

Essence and Purpose

The Essence of Cursillo

When discussing the fundamental principles and the purpose of Cursillo, it is crucial to consider the mentality, work, and life of Eduardo Bonnín. As the founder, he played a significant role in the inception of Cursillo and embodied the essence of Cursillos in Christianity throughout his life.

Essence refers to the unchanging and indispensable core of something. It represents the permanence and invariability of things. Although circumstances may vary, the inner core remains constant. Hence, the essence of a thing always remains unchangeable.

In the Mentality rollo, we learned that Cursillo centers around Christ, the Person, and a method of fostering friendship.

The Cursillo mentality involves actively proclaiming the best news that God, through Christ, loves us. This message of God's love is best communicated by the best means, which is friendship. God's love is directed towards the person's whole being, including their ability for conviction, decision, and constancy.

The framework, focus, and point of view that underlies the essence and purpose of Cursillo involves learning how to live life in accordance with the Gospel. It involves striving to perceive, value, and appreciate things, events, and people from the perspective of God's love for us within our everyday lives. This is why the founder of Cursillo identified Jesus Christ as its essence.

The Cursillo experience provides Cursillistas with essential knowledge, conviction, and experience to live what is FUNDAMENTAL TO BEING CHRISTIAN. The Cursillo gives us news of its existence, the occasion to affirm and bear witness to our conviction, experience the possibility of living it, and proof of its effectiveness.

God's love penetrates the innermost being, the very core of the person, in a profound manner, not because of what we do, what we have, or what we know, but simply because God created us to love and be loved.

That's where restlessness occurs, in the person's inner being. There is where the conviction resides, where the will through freedom decides to believe in Christ, who dwells in us if we accept Him.

Through the Cursillo method of friendship, a triple encounter is facilitated, beginning with an encounter with oneself. This is a crucial step towards personal fulfillment according to one's vocation, setting the foundation for any other encounter. The second encounter is with Christ, the core of Christian life, which is personal, permanent, and progressive. Finally, the encounter with others is a natural extension of Christian life because it is shared and relational.

The essence, the core of the Charism of Cursillo, is Christ, the Person, and Friendship.

The Purpose of Cursillo

It can be understood that the purpose of the Movement is to carry out its essence.

“The Cursillo Movement is a movement in the Church, not for the Church, but for the world, in the same way that the Church herself is. As part of the Church, it needs priests and lay people who, in addition to a constant dialogue, must be faithful to and not distance themselves from the Foundational Charism.” (Signs of Hope, An Interview with Eduardo Bonnín conducted by Bishop Josef Cordes, President of the Pontifical Council, 1997)

Staying true to the Charism is important for staying true to the purpose of Cursillo. Every message has a specific destination that gives it meaning. In Cursillo, the purpose expresses the reason *why Cursillo is being done*. The purpose becomes the destination of the essence.

The purpose of the Charism of Cursillo is directed toward the person so that all women and men will know the Good News that *God loves them*. Although the message is oriented to all, it is directed preferably, but not exclusively, to the person far away (distant) from Christ, his Church, and Christian values.

In his Spiritual Testament, the Founder wrote: *“If the Cursillos are to be faithful to the reason for which they were intended, prayed for and for which we are grateful, they must not lower their aim and should serve to give those attending [a Cursillo] a living, simple, clear and authentic experience of the Christ of the Gospel who, by His resurrection and by His grace, makes Himself alive, normal and close to each of us.”*

The purpose of Cursillo is achieved by a *unique method based on the joyful and living proclamation of what is fundamental to being Christian and by making disciples who will build up [structure] Christianity in their environments.*

In Cursillo, the kerygma (an appealing proclamation directly and constantly linked to conversion) and the personal witness of life facilitate the living and sharing what is fundamental to being Christian. The key words are living and sharing because to be considered kerygma, we cannot only live a Christian life but must also *be Christian* and, therefore, share and witness our Christian living with others.

In Matthew 28:18-20, we read about The Great Commission: “Go and make disciples of all nations . . .” Cursillo uses this approach to give witness of God’s love so that all the baptized can be:

- SAINTS whose lives are aligned with God’s will and through Grace are helping others become saints.
- APOSTLES who freely give of themselves so that Christ might live in all.
- PERSONS with a personality [character] that is deep and normal.
- IN TUNE with the reality that surrounds us, i.e., the signs of the times and the needs of our neighbor.

To “go and make disciples and build up Christianity” is *to give life to the entire Mystical Body*.

What is Fundamental to Being Christian?

What is fundamental to being Christian is to want to infect the world with what is Christian. Living and sharing what is fundamental to being Christian is the nucleus of the Christian Faith:

- God was made present in history through Christ.
- Christ redeems us, and He remains with us in the Church.
- He is present in us through Grace.
- These realities live in us through Baptism.

Living what is fundamental to being Christian takes root in the person's innermost being. It transforms into a way of life practiced consistently in all environments, under any circumstance. Through Christ, everything is given a new and significant value.

The things that bring happiness and purpose to every person's life are feeling loved and being capable of loving others.

Happiness is found in the Good News of God's love and friendship! Saint Paul reminds us: "*There is nothing that can separate us from the Love of God.*" (Romans 8:38)

God loves us. He knows us, searches, waits, accompanies, and comprehends us. He embraces us, endures us, weeps with us, and shares in our happiness and sadness. He is our companion and friend, and he is counting on us.

It is in living that wonderful reality that happiness becomes real. As Christians, we express our faith by loving God, our neighbors, and the world around us. It is through God's love for us that we can love others. We believe it is important to share this message with everyone: that God loves us and that we can freely love in return.

The goal of Cursillo is achieved when every person realizes and accepts that God loves them. It is not acceptable for anyone to live without this knowledge.

It is important that everyone experiences the joy of faith and the tenderness of God. Life should be seen as a gift to be enjoyed.

We appreciate the gift we have been given and want to share it with those in our community and daily lives. We do this not because of a contract but because we find joy in living in God's love and sharing the friendship of Christ with those around us.

In essence, Cursillo aims to convey God's love and provide a way for others to encounter it, integrate it into their daily lives, and spread it to others. It is not a mere three-day technique to convey only the Good News; rather, Cursillo strives to offer a means of living in Christ every day, in every situation, and in any place Christ calls us to be.

The message of Cursillo is meant for everyone, including the far-away person, regardless of their age, gender, economic status, or education level. It aims to reach a diverse group of individuals, so it is designed to be simple, accessible, and achievable. The language used in Cursillo should always be easy to understand, avoiding any jargon that may only be familiar to those who have been a part of the Church for a long time.

Today, there is a declining interest in Christ and a reluctance to embrace a spiritual life. People today are inundated with worldly things as they prioritize convenience, materialism, and comfort over the pursuit of Truth.

The Cursillo movement aims to ignite or reinforce a person's yearning for God. Its goal is for individuals to lead a life of grace and for Christians to embrace their faith by actively living out the promises made during their baptism.

To accomplish Cursillos' goal, it's important to have faith in God. We can only convey what we truly believe and practice daily. By maintaining a sense of hope, we can find joy in the present while looking forward to the future. By practicing charity, we can reflect the kindness of God in our actions and interactions with others.

Cursillo aims to embody Christianity in action rather than merely forming a community of Christians. It centers on the enrichment of one's life. The focus should not be on becoming a Cursillista but becoming a Christian and taking control of our lives as leaders.

Cursillo and its method are often misunderstood and misused due to their simplicity. Unfortunately, the original and genuine purpose of Cursillo has been overshadowed by other uses.

Some people believe that Cursillos' purpose and method need to be revised. However, it is important to recognize that the source of ill will in humanity has consistently been rooted in self-centeredness, ambition, or conceit. It is also crucial to remember that the solution remains unchanged: embracing the teachings of Jesus Christ and His grace.

Some may misunderstand the purpose of Cursillo, believing it to be a means of recruiting individuals who are enthusiastic and generous to serve in a specific area, such as their preferred apostolate, social, or charitable group. However, it is important to remember that a person's freedom should be considered rather than only their usefulness. Cursillo is not an organization where members are assigned specific responsibilities to fulfill. Additionally, it is not aimed at converting or re-converting people who have already been baptized to assist in our apostolate.

The purpose of Cursillo is not to create leaders for intra-ecclesial structures nor to fill positions in the parish such as lectors, choir members, catechism teachers, or ordinary Eucharistic ministers.

Here's an important reminder from the founder:

"In terms of the recruitment of Cursillistas, especially those who recently lived a Cursillo at the request of certain parish priests, in the hope of incorporating them into various tasks or parish apostolic fields such as catechism, social justice, visiting the sick, or other ministries; I consider such requirements will not constitute a step forward in 'being Christian' for the Cursillista. Especially when the dispensing of new ecclesial responsibilities will take time away from their basic Christian action in their everyday living, which is to give witness to Christ in the environment in which the Lord has placed them". (Eduardo Bonnín, The Contribution of Cursillo in the Renewal of the Parish, Rome, 2006)

It is important to clarify that the previous statement does not discredit any mentioned parish groups or ministries. They are all valuable and necessary. However, it should be noted that these activities do not align with Cursillos' original intent and purpose.

Although some Cursillistas visit prisons and hospitals, teach catechesis, and help in parish ministries, this is not the focus or purpose of Cursillo. Those who do engage in these activities do so voluntarily. However, those Cursillistas who do not participate in these tasks are still considered to be just as Christian as those who do.

It is common for Cursillistas to feel they discovered God's love during the Three-Day Cursillo. However, some leaders may place an undue burden on them by implying that they are responsible for all the evil in the world. This can lead to a sense of guilt and a feeling that they must take action to rectify all that is wrong.

Cursillo is not intended to satisfy the hunger for God but rather to ignite a longing for Him. It is important to be happy and joyful but never satisfied. Trust in the Holy Spirit and the person. Cursillos' goal is to allow the person to experience the freedom to encounter the Spirit of God and enable them to make the right decisions at the right time.

Our lives truly make sense when we pursue what we truly desire rather than simply following orders. This can only happen when we make decisions based on our genuine convictions.

When we embrace the true purpose of Cursillo, nobody feels offended. The aim of Cursillo is not to revitalize any specific thing but rather to infuse vitality into our daily lives - to enhance life itself.

Saint Pope John Paul II reminded us: *"The most important task for Christians is not so much to improve the world, but to improve oneself."* One should realize that when improving oneself, the world also improves.

It is important for everyone to understand that Christ did not come to save the world but to save the people in the world.

Cursillo originated over 75 years ago when Eduardo Bonnín, a young man, observed a society that claimed to be Catholic but did not live as Christians. He noticed that people practiced Catholicism in their parishes but did not treat each other as friends.

During his time in the military, he noticed that his fellow soldiers seemed to be having a great time while on leave. However, when he spoke to them in private, he learned that their happiness was masking feelings of sadness. He believed that these men were distant from Christ and the Church. Thus, he and his friends started devising a plan to bring the Good News of God's love to them.

Cursillo is a movement that aims to infuse Christian values and spirit into the environment. This involves introducing the Gospel into the everyday context of human existence, which results in *giving a strong backbone to Christianity.*

As Cursillistas, we are encouraged to cultivate friendships and establish a friendly atmosphere wherever we go. This fosters an environment where the Good News of God's love can become more relatable and appealing to others. This, in essence, is what we mean by evangelization.

As we work towards achieving our goal, we unite as a Movement. Together, we move forward and make decisions based on our shared purpose, which we pursue through friendship.

Cursillo equips us with the tools to persevere in living what is fundamental to being Christian.

The Cursillo Weekend serves to bear witness to Christ and extend friendship, enabling three crucial encounters: with self, Christ, and others.

The Group Reunion is a gathering of friends who share personal experiences and the love of God and neighbor.

At the Ultreya, the Cursillistas can reconnect with Christ and reunite with like-minded friends who share their Christian values and constantly strive for personal growth and transformation.

A Cursillo Leader is thankful for the love and friendship of Christ and follows a specific method to cultivate friendships and help others become friends of Christ.

The Secretariat is a community of friends who implement the method and uphold the core values and mission, centered around the love of Christ.

The School of Leaders is a community of friends who are dedicated to the purpose and method of Cursillo willing to share Christ's love and friendship with as many people as possible. They organize themselves in a committed manner to achieve this goal.

In Closing

Friendship is the foundation of Cursillo. It's not enough to simply organize the Cursillo Weekend, hold Group Reunions and Ultreyas, or have School of Leaders and Secretariat meetings. Without genuine friendship, there can be no Cursillo.