

Cursillo – “Let Us Be Friends”

By: Brother Mario Santos

Past Lay Director, Filipino Cursillo – Archdiocese of SF

September 28, 2020

As a Cursillista, how do we make friends for Christ?

(How do we really study the Environment, with the Precursillo?)

Much of our Cursillo literature, including articles written by founder Eduardo Bonnín, have a preference for the “faraway,” as those we would befriend in the Cursillo. Who are the faraways? Bro. Eduardo described the faraways as those persons distant from the Church because of their actual life circumstances, upbringing, and life decisions. They are the ones who keep looking for happiness in all the wrong places. In Eduardo Bonnín’s time the Men were most of the faraways from the Church. This thinking of Eduardo Bonnín must have been guided by what Jesus said about the Savior coming to this world not to cure the healthy but the sick, physically and spiritually.

Many “faraways” can have basic goodness in their heart and could be better versions of their current selves and could find the elusive joy they are seeking once they realize that God, in the person of Abba Father or Lord Jesus Christ or the Holy Spirit, loves them very much to the point of death.

The situation that Eduardo Bonnín and friends experienced in the 1930s to 1940s are not too far from what we are experiencing today in the U.S., where so-called Christians are distant from one another, bordering on treating the other as un-Christian, unholy, or evil. Spain in the 1930s to 1940s was torn apart by the conflict between the Republicans who were a mix of union workers, socialists/communists/internationalists or socially-conscious persons/leftists, secularists/liberals on one hand, and the Nationalists who were a mix of businessowners/capitalists, law and order politicians who did not want societal change, nationalists, and a big part of Spain’s Catholic hierarchy. It was a reflection of the conflict in Europe and the U.S. between competing Fascists/Nazis signified by Hitler, Mussolini, and Spain’s Generalissimo Franco, socialists/communists signified by Stalin, and the liberal democrats signified by President Theodore

Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill. Most of those warring in Spain were Catholics in varying degrees of holiness/piety, study and action/love. There were many unchristian acts on both sides, each side suspicious of each other's motives and actions. Tens of thousands of priests, deacons, vowed religious and lay people were killed.

Today, problems abound in the U.S.—the covid-19 pandemic which has killed more than 200,000 persons to date, continuing racial discrimination, maltreatment of legal and illegal immigrants, climate change, storms and wildfires, etc.

While the United States, thank God, has not reached very widespread physical violence, hurting words are routinely hurled at each other, and people rarely listen to different viewpoints, preferring to deal with persons of similar political, religious, or ideological persuasion. Some die or get injured or abused because of this lack of respect and caring. Such divisions affect the hope of many young children, teens, young adults, seniors—everyone. Many are starting to lose hope.

Followers of Christ can strengthen the hope of the people by putting to heart the main message of Jesus to all of us. First, God loves each of us very much. (He loves each of us, waiting lovingly like a father waiting for his prodigal son.) Second, Jesus said that we must love God with all our heart, all our soul all our mind and all our strength (which he did to the point of death). With the Grace of God, we will join Him in heaven someday.

Knowing that God loves each person very much and He wants to save especially the sick and the faraway, and bring that person to Heaven with Him, we must follow Lord Jesus' example. We have to love each person as worthy to be helped and bring closer to the Lord God, regardless of that person's current political, religious, philosophical persuasion, economic and moral situation. And we can only love that person better if we know him better and not judge him first as evil, etc. The best way to know a person and be closer to him or her is to be a true friend. It is easier to be a friend if we know a person better—his character, his circumstance, his strengths and weaknesses, his likes and dislikes, his main problems, etc.—and he knows us better.

Can the Cursillo of today, the 2020s, do something to help?

Surely! When we are told by Eduardo Bonnin to study the Environment, we have to carefully study each person and his/her circumstances in the Environment. We should have a clearer idea of how he is. Possible questions to consider by the Cursillista: What is that person's economic status, is he always hungry, does he/she have economic excess? How does a person look at life: joyfully or miserably? What makes him happy or sad? Does he believe in God or Jesus? Is he a Christian, if so, what denomination? Is he Catholic, Moslem or of another religion? How is his prayer life? How does he relate to family and other people? What occupies his thoughts? What does he need? How can we help? As a start, the person we would have the highest probability of success to make a friend for Christ is a person that is normally within "a square meter" around us, someone who probably already knows us and has some relations with us.

We will slowly get some answers only if he trusts us, if he considers us a friend. Is the probability of him considering us as a friend higher based on how we are as a person or not? Are we loveable or friendly? Are we humble or do we "know it all?" Do we really listen to his concerns or we have all the answers to life's problems, or we know everything that God knows or God's actions, thus lacking humility? Are we patient and friendly with him, or are we too quick to judge and condemn? Do we give our gift of presence with that person, in good or bad times? Or, we only remember to call him once a year when we need candidates for the Weekend? Are we a good example, a good role model?

The main purpose of the Cursillo Movement is to help each person live the Fundamentals (Basics/Essence) of Christianity or Christianness. We give our best to show, by example, to each person how God loves them very much, and how good it is to love God back. We want to show him that he could find peace, hope and joy, a taste of heaven even while on earth if we listen well to Jesus—Blessed/Happy are the poor, Blessed/Happy are the meek and humble, Blessed/Happy are the peacemakers, Blessed/Happy are those who suffer because of Christ. And greater and unlimited joy shall we have in Heaven with the Grace of Abba Father, Lord Jesus, and the Holy Spirit.

Our mission is not to bring each person to the Three-Day Cursillo Weekend. Our mission is to bring each person closer to Christ. Some or more of our friends will attend our Three-Day Cursillo Weekend, if those new and old friends, truly see Christ in us, or that, with all our imperfections, we are doing our best to be like Christ. Others might not attend immediately, or not at all. But it is alright to want to be a friend of the children of God, whether they attend our Weekend or not.

And if those friends/persons attend the Weekend, may they continue to see that what we talked about in the Rollos/Talks of the Weekend are true and are being lived by us in our individual lives, the Friendship Group Reunions and Ultreyas, and School of Leaders, and other get-togethers so that they will continue to walk with us towards Jesus until our lives on earth are finished. And as friends who constantly are in touch, loving, caring for one another, they might also do what they see us doing—being a friend of Christ, making friends for Christ, and bringing our friends to Christ.

De Colores!

Bro. Mario A. Santos, Past Lay Director

Filipino Cursillo, Archdiocese of San Francisco