



National Cursillo Movement

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Criterion

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

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 Criterion given by Ramon Armengol.

Although, the majority of you do not know me, you do understand that each of us can only give what he has. I am from the Ultreya on the outskirts of Barcelona, from Tarrasa. And almost always when I hear a Rollo with this number of such elevated concepts as the ones I am listening to, I get the impression that my Rollos are a little outrageous (unconventional). Those who already know me, I ask you to please continue to help me to see if I am discovering who I am.

If you would like, I will first explain a little about the presentation, then I will try to read it. A presentation that does not have much inspiration, but as a renowned guitar player said: “Has lots of perspiration, even though an excess of perspiration also smells”, but this is what there is.

After a long time of trying to understand what the three encounters really are; encounter with oneself, with Christ and with others, I have to thank the Cursillo movement. In the meantime, (it did not only happen to me, but happens often), they not only give you the three encounters, they give you this and more. It is like when you purchase a dinner set and they give you a bicycle as a gift. This is something that happened to me not too long ago, when a priest in the parish assigned me to a job. I was going for a dinner set and it isn't surprising that I would be tested at the major feast because I now have the bicycle. What happens is, that they give you a package, and you know in the church you cannot choose what you want; “I like this, I don't like that”, because, after all, everything that I received from Christ came through many Saints and many people that have given their lives, and this is very serious. Besides, in the church what happens is what once happened to a French service man that went to the Holy Land. He got so offended by what he saw there that he had to go to reconciliation and the priest told him: “Look, in the things of God it is better not to go through the kitchen.” I, myself, was for some years in the kitchen and I received some type of chronic scalding that took all my desire to continue with this. Then I thought, there has to be something simpler that I can understand, and not only me, but also my neighbors, normal people, people that sometimes don't understand. Why is there so much double-talk? Because we Christians are the ones that should say yes or no and, sometimes people cannot understand what we say. There must be something simpler than that, I thought, and when they asked me to speak about ‘Criterion’ I came to the conclusion that the one who knows about this is Eduardo Bonnín. Of course, I do not want to change the program or schedule of the talks, but I wanted to say that, since I am going to entangle it; then in the discussion he can un-entangle it and then surely it will be clear.

¹ <http://www.feba.info>

I think what is fundamental in criterion is that it is a platform of thought from which we all have to confront the things of life; but perhaps, the fundamental component that it has, is the attitude. It is not the thought but the attitude with which we confront things. Some say that even before thinking we have already made our selection, we either choose God or the world. Some others say that the problem man has is that while there are good people that intend to see the light, wherever it may come from, and there are others that see the light only through the autonomous channel that they like and from here comes the mentality, and from this mentality we can start confronting things. When one is consistent with his own mentality, people will say: "This person has a criterion of his own and when he is confronted with really important things and decisions in his life, he will apply his own criterion instead of following fashionable ideas of society". We have to distinguish "criterion" from "opinion". An opinion on a certain subject is what our mentality produces upon contact with different realities. The important thing is to be consistent with this criterion which is being formed by life itself, and which has also been constructed with perspiration, and not inspiration.

It so happens that our mentality almost never coincides with the reality we live; therefore, we change our mentality or try to make reality fit our mentality. Either way the confrontation between reality and mentality has a tendency to conform us. We either give up on our way of thinking, or reality changes because, with our witness, we have changed things. If we have decided that the reality can change, we may be able to devise a certain strategy that we call 'method' and to every step or moment of this method we give the name of 'norm'. The biggest problem is that man would rather follow norms than work on building their own criterion. With the mentality, we can absorb everything that is happening in life at a critical moment, the death of a loved one; mentality is assimilating all this and helps to incorporate it, without itself guiding it, but the norm tells us such a thing in a concrete way. So, man likes the norm, therefore he gets used to it. He gets used to it in such a way that everything is conducted by norms. There are people who if they had a notebook with ten thousand norms that explained what to do in every moment, they would be very happy, even though it would create a habit.

I was talking to a priest around the time when they changed to using the vernacular language. As he was saying Mass, he said, "The Lord be with you". There were a couple of ladies seated on the front pew, and I noticed that one of them was kind of deaf, so she said to the other, that means "Dominus Vobiscum". We have become so familiar with the habits, that we changed reality as we became used to certain things. One of the surprising things about Christian reunions is like when you just started to go to Church and you go to a talk at a church and there is a Priest who knows a lot about contemplative prayer and Holiness. He begins explaining about self-surrender, about interior silence, elevation, magnificent things and when he finishes he asks, "Is there anybody with a question?" Nobody asks anything, and then after a while, someone will ask, "Father, is Saturday's Mass good for Sunday?" This continues happening because we place ourselves outside the criterion where we have to be assimilating all of this reality.

The mentality of Cursillo flows from one unique reality: GOD LOVES US. I have taken this as a base because it is something that is very alive. The other day I was with a couple that have two daughters and they have a little beach house. Because of the fact that the daughters went out at 1:00 am and came back at 10:00 am, they bought a house in the mountains to change their daughters' environment. And it happened that instead of getting home at 10:00 am, they did not

get to the mountain until 9:00 pm. The couple was concerned. This concern seems to be an old one, because Christ explains that the Father is also waiting for the return of the youngest child. Sometimes we see God so calm. The truth is that God, the Father, is suffering with this pain, His concern, is suffering until He sees us coming back and I think this is really very serious. To think that the Father is looking at the crucifixion so calmly as if nothing was happening, I don't know if this is Christian. The father is suffering, waiting for his son to return and also with the profound concern for the son that has treated life as an adventure in freedom, even greater than he who is afraid to lose the homestead. The father is concerned for the one that wants to live his adventure in freedom. And this really makes me think. Cursillo is to communicate the joy of the re-encounter with the Father, when we come back, and the Father is waiting for us. Sometimes we think we are looking for God all our lives, but it is God who is looking for us continuously. Maybe if we were to remove the obstacles that are in our path, we would see the Lord's hand, how He is looking for us.

The Cursillo Movement consists of communicating the reality that God loves us, which is the best news. This love of God is materialized in Christ and the way to communicate it is the way that Christ taught us, which is through friendship, and this has to be communicated to the inner person not to their intellect, or their wealth or their position of power.

Focus on this, "We are learning to live life in the light and the impulse of this truth, trying to make it real in our lives, just as our daily living comes up, trying to perceive, to value, and appreciate things, events and people, from the perspective of the love that God has for us." (Eduardo Bonnín's thoughts.) To act with criterion is not to believe that there are some leaders that have found the right recipe to be Christian. To act out of our criterion is not to believe that we have the right, sure and definitive set of norms, but to have the will to find balance in the Truth, facing the tensions that are produced in our daily lives basing us on what we obtain from the Gospel – which is what could influence our conscience – on our common sense and on reality.

Our will or wish to find a balance leads us to the search, not to repeat the same answers that others have given before when the same question had arisen. Sometimes we have a great tendency to be so confident in what someone thinks, who thinks very well, that we repeat the same things over and over. I do not know if grammar has changed since I went to school, but when I was young there was an example that was taught, "The one who wants to reprimand should be blameless". After some time, a man tried to explain it to someone else and mistakenly said: "The one that wants to correct people has to be incorrigible". Sometimes in life we believe we are repeating things, but in fact we are not repeating exactly the same thing, because when we repeat something that somebody else said we don't take into consideration that the person we are quoting understood the norm from his/her mature mentality. Only the one that knows the criterion from which the norm was formulated catches the sense of the norm. The bad thing about norms is not that man does not need them (the more developed he is, the more norms are needed, i.e. to circulate), the bad thing is that he has only norms, though some of them are needed; that the only thing guiding him in his life be the norms.

It is one thing to have a desire for balance in the truth and another is to believe we are the repository of truth. When knowing is primordial, and the other one is the one who has to always learn from the one that knows, a lot of answers appear that cannot find a question. That is what happened as

Santiago Rossinyol explained about the school of arts, when he was told, “You think this won’t be good?” He answered, “I believe it is going to be good for teaching, but not for learning.” Sometimes the same thing happens in Christianity, there are things that are good for teaching, but sadly, they are not good for learning. In the meantime, as it has been said, the Gospel dislodges people, “The pressure of the one that “believes he knows”, can make people feel uncomfortable causing them to want to avoid meeting with such a ‘know-it-all’ again”.

What can attract us sometimes in the fundamental is not the resonance it finds within our heart, but the fact that it won’t change our security. What we sometimes like about things that are so fundamental is that they are so secure, that they become a norm, and that reassures us.

It has been said that for some people, it is impossible to consider that others could think in any other way. Sometimes it happens that there are people who think it is impossible that others may think in a different way. One of the fundamental things of sharing together as we have in these few days in the “conversations”, is that we discover that not only can we think in a different way; we can think a lot better.

When we do not let go of some established ideas, we may find it as, “having a garden full of plastic flowers where nothing withers, but nothing blooms either”. That’s what a Spanish psychiatrist said, and it is very true. I sometimes think that I would like it if my children were made out of plastic for a while. And sometimes, we would like to magnetize reality so that it would stay the same for a while, and not bother us so much; however, reality is not like that.

God’s love is a presence, not an idea. Sometimes, when we play with the love of God as an idea we can stretch it, and we can make it wide and do many things. The only thing we are unable to do is discover that we need something else in our interior, the love of God as a presence in the person.

To have a perception of someone else’s way of thinking is not to possess a mentality. This is like someone who goes to the music auditorium and believes that because he has purchased a music score by Mozart, he will be able to play Mozart on the piano when he gets home. To have the music score is not the same as mastering the instrument; to have a perception is not the same as possessing a mentality.

The Cursillo Movement in each of its three phases: Precursillo, Cursillo and Postcursillo, respond to the purpose that it pursues: the Precursillo facilitates the search for the Love of God; the Cursillo Weekend fosters the encounter with the Love of God, and the Postcursillo converts the Love of God into a lifetime witness.

Precursillo

Although it is not about saying new things at any price, to live, is to gradually discover and rediscover that which we had not yet discovered within a field we assumed we had already colonized. Sometimes, there are things we believe we know and maybe we discover that we do not know them until reality makes us understand that we do not live them. If we do not live them, we do not know them. There are many things that I think I know about Christianity, but when there

is adversity or contradiction, I do not apply them, not because I don't know them, but because I had simply memorized them.

And neither is it about repeating the same thing as always. It is known that when the same people always say the same things, to the same people, at the end if there is much luck, those who are left are the same as always.

To be original is to be near to the originator. So, without repeating one more time the "Study of Environments" rollo, which originated and prompted the others, we cannot speak about the environment in which we live without referring to the contents of the rollo in the essential:

1. Identification between environment and interpersonal relationships.
2. That interpersonal relationship is established in three different levels: our *companions*, the *environment*, and *us*.
3. That the approach, because it is conducive to the relationship that exists between people, has to be diverse, and we could describe it in simple terms as follows:

Precursillo: *Environment*

Cursillo: *Our companions*

Postcursillo: *Us*

I have always had the impression that sometimes we have been very stubborn when we dwell upon this. Precursillo is still in its very early stages in Cursillo. Seeing how in reality the environment is penetrated with a certain vision of an apostolic plan, makes this concrete. Sometimes this is what we have intended, and it is really hard to proceed on this road. We know it by theory, but it is hard for us to go deeper into this.

In the world (referring to the environment where we move) there are many things that are wrong, but we have to thank God who lets the sun shine upon good and bad people. I can imagine what would happen if the sun only shone upon good people; the good people would look tanned and the bad people would look pale. If this were the case it would be a good business to sell tanning lotion. Everybody would try to get the exclusive license to sell the lotion. The world where we live is really a world that has extraordinary possibilities. Not only in what appears to be great achievements of science, but in this century in which we live some really interesting realities exist, and people live these realities. Sometimes we find people that are capable of communicating these realities, and it happens then that you are not going to communicate your news to them, because they have their news. I have discovered rare things with people. It happens that half of this century in which we live is the only time in history that people learned to see things in black and white. Cursillo was needed to start seeing in color again.

One of the most extraordinary phenomena, that interests me so much, and we are living it, is Jazz. There is communication with it, brought out from anguished people who needed to express the cause of their anguish. Out jumped a series of interpretations and they communicated from heart to heart. This has an enormous resonance and has revolutionized a series of things. People have this restlessness. I believe it is very good that we Christians have the same restlessness that people have. Because not only are they interesting, and it is the way to enter into their lives; but because maybe in all of this is the hand of God who is working and kneading the century we are living.

Jesus came to look for sinners, not because he wanted them all in one flock, but because in the ordinary, sinners possess the great human virtues and values that God likes. I believe this is very clear in the Study of Environment rollo. Jesus came to look for sinners and from this fact the Church has to see very clearly that she (the Church) needs to approach the sinners by penetrating all that is in the environment (sinners included). The essential is to get close to people without manipulating them. God likes sinners that do not fear losing the inheritance. There is no way you can love without meeting God, but before meeting God everything that falls is seed.

In every person there is a great amount of influence that has awakened sleeping possibilities, a Christian is a fan of awakened possibilities that awaken new possibilities.

In some environments of the world evil appears to be optional and the good obligatory. This is something almost mysterious. When someone is driving on a road and sees a sign saying, 'Mushroom gathering prohibited', they usually stop the car. The simple fact that it is prohibited encourages people to think, "There is something interesting going on here." On the other hand, since "Good" is an obligatory thing, people will pass by without even noticing it. It is because there are so many things that are obligatory and some others that might be wrongly prohibited, that when we proclaim the good, putting the accent on its obligations, we do wrong, as so often the fulfillment of norms, not only hides, but substitutes faith. Instead of having faith, they fulfill norms. The apostolate is sometimes believed to be an effort of decision but is above all a witness to the conviction.

Cursillo

Cursillo is a living witness of the triple encounter with *ourselves*, with *Christ* and with our *brothers and sisters*.

Encounter with Oneself

The journey into oneself is something fundamental that we need to do before anything else. Because we tend to hide our interior selves. The encounter with oneself will only happen after we gradually admit the real truth to ourselves, the truth of our own lives, and this will take time. What is valuable is always discovering what is within one's interior self.

In the measure that we go on taking conscious account of our reality, it begins to be inevitable to tell oneself what we are and to make decisions from within ourselves. Because we can discover old things with new eyes, but always with our own new eyes and not just what someone else tells us. It is a personal discovery.

We would be deceiving ourselves if we believed that we accept something internally that is going to mold our life when in fact we accept it because we think we have to accept it, to avoid people saying to us: "Come on, get with it! You just aren't hip (or cool)". Sometimes there are norms that put so much pressure on us that we believe that we almost accept them when in reality we fulfill them to be at peace with ourselves, and not break with the environment that pressures us. It is important that each one of us finds his proper direction. Only quiet and honest reflection on the motivations behind my attachments will reveal what they truly represent to me.

Encounter with Christ

“Through our behavior and our lives, we must make the world really believe, convincing the world, that what is Christian is the most human and that what is best in all that is human is most Christian. This is the most urgent because it is what the whole world needs”. (Eduardo Bonnín).

In a world with all kinds of restlessness, if my restlessness wants to understand the reason why life and situations are the way they are, it won't stop until it encounters Christ.

From the beginning, the Cursillo Movement has intended to incarnate and communicate with joy the living Christ who is natural and near.

Someone said, “You are either enthusiastic about Christ, or everything is simply practices and mere compliance”. And I think this is very fundamental because either one is enthusiastic about Christ or everything is mere practices and compliance. Christ is the living, concrete and direct Love of God.

If we really try and live this encounter with Christ, we will gradually discover in our daily life that Christ is the only one that gives us the true ‘why’ (the true answers to our inner questions and doubts), and the concrete and feasible ‘how’. All the truths of Christ that we can capture are realizable in our lives.

Encounter with our Brothers and Sisters

If we are not fully appreciative of the value of what the person is in himself or herself, everything becomes mechanical. If we do not value the person as he is, for the fact of being a person, if the instruments of the Cursillo, Group Reunion and Ultreya, are treated in a mechanical or impersonal way and are not valued for their personal approach, everything becomes mechanical. All of us have seen how sometimes, someone recommends the Group Reunion in a manner that reminds us of the ‘chain letters’ sent by mail that say: “One person kept the chain letter going and won the lottery, someone else broke the chain and his house collapsed”. Sometimes it looks like we treat things in a mechanical way, when the most interesting thing in itself is the sharing with people. There is no need to resort to threats or prizes. The prize, as said in Cursillo, is in its practice.

When we participate in the life of another person – all living is sharing – it is all humanized.

Friendship is not possessive. Because of that, friends are not had. Friends are gradually being made. There are no two people alike. Neither is there a friendship that is alike nor comparable. There are for sure, common situations.

We have to appreciate that relationships with others (at the Group Reunion and Ultreya) allow us to acknowledge and admire the different reactions in similar situations. It is wonderful to see the enormous richness of reactions there are in people in the same situations, the same misfortune, or the same setback.

Life is incomplete without friendship. Neither the most near, nor those who are the most distant can fill the emptiness. When we focus on the ‘faraway’ we have to be careful not to leave those

who are most near, out of sight, or overlook them, idealizing the ‘faraway’, because then Love will go straight past those who are overlooked and will not reach the faraway either.

Friendship is born freely and lives only in freedom.

Among the possible relationships with others, friendship is the most appropriate, but one is not a friend because it is appropriate or advisable. It is not that I will be his/her friend, so I may achieve whatever. The greatest thing in friendship is that it is unselfish.

When the other accepts us, it is normal to feel gratitude, and this gratitude is accepted gratefully. This interrelation, this communication of the admiration of others, of the existence of this Movement, is what really creates the living sense that the Ultreya and the Group Reunion have, and this gratitude is continually kneaded.

I have a friend who is really an extraordinary man and is now going through a very hard situation. He is blind. When I first came here about 8 or 9 years ago, we had already been in a Group Reunion; he is really one extraordinary person. One day he told me something that I liked so much that I had to include it in this presentation. He was at the store selling lottery tickets and he was reflecting when he told me: “You know what I was thinking? That, intimacy is something that exists between God, me and the one I want to share it with. This is why nobody who deserves my intimacy can use it.” I think this is extraordinary because there is nothing more that needs to be added for people to preserve confidentiality. It is something so delicate that another does us such a favor by communicating his intimacy that we should not even think of communicating it to others. In other words, that intimacy is something between God, me and the person whom I want to communicate it to. This is what happens in a Group Reunion.

Postcursillo

Group Reunion

When we seek truth, good and beauty, one makes friends, and when we make friends we find the truth, good and beauty. It is a continual relationship, and this is simple because it comes out by itself.

In the Group Reunion the three encounters that started in the weekend are realized since we are faced with ourselves, with Christ, and with the others. It stimulates us to act upon it. There is a very well-known novel, with the Rural Priest of Bernanos. A priest says to the other: “When one meditates, one ends up where one wants, and when one prays one ends up where God wants.” We might be able to say that when one starts living and understanding the gathering in the Group Reunion, we do not know where he is going to end up, but we can know for sure that he will not stop. This is certainly fundamental, because the encouragement that the encounter in this magnificent gathering of love, of truth, of good, and beauty, will really drive the person to carry on living it continuously and to never stop.

Ultreya

The Ultreya is the circumstance that makes possible the sharing of the best that each one lives. The Ultreya is the witness that the Cursillo is truth. It is the reunion of those that believe and enjoy living together and in the group.

In the Ultreya the priority is the people, with their diversity and through friendship, they are increasing and polishing their enlightenment, their giving and their spirit of charity learned since the Cursillo.

Whatever the Lord wants to tell us cannot be expressed by all men together, but it is manifested to different people with different ways of thinking. We even get to discover that the language causes us to make an effort of understanding others, that the same words sometimes have a different meaning for different people. One of us may say, he does not understand his mother-in-law, and we may think something is wrong, when in reality; the mother-in-law is from Russia and does not speak Spanish. We judge everything right away, we must understand that there is a difference in language and that everyone has a different concept, words may sound different.

Ultreya is a reunion of groups of people in which a Rollo is also given.

To give a witness is more than talking.

There are people who always have something to say, and there is someone who always has to say something.

Faith is always at work, in Scripture faith is never about concepts or ideas. The most usual substitutes are worship and wisdom. When we don't want to act, we almost always escape through worship and wisdom. That happens in the Group Reunion, when there is one that doesn't work well and instead of getting into the "plans", they start reviewing the Masses and explaining what they have seen on TV, which would be worship and wisdom.

The Rollo is the witness of our own lives and the Christian witness is a rollo even when it is not meant to be. The Rollos are usually good if the one that listens is listening well, since the Holy Spirit is not only invoked by the rollista.

It is not a consistent attitude to stop our lives when we are at Ultreya, or to stop Ultreya when we are in our lives.

Life languishes when our goal is not to adapt our life to reality, without trying to preserve our way of thinking when we realize it doesn't fit with reality.

In the souls that strive to live from within like Mary, with growing perfection, everything is seen with the eyes of faith, most near to the vision that He has of their lives, from the conviction of His Father's love. There is a Laud Hymn that says:

*We thank you Lord for the dawn,
we thank you for the new day,
and we thank you for the Eucharist
and for Our Lady.*

And this really came to me at a moment when I was at Group Reunion with a problem that allowed no peace. To think that in the middle of all of this, we can be centered by criterion. The things of

Christ are very good, but we should realize how centered Mary is at each moment because she had true confidence in the Father.