ and there were a series of books, which we had access to, from the simplest, “Live your life”, to others such as, “The Grace and the Glory”. The theme was Grace, but they could never have foreseen what would happen, because once the pilgrimage to Santiago came to an end in 1948, a deep silence came over all the dioceses which had completed the journey to Santiago and whose members had returned to their winter quarters.

But those Cursillos [Catholic Action] that had been initially promoted by the people of Madrid, were transformed (in Mallorca) according to their own perspective and content. And this was the result of the leaders of the Young Men’s Catholic Action. Catholic Action, at that time, was enjoying its greatest moment since it was the “official apostolate” of the Church which was linked very closely to the hierarchy and in which some of the leaders were local young men. Among those local leaders, was their president, non-other than, who else? - Eduardo Bonnín.

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.feba.info>

Eduardo Bonnín contributed the vision that he had gained from his eight years of military service, with the rollo that he wrote, now known as, Study of the Environment. It demonstrated how the youth of Spain was at that time, a so-called Catholic Spain, which had been “the light of Tintero” and “hammer to all the heretics” (these were expressions of those years). Eduardo had seen the difference between official Christianity and real Christianity and on the tapestry that was brought from Madrid to vitalize the Centers of Catholic Action. (We remember that Centers of Action was the primitive name of a rollo that is now referred to as “Christianity in Action” and the central theme now called “Layperson in the Church” was “Catholic Action”, with its tripod: Piety, Study, and Action). Through the intervention of Eduardo Bonnín, a new perspective was opened in such a way that when the great pilgrimage to Santiago had taken place some years later, a Madrid newspaper called “Signo” (Sign) quoted, “At least in Mallorca, the fire of Santiago has not gone out”, because we continued with the “Cursillos of Conquest”, later renamed by Bishop Hervás, as “Cursillos in Christianity”.

This is our history, that, since we were the first, and the Cursillo weekends were the first, its effect and effectiveness caused surprise and it even sounded strange. It all sounded strange; we were living in a Christianity that was more sociologically based than personalized. There were many baptized people, but few converted. Maybe many people had been catechized but they were not convinced. A clergy formed a new way of teaching the neo-scholastic; the currents of renewal in theology came from central Europe, but Rome, always alert to all innovations, had spoken about the new theology but, in reality, their thinking was still anchored in Christianity, but let’s say primitive Christianity, not a new Christianity.

Mallorca continued moving forward and together with Eduardo, there were some priests, Father Seguí and Father Sebastian Gayá who started by being the diocesan Counsellor of Catholic Action of St. Eulalia and finally becoming Diocesan Counsellor of the Youth. When Bishop Hervás, who was young and progressive, arrived, Eduardo made sure that the bishop became interested in the Cursillo and made aware of the fruits it had produced.

Therefore, several dates are fixed in my memory that I do not want to forget, not just the date of my birth, which I would like to forget now that the number is so high. The date of my ordination I do not want to forget, and another was the month of August 1950, when I really didn’t know what I was getting into. But I trusted Juan Capó, a good friend - the same priest had brought us together to the seminary - a good friend, prudent, apostolic, with a good head on his shoulders, a good theologian, and who, due to the great interest and savoir-faire of Sebastian Gayá, was placed beside him, first as vice-counsellor and later on as counsellor.

I really did not know what I was getting into, but I accepted, and while in Rome I used to receive the “Proa” Magazine, the official bulletin of the Young Men’s branch of Catholic Action in Mallorca, where I could see that something had happened during my absence. I remember that in 1946 I went to revitalize some of the youth who had made a [Catholic Action] Cursillo in Puig, San Salvador, but I did not know what kind of Cursillo it was. I went there with Father Bartolomé Miguel because one of his brothers was in that Cursillo.

And now after I have re-read several old Proa magazines, I have noticed that the themes, were more or less the same as today, though with some different names, but yet the movement that had revolutionized and that had been discussed and debated, had still not really been created.

Meanwhile, in Rome I was still receiving the Proa magazine. There was some commentary in it on the topic of pilgrimage; the different stages and the peregrination style of a pilgrim; there were also some articles written by Juan Capó, with a map of Mallorca in flames, like the forests of Spain were that summer. As I was studying canon law in Rome I thought, “But, what is happening in Mallorca? What’s burning?” When I arrived in Mallorca, I saw that a strong new movement that penetrated the environments and that was being discussed, which was a good sign, had come forth. They put me in the seminary as a professor and I heard what the other professors, in August, were saying, “This is something the young are doing; their enthusiasm is just the heat of the moment, it will only last from now until Christmas”.

Anyway, I trusted those who had spoken to me about Cursillo and I attended one. The experience was positive. What I did not know at that moment was that I would not be like many others who attend a Cursillo weekend, they like it, understand it and take no part in it or ignore it. I have not been able to let go of Cursillo since that moment. I have not been able to ignore it, because I have been close to the ones who are the source, the origin, and those responsible for what today, in the Church and in the world, is the Cursillo Movement. I am thankful for it, it is a date that cannot be erased, because it is certain that the Cursillo Movement takes a lot of work, but the satisfaction is greater, and the experiences which enrich you as a Christian, and in my case as a priest, are much more.

A Movement, therefore, supported by the founders and also supported by a bishop who would have never founded it because his mentality was not in harmony with it, but a bishop who was apostolic and was moved by what he was told about it, and moved by Eduardo’s conversations in which he talked and talked.

The new movement needed the approval of the bishop. Pope Pius XII always wrote, “not to admit any method or movement without the approval of the bishop”. It was brought to the attention of Bishop Hervás and he responded: “What? I shall bless it not only with one hand, but with both hands.”

This is our history, but then came the night, the dark night, that dark night of which St. John of the Cross spoke about. It happened for Mallorca, but the dark night did not become the sad night of “Otumba” like in Mexico, (when the Spanish army was defeated by the Aztecs), but it was a dark night in which opinions were voiced by those who thought that the Cursillos in Christianity was a thing that caused disunity, that it did not compare well to the regulations of Catholic Action and consequently Bishop Hervás was transferred to Ciudad Real. And why was he transferred to Ciudad Real? When the diplomatic representative of the Holy See told him that he was to be transferred, he remarked: “I have a Seminary that I have not been able to finish, a new Seminary, and I have much other work”... and he commented on the decision, but at the end they told him the real reason: “Look, Bishop, we transferred you because we want to see what the Cursillos in Christianity is,” to which he replied, “If it is because of that, then I’ll go immediately, but I tell you, “Nuncio”, that wherever I go, the Cursillo will be there.”

Courageously he (Bishop Hervás), said to the Pope's representative that wherever he was the Cursillo would also be. Therefore, when he (Bishop Hervás) asked me to go there with him I said, "And why do I have to go?" Among other things, he told me, "Because I want to introduce the Cursillo in Ciudad Real as soon as possible". Later, a time that wasn't excessively long came to Mallorca, a sort of dark night and silence.

But we did not stop because everything is providential, the Lord arranges all things. From the center of Spain, his brothers, the young clergy of the Episcopacy, upon seeing such humiliation of the Bishop of Ciudad Real, then called him the bishop of Cursillo, although he was not the bishop in charge of the region where Cursillo was born. He stated it in the Pastoral letter that he wrote in defense of the Cursillo; and what a pastoral letter! Only by reading it, one will say he is right. From then on, the bishops themselves showed solidarity with him because they saw they had played a dirty trick on him and from there he could write his pastoral letter in defense of the Cursillo, and from there not only the Spanish episcopacy, but also the American bishops, knew that Cursillo was supported by a bishop who was very orthodox and of firm doctrine, and the bishops of America, upon seeing that the work was serious, wanted the Cursillo to go to their countries also.

When I went to Mexico in 1960 I was lucky enough to see the bishops in Mexico. They were angels! Not because they are bishops, but because they are Mexicans, it is enough to say just that; they are Mexicans. When I was there, they told me that I had to speak to the full episcopacy, to Cardinal Garivi along with seventy or eighty bishops, I was in my thirties, a little canon from the provinces of Spain. I said to myself, "This is going to be an exam like the way they examined Joan of Arc". But no, they were charming, so charming that as an ending and final purpose of that meeting the very first National Secretariat of Cursillo in the whole world was formed. Mexico itself deserved it; I still have memories of the 13th Ultreya in Tampico. Marvelous! Exceptional! What voices! What heart! What conviction! Then I said, "This time I have come alone, but the Cursillo Movement, as it was with Catholic Action, is a Lay Movement", and since I was invited to return the following year, I had to keep this in mind. I went there the following year, but not alone, I went with someone who knows more about the Cursillos in Christianity and who is a layman. The following year I went supported by Eduardo Bonnín, who from then on has not stopped traveling. Sometimes I tell Eduardo, "You are always on the road, you go to Canada, Korea, here and there." And he answers me: "But Don Francisco, there is nothing to be scared of, I don't go there on foot".

I wanted to tell you this as an introduction, they convinced me, they convinced me in 1950 and that is convincing. To convince is not only to win the mind. It is the truth that man is a rational animal, but unreasonable, continuously, one must win more than the mere mind and this is also shown in the Study of the Environment, one must win the person's heart because the heart is the nucleus, the essence of what a person is, and we have not convinced a person if we have not won their heart. And the person, leaving aside any philosophical definition - what the person is - who you are, what I am, the man, the whole man, the entire man but not only at the level of the mind, the whole man, the man who is mind, heart, emotion, action, soul, body, everything that man is, that is a person. The intelligent being, free, physical, who feels, who cries, who laughs, who loves, who struggles, this is the person, this is the one that we must win over.

I must confess to you that they won me over, I came to Cursillo puffed up with my degrees from the University, but they wiped the floor with me. I thought theology was a monopoly that belonged to those of us who studied it, but it is necessary to see when I listened to Eduardo Bonnín, who then combed a youthful head of blonde hair, when I heard him speak of the Mystical Body, not only as theory but as something that was lived in a layman's life, my jaw dropped and I forgot all about my degrees. I remembered then one of the verses that I am reminded of at times:

See that gentleman graduate red tassel, white glove that differing nominee who was approved in Salamanca because with his tassel and his degree his professorship, rent and money he is one big fool.

Knowledge increases what I know, but it does not increase my holiness, in the same way, it does not increase my devotion to Him. Here we try, to go to the center of man; the heart, and the Cursillo presents it well enough. For that reason, once in a while a leader does not know the Rollos well; he says everything, from the preliminary rollo of the very first night: to fill the head with ideas and the heart with fire. This is what the Gospel is trying to do; what Jesus Christ did: He won the hearts of those fishermen of Galilee who left their nets because Jesus of Nazareth had looked at them with His power and His attractiveness, with His profound eyes that penetrated the heart of those fishermen who were then capable of leaving everything for Him.

This is the way to evangelize, like Him, seeing the man, his anxieties, his absolute being, his cheerfulness, his liberty. Thereby this is what is needed: filling the head with ideas and the heart with fire. This is expressed now in technical language as "kerygma". Kerygma is what in other words has been said since the beginning, even before 1949: *the jubilant communication of what it is to be Christian*. This is what the European theologians, like Hugo Rhaner, who has theology in preaching, says. I had to study all this for the love of the Cursillo, to help Bishop Hervás so that he would have material for his pastoral letter, but this was the joyful communication of being Christian; not an education in Christianity. The problem wasn't religious ignorance; it was a problem of "living". Many who went to Cursillo weekends had studied religion for seven years and at that time the study of catechism was done by memory, and they were catechized. The problem wasn't instruction, maybe for some it was, but this is not the problem, the problem is to share faith in a convincing manner, faith in Jesus Christ, the one we have encountered because He has called us.

He calls us and then we see how the human and the divine meet each other because one is reciprocated by the other in the encounter. This is why the method of the Cursillo has Ideal as the first lay rollo, which is the study of humanity at a philosophical "reasoning" level. That defense of what a man is and what mankind wants at a human level, what makes him the epitome of Creation: being a person, being intelligent, having the capacity to progress, what makes it necessary for him to have a mainmast that suits the capacity of his life. This is the sublime ideal as an example of the heights towards which man's life is directed, which gives life meaning. This is what mankind is looking for at a rational level, this is what philosophy is looking for in its "personalism" approach and this is what Yakan hinted at when he said, "a person has absolute value and cannot be employed as a means because he or she is an end in themselves". This is what is sought in the Christian essentialism of Gabriel Marcel, and theologians like Uber. This is what all who have forced what is called "personalism" have said.

We don't stay at a reasoning level, for the simple fact that the superior level, that which the Word of Christ brings, embraces the inferior, embraces all that is honest, all which is positive, what is human, not vice versa. Pure philosophical reason cannot embrace man in the image and likeness of God and will not embrace the affirmations that are derived from the light of the word of Christ. For the glory of God is not that I feel bothered, the Glory of God is the image of man fully alive.

We can't keep quiet about this in the Cursillo, we can't agree to the humanism of the Enlightenment, (the Enlightenment was a philosophical movement of the 18th Century characterized by belief in the power of human reason and by innovations in political, religious, and educational doctrine) a humanism without reference to Jesus Christ, because Anthropology is the science of man and Theology is the science of God, one and another, man who seeks the living and personal absolute, and God who seeks man in Jesus Christ, who for us men died and was resurrected. These two realities have to encounter each other, with the result that in the Cursillo we speak of Ideal.

Anthropology at a rational and philosophical level accepted by all and by common sense; and then the revelation of this Grace that is not the Grace of the neo-scholastic, but is rather a personalistic Grace, which is a new way of being connected to God. This Grace is defined as God's free giving of Himself to mankind, to enable man to be a person in all its fullness. This is what we say to someone who goes to a Cursillo so that he really feels called, challenged, and this is done so the person can make the encounter with himself during the first meditation, the night of the retreat - what is a man like you doing in a place like this? Are you happy with yourself? Are you happy with Him? In the next meditation, the encounter with Christ, that we later see being realized in the Cursillo and which reaches its highest peak in the applause before the Blessed Sacrament that always makes me emotional, at the end, after the closing act. We have encountered Jesus Christ and He has convinced us, not with theoretical arguments, He has won our hearts, He has stolen our hearts. "Man is he who loves", St. Augustine used to say, and that is what Jesus Christ has really given to us.

I have to offer a great act of thanks to the Lord for so many things, but also for the Cursillo, for all the difficulties we have all experienced, and of which in some way, I have also had my share, but I also give thanks for having met so many Cursillistas from around the world. I am proof of what sprouted in the forties, sprouted in Mallorca by the will of God and made possible through some determined chosen persons; laypeople, priests, and a bishop, each one according to their particular vocation.

I give thanks to the Lord because you are really the most evident proof of what we said from these mountains of Mallorca, from San Salvador in Felanitx, from Montesión de Porreras, from St. Lucia of Mancor; what we said about conquering the world was true, Jesus Christ was right. The Gospel is for the world and that is what we want to give the world; we want to share the Good News, not to proselytize, which is not the same. It's not the same to win a person over for a project, for a job, for work, as it is to win his heart, so he can develop as a person in the historical place and in the circumstance in which God has placed him, where it is the Lord's will that he sanctify and leaven it with the message of Christ. Evangelize, never "proselytize"; men don't belong to us, they are God's, they are Jesus Christ's, they are free and, if we serve them, by accompanying them with

our friendship, and do not limit our attention to the Clausura, nor an anniversary, nor assigning new tasks to them. We are not limited to the parish, our limit is the Final Judgment; that we may find ourselves, as many as possible, to the right hand in the most joy and happiness, because we found the meaning for our life by living aware of the presence of Jesus Christ.

Blessed be the Cursillos in Christianity which has planted the seeds of restlessness, humanity, and Grace, in the world, and which has given us, on the one hand suffering, and on the other joy. Who remembers the first difficulties now? The Lord will help us to give witness in the world so that men can love each other, realizing there is something better than hate, better than envy, better than terrorism, better than drug trafficking. There is something better, it is Christ! Word of God, man, brother, friend, companion on the journey, savior, liberator, who makes us free with the freedom of the children of God. We owe this to the Gospel of Jesus and to a method that has come close to men in the mentality of each moment, which has revealed God's heart to them, a God who has a heart that is as big as the ocean and into which we all fit.

Brothers of different countries, may these Conversations become the guidepost, a milestone in our journey, so that we know that we fight for man, for humanity, for Christ and for the Church.