



National Cursillo Movement

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Joy

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 *Joy* given by Jesús R. Valls Flores.

Introduction and Overview

First of all, I wish to thank you for including me and letting me take part in this great Cursillo event because, at this stage of my life, it’s been very important for me to have taken part in it.

These conversations have meant as much for me, or even more, as that Cursillo number 339 held in the Monastery of Santa Lucía, here in Mallorca, in 1987; that was my first Cursillo weekend and I was 15 years old. For me the days we have spent here together have been like living something beyond that Cursillo, an Ultreya, an improved “encore”, so to say, of what I lived then in 1987. My weekend at the age of 15 was for me the discovery of something new, I mean a new way of living Christianity. Thereafter I had unwittingly been looking for something I didn’t know I would find, and it has been through living and sharing this weekend with brothers and sisters Cursillistas from so many places in the World that God has opened up a clear path of hope for me and therefore the possibility of taking this Cursillo reality into my time and place and into the concrete circumstance in which I live. I pledge my firm commitment to it more than ever before, and I consider it the only way that I feel can make me live fully.

I am surprised that you, our illustrious visitors from all countries represented here- have been amazed at the presence of young people in the Cursillo in Mallorca. The fact is that the Cursillo began as something organized by young people and then, the maturity of that idea, which was later recognized by the Church as the founding charism, pervaded the youth of Mallorca with a spiritual impetus, and it set a specific style and devised a specific method that has allowed the Cursillo Movement to be capable of reaching the height of any heart sensitive to the truth of Christ.

So, today I feel the need to feel pleased, as all of you feel pleased, and I want to mention something specially addressed to my young friends in Mallorca, and for which I am sure they are not going to reproach me. What I want to tell them is that to find out what young people can contribute to MCC their mere presence at the Cursillo meetings is not enough. So many times, in Mallorca - the birthplace of the Cursillo community - even with the historical and geographical proximity to the sources, we have spent periods of lethargy and “fatigue” in which we have lost the true light, not knowing why we are in the Cursillo Movement. And what I want to say today to the young people who have been here with me, that this event of First Conversations about the ideas that have given support to the founding Charism, must be a starting point to definitively taking the torch of the

¹ <http://www.feba.info>

true fire of the spirit that landed in the world in the form of MCC. You and I know that if we do not take the baton from the hands of the initiators we will confuse the sense of Cursillo. We need the Cursillo of the initiators and what is more, many people need it.

We are on the right track only when we confirm these things and soak our awareness with the truth that God loves us, and when we accept that Jesus Christ is in faith with us and that it is

He who governs our community. When we accept that Christ is a presence among us and that we are not superior to others, but through His presence, our lives receive and contribute more light. For all that, let me invite you to form a permanent group, good, united and happy in order to be able to achieve and offer all that today's man can receive from Cursillo.

That effort made by some young men in the forties and fifties cannot come to nothing when they are no longer with us. They were enlightened by the Spirit and the Spirit does not die but It revives when it comes to raise awareness in other people. My friends, we have to take and seize the torch that carried that first fire, we must take over the baton and help the values of what is eternal to be present again in history. Now by this event (1st Conversations) I truly realize the relevance of the fact that there is a Movement like Cursillo in today's religiosity.

I stand before you as a Cursillista with a confession of the Creed: I believe in Jesus Christ and He is my ideal. In life we always find what we seek, the mistaken believer focuses on finding and the true believer understands his/her human nature and strives and focuses on seeking. Life is a search time. From the youth of spirit perhaps this is better understood; and mentally I think the most we can reach as individuals is to sense; when we cannot know, i.e. through our thinking we have to try to reach and get to what interests us most, which is the world of the indemonstrable that is challenging us.

Especially the years of our youth are a time of intuition, and that makes me repeat aloud the sentence learned from Francisco Serra. "A man loaded with ridiculous honors dies crushed under the weight of a futile knowledge, having forgotten what he once had sensed in his youth." And perhaps the intuitions we had in our youth is what most connects us with life.

When I turned 18 I reflected on what my condition was at that time and wrote something that read more or less like this:

What I must do in life I still do not know, what I'm sure of today is that I pledge my commitment to and I want to give evidence and demonstrate through a brave gesture that I feel young, alive and happy.

Things are not their appearance, the essence is not just a piece of something, and living life is tantamount to patience, not to give somebody the come-on / to hit on somebody.

Being born fills my friendship, and this was my great discovery, let alone the knowledge that God loves me; that was the fright of my life that yet one day gave me encouragement.

It's not the fear of death, my friend, nor the influence of a reverend, it is the wish to live life making the most of the occasion of each moment.

Today I would run out to the forests and screaming I would sing to the wind saying how beautiful life is today, because I love man, God and silence.

And so, it began to take shape in me what I am talking of intuition. Things, this late on in life, still we cannot know. I mean, that our knowledge is not enough to answer what most interests us in this life, for logic goes as high as it can go when ideas seek to understand how I believe and feel. Only one means of expression is able to voice out my sense of fullness ... and these are intuitions. An abstract idea that has always stayed with me is that life for man is a conglomeration of "History" and "mystery." History is what we do, and it builds up in our minds, it's the way we go through life. We could say it's our past. But the mystery is the value that connects us to life and makes history possible. Indeed, it makes it possible for history to gradually achieve its fullest dimension. When we open our eyes and face the mysterious aspects of life, our behavior feels filled by an inevitable magnetism and goes looking for things and people and react to them looking for "roots" and "highness".

Then "knowledge" opens its full extent to ourselves, it exposes its limits to us, and inadvertently, as our knowledge increases we come to the beginning of faith, where God is not only discovered, but we enter into an aura where it is impossible to cover Him up.

So, we can say that the fact of confronting the dose of mystery that is in every person and thing converts us. Because before the transcendent aspect present in every being, which is its essential part invisible to the eye, our behavior changes.

The mystery is not knowledge itself but what comes after it; that which is beyond the reach of knowledge. With knowledge we stop being ignorant. But in the ocean of mystery we can only keep afloat with the boat of faith and s/he who has no faith sinks. Under the water of doubt conscience cannot breathe, only the body can dive there, but the sun doesn't shine there. Mystery is everything of interest to give an answer to the meaning of life and its destiny. Knowledge can solve and settle our daily life and situates us within the boundaries of what is humanly possible. Faith saves us and culminates everything, and we feel that life is not lost and has a meaning, unlike the eye that loses sight beyond the distance.

I thank you Lord because you have revealed this to me in this time of youth and intuition!

When I was asked to take part in these conversations, and told that the theme would be Joy, my first reaction was to accept very 'Joyfully' and I must note immediately that this reaction is not Joy. My time in the Cursillo movement and in various kinds of Christian witness, has made me aware that speaking - and particularly, speaking with the rollistas with whom I am now associated, must not lead to personal pride and the applause from an audience. In the end, this would merely be a mask. Speaking is the need we have to communicate, with God's grace, the ideas which come from personal meditation and the living testimony of our experiences in space and time.

Yet my internal struggle - and I have not tried to rationalize it is not having to speak here but rather speaking about Joy. After you invited me to take part, I think I mistook the Joy of speaking in these Conversations with the reality of speaking in these Conversations about Joy.

I say this, because as soon as I began to think about it, I realized it was something like expressing the sensation of sensing color, or talking about love, or about the sentiment of other liberating pleasures that rise in the soul. Thank God that I am not speaking to the blind people, who have never experienced the power of color, or to the proud who have never known Joy, or to the heartless who have never been in love.

Thus, I am prepared to treat the theme of Joy without forgetting that it pertains essentially to a person's interior self; something that is born in the nucleus and vital core of a person and that acts in one's consciousness, in the center of all that we know and feel. I do not dare speak of Joy as phenomena, but rather as a state of harmony in the body, in the mind and in the soul. It is always the result, never the beginning, of the forces that bring about harmony and peace. And this is true not only in dealing with God but also in the many situations that do not usually conform themselves to our wants, desires or preferences. For that reason, we do not speak now of Joy but rather of the Joyful person in whom we recognize spiritual health.

I would like to note to what extent the themes that we are treating in these conversations have been chosen unequivocally, because for me, they form the skeleton on which a person bases his integrity. This is so true that I attribute much of the success of the Cursillo Movement to the fact that those who started the movement 50 years ago tried to learn these themes and make them live. Thanks to this, I personally have grown to the extent to which I have discovered the indispensable reach of each of them. Moreover, it was Jesus Christ who chose them as the centerpiece of his testimony. Joy has been and continues to be the way He presents his message: "Be Joyful because the spirit is with you".

I believe that Joy is possible when all the themes which we have heard in these conversations are assimilated and come alive in a person. They are all essential for a definition of Joy: "JOY arises in the PERSON when he discovers his condition of FREEDOM and chooses to live by a code of LOVE, that is to say, without fear or dread, using FRIENDSHIP as the best means of true communication that is guaranteed by CONVICTION. Love shows itself by one's walking in the truth, that is, with SINCERITY and directed by a CRITERION which appears as the art of adapting our personality to circumstances and interpreting LIFE as something that is always to be tried and which is always beginning anew. If we accept this condition, not indulging in mental prejudices nor sudden fits of passion which are born out of instincts, we give our affairs only the importance that they merit and, therefore, we appraise them objectively, within the NORMALITY of ordinary life".

Every definition of Joy seems in some way to have little to do with the moments of Joy that we experience; when we feel truly Joyful we find it impossible to express what is occurring in reality. In fact, when we feel truly joyful, we usually fall back on descriptions that attempt to express what we do not know how to describe: incredible! marvelous! phenomenal! authentic! True Joy is one of those things which we have all felt and yet find difficult to define. And this refers not only to important events that mark our lives but equally to small daily happenings that take place within our souls. Something like this happens to me when I think about some images that do not seem important in the overall playing of the movie of my life and yet are what make the picture truly beautiful.

For example, this can happen when my boss is irritated but listens to what I say to him, when my mother carefully places the flowers I have given her in a vase, when the telephone rings and someone is calling for me. The noise of the machines of the nearby bakery early in the morning, all this can make me think that the city has been alive during the night. You yourself feel Joy if someone hugs you and tells you that they love you, and you are sure they really mean it. Think about the end of a class which has inspired your enthusiasm, the toast at breakfast, the red cover of a law book, a small child when asleep, the pharmacist who is pleasant to a customer, when you are thinking “that was the time”; the hand of a fellow Cursillo member which you take at the “peace of Christ” at Mass, when a wife answers “yes” to her husband, even a green traffic light which you pass just in time, the smile of an old man who looks at you thankfully because you remind him of his youth, a sport stadium which erupts when the home team wins, the ringing of bells in a nearby church at daybreak, the sun that has just set, the pub at your college where you passed so many pleasant moments, the songs that you sing, a Spanish guitar on the stage, a goal scored by your team, the soft hands of a fifteen year old girl who shakes your hand, a red rose in your garden, a drug addict who asks pardon for bothering you, looking up a word in the dictionary, the enthusiasm of four boys playing together, the offering of your day to the Lord in the morning when you are about to begin your day and your family are still in bed, a short break at twilight , a friend who is trying to open up to you sincerely and you realize it’s not easy for him to do so, and this makes you feel more understanding and attentive to his word.

Thus, thousands of daily images, most of which come unbidden and always depend on the internal attitude of each person, that is to say, our attitude of contemplation and on the capacity of wonder that will confer eternal value to things and situations that only last for a moment but yet will remain in our memory for ever and that will gradually form a conscious feeling of a pleasant life. All this liberates us so much and brings the ability to see the blue of the sky above the turbulence and the clouds that swirl around us and which conceal the false historical roof provided by our world. This is Joy, and this is how joyful men behave. On the other hand, I think that joy is also consequence of a process of conversion.

Joy does not invent itself; it never arises spontaneously by the mere reflection of the things that happen to us, although this may help. What we can say is that when there is a believer substrate that evokes a feeling of gratitude for life, we unexpectedly find ourselves on a platform from where we can powerfully see all our life and being and become radically joyful men and women.

Joy is always the result of the effort that everyone is doing in their interior space, where we exercise the spiritual strength of our being and acquire skills to adapt our personality to the particular circumstances that we live, and that depends on several reasons:

we have to choose from our freedom.

Thus as Fr. Francisco Serra Estelles says, “Either we choose to be ourselves, or we allow ourselves to be carried by the influence of those around us without giving ourselves room for choice.” Today we live, a time of change at a universal level, progress in the media directly affect the means of production and these have effects on human life.

The speed of events that change or affect the dynamics of man is impossible to be assimilated and this maelstrom of change creates a climate of confusion about the values that conform the person.

These values are always the same, because the essential need of man does not change with historical circumstances and scientific advancements. We all have the same needs, and happiness is not resolved by tastes and preferences; it's a matter of clairvoyance.

Moreover, the rhythm of Western life, based on consumption and image, in the end is degrading, because life cannot be built where only what is ephemeral is exalted, a life on which all future depends. A person is only s/he who asks themselves what it is to be a person, and today this person is continually seeking and not finding firm paths outside themselves that lead to accurate and secure goals and ideals. The flurry of offers and proposals that denigrate people, and promises of lethargic well-being, lead us to have to make do with paths that are clearly too narrow for men and women, i.e. to work just to survive, always in search of "pieces" to help us pass winter time, and communication by signs to avoid being interrupted in the way to an immediate destination that leads us very quickly to nowhere. In the end the fact is that man has lived outside himself and finds no response for his time of existence.

So, the young are lost in the market stall with its artificial lights and captivated by the oasis of consumerism that presents to us the picture of happiness that we want to reach, unaware of what we are able to do... but do not do. We are coaxed by these things, and deceived, taking the artificial for the real, diversion for Joy. But, if we look at this situation intelligently we can see that the euphoria that comes to the person who follows diversion and consumerism, reveals the need we have for transcendent reasons for which to put our life at stake. At the same time, it exposes our false intuition about reality and our lack of insight about life and what constitutes a proper life for each person. Fashion and shows win us over, rating aesthetics higher than ethics, and thus ethics loses its value for Man.

So, because of the need we feel to be accepted by others we adapt to a brand rather than strive to improve reality, we make an enemy of a competitor and we become supporters of what is generally accepted so as not to be rejected by others. The worst thing here is when this man approaches the religious area and makes it an instrument of social empathy seeking economic, political or moral patronage, not knowing that the deception comes from the lack of altruism, the lack of convictions, and lack of faith, and inadvertently falls in lies, sin and crime.

Building Up True Affectionate Relationships

What we seek most in life is the joy of a true affection and again we are talking of something endearing and close. True affection flows from the connection to the core of love that resides in every person.

But you have to dig far to find what you really seek. And it is not a mental exercise but a spiritual opening and closeness to others. We need to move beyond ourselves to a relationship. We only grow in the hearts of others. Someone must connect with our core of the being for us to be able to find meaning in life. One man alone cannot be a happy man and can only speak of joy as a result of a search process which is necessary to live more than survive, and spiritually it is also so.

It is precisely in the acceptance of this reality where there is often conflict. It is not wanting to confront this challenge, that tendency (which sometimes requires the effort to activate the will),

what leads us to sadness, boredom or despair and end up being guided by the animal we all have within us.

The result of acting on instinct, of pushing our will aside, is frustration. We finally turn against ourselves, at each step deadening our capacity to love. Yet love is the form of life that makes us free because love is the major force of change in our lives. On realizing this, and only then, can man intuit that God is and exists, and that life retains and keeps tirelessly its meaning.

Yet there is a propitious time that we have to respect. The process is different for each person but we all need the same thing to be happy, to achieve “happiness”. We have to trust ... since everybody senses at some point in their life, when he finds himself alone in his necessary personal desert and in his silence, that there has to be a way out, that it cannot be that everything be doomed to the abyss, to nothing. This requires our opening to faith, which is the state which provides us with constant and definitive happiness. Thanks to this faith, we understand that life did not give birth to us to kill us later, and that beyond our capacities and abilities there is the force that gave rise to them. Whoever opens up to faith does not see everything entirely clear; s/he does not avoid doubt for the rest of their existence, but s/he begins a journey of education of their consciousness that seeks the profound and transcendent version of everything.

For this reason, in my opinion, people in the world cannot be divided into Christians, atheists and members of other religions. They should be separated into those who realize, and those who do not realize, that love is the only thing that militates against our fear of the unknown. Trust is the only thing that brings us beyond death and beyond what science and consciousness can know. We must not deceive ourselves and, as far as possible, we must help others to live without being deceived by the idea that life is only an inevitable fate. and that we have to elbow our way through the limits constructed by such a viewpoint.

To open up to the other is the art of the Joyful man and the source of joy is within ourselves, in gathering the fruits of the seed we sow in our interior lives when we opt for this kind of life. Joy is the health of the soul, the interior peace, the capacity that makes possible the understanding of all things and acts as a shock absorber for all that we find incomprehensible.

The Sense of Humor

The wise say that we exercise our spiritual muscles by practicing a sense of humor. This consists not only in answering in a relaxed way when we are approached graciously, but also replying graciously when we find others strident. Everyone can do favors; we all know how to tell a joke, but a sense of humor is not always at everyone’s beck and call. A sense of humor is the art of knowing how to make relative what is relative, and absolute what is in itself absolute. It is the capacity to treat the good and the bad in a relaxed and Joyful way, basing our conduct on an essential prerequisite of logic. A sense of humor is another form of the sense of love. It is to know how to pass over things, as it were, to put quotation marks around them. It is another measure of affection, something like the view God must have of the world... when He is looking at the movements and adventures of His creatures.

An English psychologist wrote a book titled “The art of becoming bitter about the world” and two ideas from the book stayed in my mind. 1) He said that we take life as a game whose first rule is:

life is not a game, life is something very serious. 2) He held that men are unhappy because they do not know they are happy. This makes it clear, perhaps, that consciousness is the major source of human problems. Cabodevilla alleges: "I think, therefore I do not exist". Joy is also a stage in man's life where he uses his sense of humor and, therefore, he has power to control his personal pride, to be able to laugh at oneself is tantamount to reaching the height of this capacity.

Faith is the Source of Joy

Finally, I would like to say that Joy is the result of individual effort to understand and assimilate the outstanding reasons a man has to feel Joyful. History has presented us with the reasons; in fact, they are unmistakable: knowing freedom; Faith that opens us the door to the eternal that is always open, light in moments of darkness, the hand of a companion in loneliness, signposts at the crossroad, and the self-confidence to keep a firm hand at an impasse.

For that reason, Joy always supposes something more than the absence of sadness, just as happiness always supposes something more than the absence of problems. This is because we humans have motives - with motives as part of our lives, we are men and women who are radically Joyful. We have been given a gift, a great and powerful motive to be Joyful. We have the gift of Jesus Christ. His life, and above all his resurrection, is the supreme moment in which mankind becomes sure of his freedom, the moment in which he has a powerful reason to always feel Joyful because now he can speak about LIFE in capitals, because life is now more powerful than his own limits, than his own death. Now that we know that life is not one light between two nights but rather a perpetual dawn, we have a boundless motive to be and to feel Joyful.

Hope is the Attitude That Saves Us

Faith in Jesus Christ is the Joy that brings us hope. We now know that it is not just hope in a future but a hope able to conquer the impossible of the here and now. It is a means to clear and relax feelings and sentiments faced with the lack of understanding, faced with a lack of response often from persons with whom we live or faced with the disdain of those who "label" you because they don't know you.

We all encounter anxiety and anguish on our paths through life. The hope that I am talking about is the one that always opens the road to our further steps and leads us again to feeling eternal, Joyful, graced. The hope that helps us find again the beauty of the serenity of our countenance, which leads to the possibility of warming ourselves in the Joyful currents that strengthen persons of faith, because Christ is more than the herald of the transcendent. He is the friendly hand who fills me with courage today, tomorrow, and the day after tomorrow - courage to understand that the challenges of earth always have solutions. When we interiorize the knowledge that God loves us, that Christ is my friend, and that the Spirit is with us, this becomes the most powerful reason for us to speak with terms teeming with joy; the most powerful reason for the existence of joyful people in this life.

Cleopas and his companion discovered this when they were walking one evening on the road to Emmaus. They asked Jesus to stay and eat with them because, without knowing that it was He, they were attracted by his words. They knew him in the benediction. Evidence made them pass from despair to hope because they saw that He had risen from the dead, and they changed their lack of understanding into Joy.

The same has happened to me in hours of frustration, of darkness and of feeling trapped by circumstances around me, during moments when it seemed that all efforts to reach the truth made no sense, it seemed that there be not such a thing, that it didn't exist... Life had turned its back on my struggle, but while working on the preparation of this talk a spark of joy has renewed my stance in this world. I have felt that I trusted again, confident that beyond what I could see lay what I hope for. My joy pretends it has just bumped into me as soon as I resume my search for truth. Something has started again in me.

This is the Rollo of my conversion and when I wake up I repeat to myself that song...
“Come, sing, dream songs, dream about the new sun, in which men will again become human beings” What better reason for Joy than the Hymn to Joy itself. And not only now but in all the days in which I must repeat on awakening: “Listen, brother, to the song of Joy.”

¡DE COLORES!