



National Cursillo Movement

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Life

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 Life given by Fr. Antonio Pérez Ramos.

Introduction

I imagine that when the coordinator of these first conversations of Cala Figuera entrusted me with the presentation entitled LIFE, he did it bearing in mind the fact that I am a priest, one of the many that have had the great good fortune of knowing, participating in and living the singular experience of Cursillos, not called precisely at the first hour, but at the sixth, although certainly in the land of its birth and in direct and fraternal contact with its founder.

As you see, I have accepted the invitation, which I appreciate: but I wish to make it clear that, in what concerns the method and style, I will limit myself to using the parameters of the very etymology of the verb “converse”. That is, to speak in a familiar, simple and cordial style, free of academic terms, and official form thinking that I will direct myself to friends who share with me the same ideals, who are moved by the same criteria and cultivate the same values. As for the tone, once again I will endeavor to be forceful and passionate in what I say, with a renewed enthusiasm and urgency, the enthusiasm and urgency that love for the things of God implants in us; adding two things to it, as a counterpoint by my office as an older man, a note of serenity, the serenity that the years give, and the hallmark of pastoral service in which Cursillo lives and is marked by.

But above all, I will try to do this with my soul praying, i.e. I will try to say it with humility. The Mystery of Christ, aligned with the subject of Grace, merits it; Grace is the central point in the ecclesial doctrine and axis in the Cursillo Movement. And, moreover, our common relationship in the Mystical Body requires that I speak with humility.

That is why in this presentation I wish to be only a kind of Psalmist accompanying those like you, who are making their way towards the one Who is the Way; to be a tutor to those that belong to the School of the only Teacher of the Truth; and to present myself, as an assistant associate, by virtue of the Sacrament of Holy Orders, to tell you the wonders that are perceived in the miraculous distribution of the LIFE that flows from the Heart of God.

¹ <http://www.feba.info>

The Teaching and Ministry of Grace

Precisely, our priestly ordination is the title that legitimizes us in the Church – and Cursillo, as a work of the Church – for the teaching and Ministry of Grace or, of SUPERNATURAL LIFE, that is, in the context of Cursillo obviously, what without doubt, signifies, LIFE.

In this double context, by teaching we must “bring to people’s consciences the word of Christ and see that it penetrates and wins them” (M F. Sciacca). It is a beautiful, symbolic function that we carry out through the meditations and the various Rollos given at the Cursillo. It is the way in which to bring to the Cursillistas, the luminous truths of the theology of Grace, and to attract them to the knowledge of the Person of Christ.

Meanwhile, through the action of sanctification, our mission is, as the Apostle says, “that people come to consider us as servants of Christ and entrusted with announcing the secrets of God” (1 Cor. 4:1) And is there anything more secret in this service – proclamation – commitment, mediation, or priesthood than assisting in the aura of the intimate life of God, in “downloading” them (God’s secrets) to people, an attainment obtained by the price of the Blood of Christ, to those saved in His name? Or is there anything more secret, mysterious, and admirable than that of being collaborators in the process of opening souls to the action of the Holy Spirit, Lord and Giver of Life?

Grace: Base and Axis at the Cursillo Weekend and in the Cursillo

By looking into the past and coming closer to the sources – the objectives that are involved in every historical commemoration, like this one – will result in something opportune and convenient, and much more in the area of theology, to investigate how the Cursillistas chose, addressed and articulated the topic of Grace in the very beginning.

What I mean to say is, this is going to be our modest contribution to the Conversations; to review, to remember, to gather and choose what others discovered, most of them pastors, theologians, and give them here, a minimally ordered exposure, without daring to correct or change anything. In Cursillo, we say, everything beyond the essence is invented.

I will gather, therefore, the most authorized testimonies and draw on the clearest analysis present in the bibliography, which we already count on from a long career. I will organize and summarize the contents and make some reflections to offer you. I will do this to somehow pay homage to those who put their effort into thinking and articulating, in order to give structure to the Cursillo.

In other words, and getting to the point: what is and what has the topic of Grace been, in the basic founding doctrine of the Cursillo Movement? We would respond that it has been a major topic.

Let us hear what Bishop Hervás said in 1957. “Catholic doctrine solidly establishes, on one hand, the perfect harmony of nature and Grace, and on the other hand, the primacy of the work of God and His Grace and the necessity of having man’s collaboration. The Work of Cursillo is built from this doctrine, personified in the life of the Leaders and transmitted to each one of the Cursillistas. Grace is the granite block on which the whole building rests. The Cursillos in Christianity and, in general, all its complementary work, is centered and based on this conviction. The order and use of traditional methods used by Christian people to attract the flow of divine Grace, are primary

expressions of the intimate and deep persuasion that, although utilizing human resources, everything must come from above. All this comes to be a deeper realization of the three great truths expressed in the Creed; I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church, in the Communion of the Saints. It is the movement of the Mystical Body to attract the light and life of Jesus Christ, its Head, by the actions of the Holy Spirit.

Grace, in the Living of What is Fundamental for Being a Christian

In 1962, Eduardo Bonnín, Bernardo Vadell and Francisco Forteza, when presenting the Cursillo as the joyful communication of being Christian, or living what is fundamental for being a Christian, called on the authority of Bishop Pildain to qualify its content as a synthesis of Catholic dogma and its ecclesiastic impact as the Pentecost of Catholic Action.

At the same time, they remarked in the masterful ‘Structure of Ideas’: “Through the rollo, Habitual Grace, the Cursillistas must be opened to a new world, of unsuspected realities, unknown by most of them and disregarded by all; it is necessary to break down the effects of Grace and make them clear to them (to the Cursillistas). To know that the rollo on Actual Grace is to convince those in the Cursillo that they are constantly under a shower of Actual Grace, and it is necessary to take advantage of it, and that what the Cursillo becomes for each one, depends totally on their response to these Graces”.

Besides, these, and the remaining spiritual Rollos, they added, follow the classic line of the theology of Grace, Habitual Grace: Divine Life; Actual Grace: its promotion and actualization. Sacraments: their sources, and Obstacles: their enemies; Life in Grace: its fruit.

And it is in this vital dynamic, where Group Reunion should be understood as: “The personal experience of living out the dogma of the Mystical Body”, on a lesser scale, that of the possibilities for each one, whose origin is not reduced to the level of human work, but in the same Christian concept of the Triune God and of the Communion of Saints.

Lastly, in the epilogue of the mentioned book, the authors forestalled the misunderstandings: The ideas that move, maintain and structure the Cursillos in Christianity Movement are difficult to understand in its authenticity for those who, with their prejudices, sift the realities. Cursillo is not only these Ideas, it’s also, and mainly so, Realities.

And when an Idea is transformed into Reality it is also an object of controversy, because life’s experience of Truth calls forth a vital commitment. In the same way that many people would prefer Christ to be only the Truth but not the Life, many people also – probably the same people – would be happy if Cursillos were only Ideas and not Realities.

Redefining the Theology of Grace

In 1974, after the Council and after the recognition by Paul VI at the I World Ultreya, and with the III World Encounter Celebration in Mallorca still fresh in mind, those who had written the ‘Fundamental Ideas of the Cursillo Movement’, spoke about the actual reason for them: “Without a doubt Vatican II has permitted a new light to enter the Church, the consequence of which is a refocusing of direction towards a theology of Grace which is more biblical, more existential, more alive, more personified.

A theology of Hope, clearer and more concrete, in which man's response to God in the Salvation Dialogue is more alive and more responsible.

A theology of Salvation that is more present in the community of people who live in community”.

Methods that Focus the Lived Experience of What is Fundamental for Being a Christian

It was never the intent to create a theology of the Fundamentals, which is stated in the referred to “Fundamental Ideas” in their essence and purpose, but rather they tried to find some appropriate methods to give experiences of life and to communicate in three days, without perhaps giving all the essentials of Christianity but voluntarily centering itself in the global proclamation and testimonial of what is basic, sustaining conditions and distinctive characteristics of all that it is to be Christian, and that which brings the individual to conversion and, through their conversion, the transformation of the environment and structures of the World.

This search for appropriate methods caused the Cursillos to focus on the lived experience of what is Fundamental for being a Christian in successively diverse ways, in rhythm with the Church. Sometimes, the Cursillo vision regarding what is fundamental for being a Christian was and is in triplicate, the love of God, love of ourselves, and love of neighbor.

By definition, what is fundamental for being Christian, is, “Christ alive in Christian people through Grace”, which is expressed in love of God, and in love of neighbor, because only by living in Grace, loving God and loving our neighbor can be considered the foundation, the root and the origin of all doing and of being genuinely Christian.

Sometimes, the vision of what is fundamental for being Christian in Cursillo was and is in Baptism, which, by its action transforms and shapes, and immerses the one baptized into Christ and prompts him to participate in his triple mission of priest, prophet and king (Lumen Gentium, 31). Therefore, baptism is the fundamentals of being Christian, for what it has of sacrament and conversion.

Sometimes, the vision of the fundamental Christian was and is in living in Grace. To participate in the life of God through Grace, always creates a new existence within us, as if that new existence is in us and of us.

Sometimes the vision of what is fundamental for being Christian in Cursillo was and is, in living in the Mystical Body, the Church.

While some others melted, mixed, and interrelated these four visions of the fundamental Christian, which, evidently, inevitably and finally, lead to Christ and His Grace.

Romano Guardini said, “Christianity is not, in the end, either a doctrine nor a truth, nor an interpretation of life. It is this, but none of this constitutes its nuclear essence. Its essence is constituted by Jesus of Nazareth, by his existence, his work and his concrete destiny, that means, by his historical personality.”

And Monsignor Tarancón, “The Cursillo is, above all, a strong reaction that melts the layer of ice that covers the heart. It removes the scales from the eyes. Opens wide both ears; shows men their condition as rational beings and the importance of their being children of God. Light streams in. Grace forcefully enters the soul. Love massages and swells the heart. That is when the encounter with Christ takes place. A new world opens up before the eyes. The presence of Jesus gives a different significance and a new value to all things. It is an encounter that constitutes a true revelation.”

In the encounter with Christ, the Cursillo is wrapped in the Grace that He earned for us. And the Cursillo settles itself into the nucleus of Christianity, in the Word of God made flesh: Who came so that we might have Life and Life in abundance (John 10:10).

Rhaner has written: “In Grace all conversion takes place, all encounters with God, all Christian Community. It is the Father’s Gift that Christ – and the Church, as a continuation of Christ in history – offer to everybody”.

Juan Capo and Francisco Suarez emphasized in 1972, for the purpose of commenting in, ‘The basic guidelines of the Cursillo Movement’, “Having Grace as a key to Christian life, Cursillos” – they said – “since the beginning has given it importance and a central place, in its method and spirituality, making it an essential and indisputable proposition”.

The Lived Experience of What is Fundamental for Being a Christian

According to Father Haring, a lived experience does not consist of cold and conceptual thoughts that attempt to capture the characteristics and essential relationship while at the same time maintaining a certain distance. The Lived experience doesn’t in any way exclude thoughts, but they are the thoughts that come from the heart. They are a person’s vibrant response when he is faced with something really valuable.

And Cardinal Danielou said: “Being Christian is essentially a form of life, not fundamentally a philosophy. Being Christian is living the Divine life, to possess Grace in our soul and to enjoy familiarity with God. And this is an absolute novelty. Through Grace, life acquires a new dimension”.

This is why Cursillo does not seek psychological experiences, – although neither does it exclude it, without giving it decisive importance – but it seeks the lived experience of the Spiritual life, with our spirit in union with the Holy Spirit. (Rom. 8:14-17).

That is why the Cursillo has always been presented as a lived experience; attempting through personal experience to make living the Gospel a reality; the personal encounter with an alive Christ, which should be the response of love to a personal requirement that commits us and where prayer becomes a personal dialogue with a Friend.

A Cursillo Weekend is essentially to bring Christianity to life, to live the greatness of the fullness of Grace as a personal experience, conscious and growing, received in freedom, from the generosity of God, transmitted through the marvelous communion of the Mystical Body, where the sanctifying action of the Holy Spirit is implored through the palanca of prayer and sacrifice.

Life in Grace and the Apostolate

Then the action of God through Grace in each participant becomes by itself like an apostolic action, according to Saint John Chrisostom: “It’s easier for the sun to stop shining and being hot than for Christianity to stop being a torch. And the Torch of the Christian cannot be hidden”.

Indeed, the whole history and the whole of Cursillo literature are a unique testimony that confirms that apostolate belongs to the essence of Cursillo. Cursillo says that life in Grace, which becomes by consequence, the apostolate, is the essence of Christianity and therefore the essence of our Movement.

The Cursillista who grasps the Rollo on Sanctifying Grace well, understanding it as the jubilant proclamation of God’s Love and His desire to communicate with man, and has thereby opened himself to be seduced and invaded by the Lord, has understood and become fully aware that Grace is his being Christian. Furthermore, in understanding this, they are then compelled to proclaim, in the same way as the Samaritan woman did, that they have discovered the best thing in their life, Life itself actually; or like Mary Magdalene, they feel the uncontrollable desire to announce to his brothers that he has seen the resurrected Christ, glorious, alive, and close, or like the disciples on the road to Emmaus, he jumps for joy after being surprised by their contact with somebody who, pretending He had just bumped into them, got involved in their lives, spoke to their hearts and made them understand that Christ is definitely salvation, and the only Hope.

Because the person who through faith has discovered Love, Happiness, and Hope, in a privileged place during a time of Grace – or Kairos – during the Cursillo, having been brought to this specific time and place by providence, by the affection and warmth between the brothers or sisters, and by being close to the light of the Blessed Sacrament, can do no less than communicate everywhere what it was that had such an impact on him. Grace is expansive, contagious, creative, building hope; more than light, fire, and air because Grace is God, who offers himself, immense, creator, and the very ground of our existence.

He who has understood the self-giving of God, that we have been chosen without merit, and have been since all eternity, through the initiative of the One who loved us first (1 John 1:10), those have found the core of what is fundamental for being a Christian, i.e. what the condition of Grace means, with its gratuity and beauty, its interiority and permanency. This person has discovered the meaning of life and cannot then fail to be a spokesperson for the great reality and the most memorable event in life. “To those who received His word” – says St. John – “they were made Children of God” (John 1:12). “And of his fullness we have all received” (John 1:16).

The awareness of that greatness and responsibility is what makes us happy and joyful, and what impels us to announce with enthusiasm and generosity what was so freely announced to us: Christ is alive, and loves us, and he has saved us.

And we not only feel compelled to transmit by word of mouth from one person to another, but also to radiate the Gospel in the environments that we frequent and share.

In direct proportion to the measure of his or her interior warmth, the individual Cursillista, or the group, will find their own Jerusalem, driven by the Charity of Christ (2 Cor. 5:14) and they will try to be faithful witnesses of the message received in the last meditation of the Cursillo.

Cursillos and the Vitality of the Ecclesial Structures

Vitality, in accordance with the dictionary, means the quality of having life, as well the activity and effectiveness of the vital faculties. It is the old question about the Cursillo as an apostolic instrument or function, and its missionary aspect. Was it created or born from the heart of Catholic Action, or, by autonomy or self-sufficiency from the Catholic Action and other organized Apostolic Groups, particularly from the parishes? It seems that the question is still not resolved.

We shall now focus only on what concerns the nuclear element of Grace. Well, Grace, experienced as the primary value, as the supreme ideal, with energy and enthusiasm, proved itself, already at the very beginning, as a determined and able force to send the Cursillistas out to win over their brothers and sisters, environments and society. That promptly helped the Cursillo Movement to become known as an instrument of Christian Renewal.

However, as was remarked upon in 1981, in the Manifesto where it stated, “the Cursillos of Christianity, a reality not yet accomplished”. “There is an unquestionable fact that during the Cursillo Movement’s history, there have always existed two ways to understand it and by consequence, also two ways to channel it and guide it towards its purpose.

Some believe that it is only to give vitality to the already existing structures and organizations, leaving the original in place, but with a better spirit; and others who believe that if the Movement is given the space to live its basic and minimum structure of Group Reunion, Ultreya, and School, with the same dynamism, it can bring the Good news of the Gospel to all the hidden places of human existence, personal, family, and social.” The specific purpose of the Cursillo Movement is to make it possible for everybody to live what is Fundamental for being a Christian, to achieve that the freedom of the person may encounter the Spirit of God. This will always surpass any structure and will strike down any temptation to enclose and classify something that it is so natural and spontaneous as the individual encounter of people with the Gospel of Christ.

Grace and the New Evangelization

John Paul II remarked on May 9, 1988, that one of the qualities of the New Evangelization is that it has a new ardor. In this, without a doubt, there is a point of connection with the work of Cursillo, in which Grace is the desire for holiness that is prompted by the radical union with Christ, the only one Who has the Word of eternal life (John 6:69), who is the Bread of life, coming down from Heaven to give life to the World (John 6:58-61).

Something profound, which I insist upon, is the truth of Man himself, as was revealed to us, that everyone has been created in the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:27) and has been called to participate in the divine life and to realize the plan of Salvation (1 Tim 2:4; Gaudium et Spes 22). Something that is amazing is when theology teaches that the divine nature, in One who is the Word, is united with human nature and that Jesus’ humanity belongs to God Himself, and that, therefore, human nature could possibly cohabit and be radically united to divinity.

To evangelize the world with power is one of the dearest truths of our doctrinal, ecclesial and Cursillo heritage. And to evangelize without preference for any kind of people – Cursillo has never been partisan to the differences between the social classes – because Cursillo is aware that every person has one and the same Father: God (Mt. 23:9). And when a person meets another person, they should accept and love them as a brother.

Cursillo has been evangelizing for fifty years, with love and from a very evident solidarity with the Mystical Body of Christ, conscious that all should be in solidarity with each other (Gen. 4:9; 2 Cor. 11:28) and that solidarity – another beautiful name for charity in action – is a Christian virtue that covers all dimension of gratuity, forgiveness and reconciliation. (Gaudium et Spes 24)

We know, also, from the point of view of Grace, that our neighbor is made in the image of the Father, saved by Christ, and under the influence of the Holy Spirit, that even in the most insignificant, Christ is also present (Mt. 25:40, 45); also that we have to offer help and offer ourselves, because above all, we all receive from the fullness of Christ, the love that corresponds to his love (1 Jn. 3:16).

Terutliano said, that the Christian is another Christ, and we say in the Rollo on Habitual Grace, as an echo, that man is a sacrament of Christ, in the same way that Christ is a Sacrament of the Father. Also, a Christian, aware of that greatness, of that vocation and mission of Sanctity, is able to renew humanity, to incarnate the Gospel, re-Christianizing the whole world, in, with, and through Christ.

Meaning in Life is the Trademark of Christ

This concept appears very clearly in the Gospel. Jesus is himself, his own person, who becomes the guiding light in the life of the disciples. They accept His invitation to follow him, to leave everything and go after him (Mt. 4:20).

In our following Jesus we must trust Him, in life and in death, and consequently we have to make our way towards Him and, like Him, gradually leave all other things aside. This is the consequence of our adherence to Him.

Then the mission involves a double aspect; trust in Jesus, in his work, in his personal power; and the aspect of identification with Him, with his love, life, and his mission. It means, to develop our life with Him, to join our fate to His, to join our existence, its meaning, its activity, its future, with His. Then life conforms to Him, takes its meaning from Him, and identifies with Him.

What is important, – says Joaquin Herrera – is the meaning that I give to what happens to me. This sense of the meaning for what happens is able to transform those facts into new attitudes in the work of making us become a person. The human being is an ongoing work. Nobody is complete, and everybody is undergoing that work. In Christ and by his Grace, by baptism, and the action of the Holy Spirit we have been made a new creature, a new person, we have armed ourselves with Christ, and we have been resurrected from death to life, that is Him, and as Paul says, we have to look for the things of Christ, and try to taste, in our hidden life in God in this life what our future with God will be, what eternal life will be, what is going to help us rise above, what will help us to improve ourselves, until Jesus Christ, our life, comes again. Then we will be resurrected together with Him in Glory (Col. 3:1-4).

Plan for life

I will allow myself, in summary, to repeat a wonderful and inspired prayer of Paul VI, in April 1955, entitled “You, Christ are Life”:

You, Christ are the light,
You, Christ are love,
You, Christ are truly He,
Who gives true meaning to life,
True value, true purpose, who straightens our life.
You, who teaches us why we live,
Why we suffer, why we die.
You, who guides our thoughts, and our will, in the right paths.
You who gives our behavior
And our ways of interpreting our existence,
The most authentic, vast, and supernatural form.
You are the only one able to give the means, the power,
And the capacity to be a good person,
Of having character, to sacrifice ourselves for something that is worthwhile.
You are the one who reveals the secret of life.