



## Founder's Tripod: Christ, Person, And Friendship<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

If we consider the history of the early years of the Cursillo Movement, we see a predominant layman in this foundational period. That layman was Eduardo Bonnín, founder of Cursillo, who would later travel the world supporting numerous Cursillo communities. He shared his love of God; he was always attentive to the person, and he was always making friends. His legacy continues in millions of Cursillistas throughout the world.

Eduardo writes in his Spiritual Testament, “I sincerely believe that one of the greatest assets I possess is the awareness of knowing what constitutes the authentic Cursillos of Christianity, as well as the Movement that it engenders.” Eduardo was a faithful and trustworthy steward of the gift of Cursillos in Christianity.

Eduardo was born May 4, 1917, in Palma de Mallorca, Spain. He was the 2nd of 10 children. One of his brothers became a Priest, and one of his sisters became a Vowed Religious.

Eduardo never married because he devoted his entire life to Cursillo. He was an avid reader so he would rather read the next book than eat his next meal.

He was provided with an intense religious and academic formation. He studied theology for 2 hours every day. He was a restless young man with a great sense of leadership. He befriended prisoners and others and made them friends of Christ.

Eduardo served nine years in the military. While making friends, he soon realized that the men in the barracks did not know the doctrine. He considered these men “distant” or “far away” from Christ, his Church, and Christian virtues.

From what he observed, lived, and learned and his concern for the person and friendship, Eduardo became aware of the need to share the message that “God loves us” with everyone, especially with the faraway person, the unbeliever, the indifferent.

Eduardo's Study of the Environment rollo was the beginning of everything that followed. Eduardo learned a lot from everything he lived. He was convinced that the solution to his concern about presenting his ideas to infect others was this: to bring people together in an isolated place since this would be the best way to reach the faraway person effectively. The intent, said Eduardo, “was not to feed the ecclesial structures, but rather to ferment normal Christian life in each person through friendship and, as a result, the environment that surrounds them.”

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<sup>1</sup> This information is from Reflections II, In Search of Oneself and Eduardo Bonnín 100 Years: Biography-Mentality

After much prayer and looking for people willing to pray for the idea, and after much reflection, planning, and selecting all the material from index cards, notes, and underlined passages in books, Eduardo and his friends managed to gather a few candidates. They took the chance of planning a “new” Cursillo, which became the first Cursillo in Christianity in history.

The first Cursillo was held in Cala Figuera on August 19-22, 1944, in a small villa that Eduardo had borrowed from a couple. There were 14 candidates, 1 Rector: Eduardo Bonnín, 1 Priest: Fr. Juan Julia, and 2 Leaders: Jaime Riutord and Jose Ferragut.

Eduardo Bonnín was, as he himself said, an “Apprentice Christian” who dedicated his life to proclaiming God’s love, valuing people, and friendship. The basis of his thinking, the three core beliefs that guided his life and guided the development of the mentality, essence, purpose, and method of Cursillo, is what we can call Eduardo's tripod: *Christ, the person, and friendship*.

### **1st Leg of the Tripod: Christ**

When God the Father sent His Son into the world for the redemption of mankind, He also gave us — through Him — the key to discovering the path that could lead us to our fulfillment. Christ came to us so that we could discover our identity, illuminate our abilities and possibilities, and help us recognize our limitations. In other words, Christ came to us so that we could start feeling and considering ourselves a person.

Sometimes the founder believed that perhaps with good intentions, we mistakenly believe Christ became a man and entered history to save the world. I do not think this was His idea — I humbly confess — I believe He became flesh and came to earth to save man (the person), so that man could be happy through his faith in Him.

In order to stay motivated, we need to approach everything in a personal way. Only the person of Christ, and the Christ in each person, can bring about an attractive and lasting motivation.

The truth of Christ helps you discover your truth, penetrating all those layers that hide your most intimate reality, one by one, through the successive levels of your consciousness. These levels deal with the most obvious faults: the bad actions, the good deeds performed with bad procedures, and the good resolutions adopted with insufficient conviction.

The risen Christ is a living, near, and friendly person. Thanks to your living in grace, you realize that He knows you, is looking for you and offering you His love, and wants to accompany you in your everyday life with the light of His word and the gentle touch of his human tenderness.

The Christ we proclaim today is identical to the one we have always been proclaiming since the Cursillo Movement began in 1944. And this Christ is none other than the Christ of the Gospel and the Church; that is, the *Christ who is alive, normal, and near to us* that we have always tried to embody, express, and present with full conviction and enthusiasm at our Cursillo Weekends.

**Christ is Alive** because we experience Him in ourselves and others to the extent that we consider Him our purpose, motivation, and orientation in life. All of life, ours, and the life of others gradually begins to make sense.

**Christ is Normal** because He accompanies us in the normality of life, in everyday life, our family, our workplace, the people in our environment, etc. We can turn to Him in our most difficult times and times of joy and happiness, which He certainly wants to share with us.

**Christ is Near** because He has become one of us and has come to participate in our human condition and because we can't help but marvel at the joyful reality that, through grace, Christ is not just with us at our side but in our most intimate depths.

God became incarnate in Jesus Christ. He gave us the motivation, orientation, and the goal to live a meaningful life. From any point of the compass, in any situation — difficult or not, He is always the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Cursillo seeks for the person to encounter the living Christ of the Gospel in the place where they are and in the simplest way possible, and that, feeling united with Him through grace, the direction of their life may change. Eduardo believed *life is beautiful, people are important, and life is worth living!*

## **2nd Leg of the Tripod: The Person**

In Cursillo, the person is the focus of our concern. The concept of “person” is undoubtedly one of the essential constituents of Cursillos' foundational thinking.

What does it mean to be a person? What is considered most profound of our being is our essence, the core of our being, of our existence, of our identity, of our singularity, our will, our sense of life, where our hopes and our fears exist, where we encounter ourselves just as we are, where we encounter Christ and where everything is lived.

To truly know oneself, one must be sincere and authentic. Only through sincerity will we know where we came from, where we are now, and where we are going.

We see the person as a being for love. Many people feel alienated from the Gospel because we, Christians, have not managed to convey to them — through friendship — that the love they seek is within their reach, within themselves, and in their brothers and sisters.

The person is the reflection, the expression, and the splendor of God's specific plan for the human being. Being a person is a reality that is always open to becoming more of a person and a better person.

A person is one who knows they are capable of loving and worthy of being loved, who knows he is limited, conditional, and an integral part of a whole. The concepts that Cursillo offers are focused on helping the person discover their worth because of what they are and their capacity to love and be loved, certainly not because of power, knowledge, or what they own.

People who place more importance on their social status, such as being a doctor, a mechanic, a teacher, etc., than on the fact of being a person, and people who systematically mistake their asset as a person for their physical, cultural, or financial situation will end up relinquishing their identity as a person.

Each individual is a unique and irreplaceable person of enduring values, open to their worth and that of others.

Cursillo is a Movement that moves each person inwardly toward the truth that can motivate them, guide them, and bring them to their personal fulfillment.

We can never judge anyone from the outside because a person is exactly what their intention is. And we will never know someone's intention unless they share it through freedom.

People reveal themselves to a greater extent through their reactions than through their actions. Their way of reacting to a success, a failure, or an event reveals their true self. Therefore, more important than the action is the reaction that occurs inside the person, which is expressed outwardly.

Cursillo acts in a person as a leaven, stimulating and fermenting their life. It widens their vision and establishes and affirms their conviction. It motivates and stimulates their decision and makes perseverance pleasant and attractive. The Cursillo Movement has enabled millions of men and women in the five continents to discover the value of being a person instead of a mere individual.

The person — who we are — is more valuable than the “character” or “role” we are driven or compelled to play in the great theatre of the world. We are always more important than our “role.”

The person — who we are — can affect a group, a community, and the world through their normal spectrum of coherent identity by revealing their capacity to love, understand, forgive, and carry out what is possible and ask God to make the impossible possible.

Since creation, the person has been substantially the same. They flee from their fears and move towards their aspirations. The constant awareness of this alternative is what makes them become a person. It motivates them to move from being an individual to becoming a person, and they feel frustrated when they deviate from their personal path to feel loved and free to love others.

There are three dimensions in each of us: *person*, *persona*, and *personality*, through which we gradually express ourselves to make our lifestyle transparent. The person is who we are. The *person* is the reflection, the expression, and the splendor of the specific intention of God for a human being. The *persona* is the role we are driven or compelled to play in our normal living or the abnormalities that life places before us. The *persona* expresses and reveals the “how.” *Personality* is the ability never to forget that each of us is a person, even when we must act out a *persona*. Personality is the faculty of always being one's true self, no matter the circumstances.

The Cursillo Movement, using a method of its own and through God's grace, makes the essential realities of Christian life become incarnated in the uniqueness, originality, and creativity of each person. The person is important to the Movement and the Church.

### **3rd Leg of the Tripod: Friendship**

Friendship is foundational in Cursillo. Each stage of Cursillo facilitates encounters that generate friendship and a desire to be friends or to become better friends.

Friendship is the human and evangelical form of communication among people. Friendship is how God relates with people, and it is the best way for a person to relate with God and others.

After having experienced friendship, the person yearns to grow into it. Friendship enlarges the heart, especially if you have learned to live friendship from faith. Mankind, in its steady advancement, has managed to discover and invent many things, but none of them has been able to surpass the happiness brought to a person through the joy of friendship.

If friendship is to be a true friendship, it has to be without conditions. Historically, it has been said in Cursillo that the tree of friendship cannot be planted or grown in expectation of the fruits it produces but for the joy that more trees [friends] exist, for the joy of knowing they [friends] exist, for the pleasure of their [friend's] company, because their [friend's] mere presence creates closeness. What matters is the friend, not what they have, what they know, or what they can do. St. Augustine affirms, "What we do not love for its own sake, we do not love."

We did not invent friendship; it existed many centuries before the start of Cursillo. But it is also true that the essence and purpose of Cursillo can only be understood and appreciated in a climate of true friendship. Sadly, some people try to learn from studying what can only be understood through loving.

Christ is our best friend. The person who reads the Gospels will be in awe of the warmth, loyalty, and faithfulness of Jesus to his friends. The Gospels are the textbooks about friendship.

Christ became one of us to befriend us, and we were created to be friends with Christ. It is important to know Christ as a friend, my friend, your friend. The friend who never leaves me and accepts me as I am. The friend who does not demand but rather invites. When we feel his love and friendship, we naturally respond to his love and mercy. And to live this reality in my interior generates joy because it makes me feel free, and I realize I cannot live without him.

Friendship must always be, for the one who offers friendship and for the one who accepts it, a shelter, a haven, a strong fortress. In Romans 8:38, we read: "*I am convinced that nothing will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ.*"

He who seeks a friend without faults will end up without friends. We should never love a friend because of his specific qualities or social status but because he is a person. Love your friend as he is, and help him be the way God wants him to be.

Our Movement, by the grace of God and the prayers of many, attempts to connect, communicate, and create friendship among Christians who strive to live their faith in spirit and truth. Being a Christian, being a friend of Christ today, when - despite geographical distances being reduced - people still live so far apart. We need to facilitate communication, first among those near - and afterward, or simultaneously, with those far away.

The most profound form of sharing life is friendship. Therefore, Group Reunion is friendship taken to the realm of transcendence and friendship converted into permanent actual grace. Every Christian should somehow share their Christian life, and when they share it with other Christians, they should raise this coexistence to the realm of the supernatural.

We must try to befriend people. Perhaps the most updated notion of the always current “love your neighbor as yourself” could be today: make friends with the person close to you. Through our friendship, our vision and spirit must reach everyone in our environment - family, neighbors, and others.

To prevent the approach and viewpoint discovered in Cursillo from eroding over time and to keep it alive, Cursillo provides well-known means that have proven effective over the years. Namely, Group Reunion, which is life as a reality shared in friendship, and Ultreya, which enables the best of each person to reach the greatest number of people possible.

The Ultreya creates closeness. It is the celebration of gathering together, the reality of knowing we are united, and the joy of feeling motivated by Christ. We have lived a personal experience at the Cursillo Weekend, and we are determined to live it out in our lives and in the lives of others. But beware, to gather is not the same as being united, and more important than gathering is being united.

Friendship can be summarized in this double affirmation: *I am glad you exist, and the world is more beautiful because you exist!*