

The Ottawa Catholic

Cursillo Movement

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The Cursillo Weekend and Christian Enculturation

My name is Dennis Coates; I made Cursillo in Toronto in 1976, with the table group of St. Peter. The title of my Rollo is:

THE CURSILLO WEEKEND & CHRISTIAN ENCULTURATION

Please join me in the prayer to the Holy Spirit

In this Rollo, I'd like to make clear the essential nature of the Charism of the Cursillo Movement.

Specifically, I'd like to make known exactly what Eduardo Bonnin was seeking to achieve in the Cursillo Movement, and how that expressed itself on the Cursillo Weekend. I'd like to show how that message became distorted in the mid-fifties and later on, by comparing the original message of the Weekend to what most of us have experienced.

I left my Cursillo Weekend in 1976 on fire for Christ, having encountered him in a deep way on the Weekend, never wanting to return to my old life, wanting this new life for which I had only to make a decision, and wanting to let everyone know about Christ, my Lord, Saviour, and Friend.

On my Weekend there was a witness talk given after the Group Reunion and Ultreya Talk that was given by somebody who was in a Group Reunion and attending Ultreya, telling of the benefits of

doing so and encouraging the new Cursillista to do the same. These were said to be “a help” in persevering in ongoing and progressive conversion.

Those kinds of presentations, carried on in Toronto in one form or another until about four years ago. They presented the Group as something optional, not something intrinsic to Cursillo.

I was fortunate that my two sponsors already had a “permanent” group they invited me to join. I understood clearly what the Group Reunion was for: it was to be a help in persevering in being a Christian.

I also left the Weekend with a clear understanding of what my goal as a Cursillista was was: I was to be an apostle for Christ in transforming each of my environments into a more Christian environment.

I was to accomplish this by creating in each of my environments – home, neighbourhood, workplace, social, and parish – a small group called an “environmental” group, that would be the means of inserting Christ into the environment and through their presence and witness would leaven that environment with the Gospel.

I began to think of the parish in terms of the groups I could become part of, and then trying to create friendships within the groups, and injecting some Christian witness when possible.

At work, it took me a while, but I was able to help in the creation of a small Christian group that met each week.

In my family, I tried to identify the people we could naturally be linked with in order to create something as close as possible to a group

This is how I understood and lived Cursillo for twenty-six years until I read an article in the CCCC's Fully Alive in 2002 entitled "Enculturation in the Cursillo Movement."

I was so upset and enraged by this article that I interpreted as telling me that the understanding I had devoted myself to for twenty-six years had it all wrong and wasn't Cursillo at all. I felt let down and deceived by whoever was responsible for this.

Barry Guihan, former Chairperson of the CCCC, wrote the article.

Eduardo Bonnin was so impressed with the article that he included it in a book he wrote called "History of a Charism", stating the article "explains precisely what the Cursillo is."

Of course, I didn't understand what Barry was saying in that article, and only began to understand it when I went to the CCCC's National Encounter in Windsor in 2005.

It was then that I began to study the Charism of the Movement that the CCCC had spent so many years coming to understand.

You should know it took me a long time to "convert" to the Foundational Charism Cursillo. I had resisted it before, and after, 2002 until Windsor in 2005.

I eventually realized it wasn't all wrong. The Cursillo we had did a lot of good in Toronto. We understood the importance of the

permanent group, and that understanding came out of what Cursillo was in Toronto.

Cursillo in Toronto and all over the world has brought a lot of people to Christ in a lasting way that has affected all their relationships thereafter.

The greatest resistance faced in Toronto was exactly the resistance I myself had. But Toronto has always had one great asset – Toronto always wanted to be authentic in Cursillo, and that desire helped Toronto to transition to the Foundational Charism Cursillo.

Beginning with our Secretariat who were all present in Windsor, and later the other Cursillistas in Toronto, we came to realize that the Charism is the gift given to Eduardo Bonnin and thus it is the authentic Cursillo.

And so we persevered patiently, very patiently, understanding that change is difficult. People's feelings had to be respected; we discussed it all openly and freely on many occasions.

When we finally had our first two Foundational Charism Cursillos in June 2006, a year after Windsor, the teams were overwhelmed with the simplicity and clarity of the Weekend message. All were finally “converted” to the Foundational Charism. The truth had set us free.

Eduardo Bonnin has said, and I believe him, that Cursillo has hardly ever been tried in the world, and that it is now in danger of being lost.

In a presentation called “Evangelization Through Conversion,”

..... which tells exactly what Cursillo is,

he states:

“When we speak of ‘EVANGELIZATION’ in the context of the Cursillo, we do not only mean it in the sense of simply passing on or spreadingthe Gospel Good News,

but rather to succeed in making the person ‘BECOME’ the GOOD NEWS,

that joyful good news that Christ is alive in and amongst his people today just as surely as He was 2000 years ago.

In his article, Barry says that Eduardo:

“knew that what was wrong with the world, even the overwhelmingly CATHOLIC world of his native Mallorca,

was NOT a lack of knowledge ABOUT CHRIST, or Christianity,

but a lack of ENCULTURATED Christians.”

This was what Eduardo set about to achieve:

A circumstance whereby people far away from God could actually become Christian through time by being immersed in a Christian culture, whereby enculturation as an authentic Christian could be made possible. (Repeat!!!)

At that time, God and Jesus were strangers to many in Spain. Only a very small minority was attending church. But a majority was left stranded. Faith, if they ever had it, was withering and dying.

It was these that Eduardo, with some friends, focused their prayer and study on. They moved to reach out to what they called the “faraway” from God, or the “distant ones”. Maybe you could mention here that this study with a group of friends was the first School of Leaders. The focus of this weekend is to point out the importance of having a School.

A “faraway” is someone far and away from God. They are not in proximity to God in mind, heart, or in daily life. The common denominator is being outside or peripheral to God’s action and his Church. A term that Eduardo used was, “empty of God.”

The means was to be “enculturation.” Let me explain.

Barry gave the great, and simple, example of how a cucumber gets to be a pickle. It is through immersion in the right brine, through time, that converts the cucumber to a pickle.

It is the right brine and the time of immersion in it that are the important ingredients.

To quote Barry: The goal, then, was to provide the means of Christian enculturation.

The Precursillo then sought to identify persons who could move from “un-enculturated” to “enculturated.”

This process would begin on the Cursillo Weekend, but it would be the 4th Day that would provide the brine and time in which enculturation could take place.

So, rather than being an optional help, the small group in Cursillo is of the very essence, the very means of Christian enculturation intended by the Founder, like the brine that turns a cucumber in time into a pickle.

It would be these enculturated Christians who would be, naturally be, who they are – true leaven in the world. This is what Edaurodo was seeking.

So I now know the difference between what I experienced on my Cursillo and after, and the Charism as still lived in Mallorca.

It's how this difference expresses itself in the Cursillo Weekend message that I would like address now.

(Difference in the Weekend Message)

With this clearly in mind, we now turn to the difference in message between the current Cursillo now in use in many places, and the Foundational Charism Cursillo. The current Rollos are basically those provided in US literature over the years and in earlier versions of the CCCC Leaders' Manual.

For the sake of clarity I'm going to call these Rollos as the "current" Rollo, and those of the Foundational Charism Weekend as the "Foundational" Rollo.

I call it the "Foundational Charism" Weekend because Eduardo referred to the authentic Cursillo as the "Foundational Charism¹" in 1997.

The Rollos of the Cursillo Weekend contain the whole method and purpose of the movement, and the Mallorcan Weekend contains all that is essential to the Charism.

The CCCC had been studying the Charism for years and came to realize that by still using the Rollo outlines from the US we were still promoting a distorted version of the Cursillo.

This is why the CCCC made the decision to adopt the Mallorcan outlines. They contain the Foundational Charism. The outlines now published by the CCCC for use in Canada are not new outlines; they are the original Mallorcan outlines recovered.

I should add here that it is Bishop Hervas' Spiritual Meditations and Rollos that should be used with the CCCC outlines, not those contained in the US Spiritual Director's Manual.

When Bishop Hervas left Mallorca for mainland Spain in 1955, he converted what was a lay Movement into a clerically run Movement whose purpose became the building up of parishes.² The parish, rather than the world, was held up as the primary environment. This began the change in some of the Rollos that became even more exaggerated after Cursillo left Spain.

After the publication of The Fundamental Ideas of the Cursillo Movement³ in 1974, virtually all the Rollos on the Weekend changed, with major changes occurring on Friday and Sunday.

The Cursillo literature we had in Toronto and that you likely have used⁴ is a consequence of that publication and bear all of its adaptations from the Foundational Cursillo in Mallorca. The new

Cursillistas in Windsor lived the FC weekend. If any present are from Chatham they will have used the US versions. Windsor just held its first two weekends and used the CCCC manuals.

Prior to this the outlines used in Canada were basically true to Bishop Hervas' Leaders' Manual⁵, which were similar to what had been used in Mallorca, but were modified in some key ways on the Sunday.

On Thursday night, one line that was missing from the current opening Talk was the explicit reference to happiness.

In the current opening Talk, candidates are told they will receive a practical solution to today's problems.

But the foundational opening Rollo promised that on the Cursillo they will find their authentic happiness.

In the Hervas' Leaders' Manual, it is put this way,

“We are interested in finding true happiness. It is possible that some have been looking for it where it isn't to be found. The Cursillo promises to reveal it.”

Remember that these words are addressed to the faraway.

The key changes on the Friday involved three current Rollos: Grace, The Layperson as the Church in the World, and Faith.

The current Talk ... Grace ... replaced the foundational Rollo ... Habitual Grace.

The Layperson as the Church in the World ... replaced ... The Layperson in the Church.

Faith ... replaced ... Actual Grace.

The description of the life in Grace that was so clear in the foundational Rollos Habitual Grace and Actual Grace, was made unclear in the replacements.

These two spiritual Rollos underpin the understanding that runs through the entire Cursillo and the Postcursillo so that clarity in them is absolutely essential.

The clarity is this: there are two kinds of grace at work in our lives and both are needed if we are to grow as Christians.

There is permanent indwelling sanctifying grace and there are temporary aids called actual graces.

This framework allows the Cursillista to see exactly what the nature of the life in Grace is, how Sacraments fit into these two types of Grace, and to understand the nature of the various spiritual helps throughout life available to the Christian that are enunciated during the rest of the Weekend.

The current talk Grace presents grace as an invitation to a new relationship with God, and this invitation requires a response.

The current talk Faith identifies what the response is and should be. "Faith is the response of the person to God."

These two Talks, Grace and Faith, completely change the very intent of Habitual Grace and Actual Grace.

The current talks give a call to a new relationship with God. The foundational Rollos simply present and explain the action of God in our lives. There is no call to a new relationship with God in the foundational Rollos.

This clarity has been reaffirmed in Toronto since we have introduced the Mallorcan Weekend in 2006. The simplicity and clarity of these two Rollos make the rest of the Weekend completely understandable, whereas the replacements serve only to confuse the message.

The current Rollo, Laity – The Layperson as the Church in the World, places the focus on the Church and not the person.

It calls the candidate to be a living and working member of the Church community, a call that will be picked up again in the current Sunday Talk called Christian Community.

Such a call was never a part of the methodology or message of the Foundational Cursillo.

The Foundational Rollo, The Layperson in the Church, has a very simple, straightforward, true description of the place of the layperson in the Church and differentiates this from the place of the clergy. This rollo has been rewritten by Mallorca, we are waiting for the updated version. Its focus will be the same but it will be different in style I think.

It shows that the primary role of the clergy is the transformation of people by God's Grace.

The transformation of the world is by those living in Grace and this is primarily the work of the Laity.

The message is that the Church is formed by both the clergy and the laity and the one cannot advance without the other.

Both pursue the same end, from different angles, according to where God has placed them. We see that clergy and laypersons together ARE THE CHURCH.

The major changes took place on the Sunday, where the clarity of the foundational message was simply replaced with another message.

Whole Rollos were eliminated, and a key section in another replaced.

The results of these changes left the Cursillista with a different message than that given in Mallorca that effectively changed the purpose, message and method of Cursillo.

It is in the first Sunday lay Rollo that the first significant differences occur.

The Foundational Study of the Environment gives us a way to see who the people in our environments are in terms of their relationship with God.

It does this because helping persons to find their way back to the Father is what Cursillo is all about.

We see that we have to first win ourselves for God, and we are shown a way to bring others back to God. The focus remains on the person.

The current Rollo Study and Evangelization of Environments shifts the emphasis from the person to the environment.

It eliminates the overview of the types of people that typically make up the places where we live each day in terms of their relationship with God.

Instead it speaks only of three types of people, not in terms of their relationship with God, but in terms of their place within the environment.

There are the followers, the impulsive, and the leaders. Change the leaders and you change the environment. The focus has shifted subtly from the person to the environment.

The Foundational Study of the Environment Rollo is a study of Catholic people that make up our environments in terms of their relationship with God.

We can still see today how valid the groupings in the Foundational Rollo are. All the Rollos in the foundational Cursillo have that first Rollo of Study of the Environment as their centerpiece. Eduardo has said that if you understand the Study of the Environment Rollo then you understand Cursillo.

The rest of the current Sunday Rollos reflected this shift as well.

The next current Rollo is called Christian Community. It has a totally different focus than the foundational Rollo entitled Christianity in Action.

Christian Community talks about what a small group of Christians can do to effect change within a specific environment like a family, workplace or parish.

The focus of the foundational Christianity in Action is on what takes place within the small group.

Christianity in Action is what takes place within a small group, not what takes place within a specific environment like a family, workplace or parish.

The life of each member of a small group is being changed little by little through the action of the Gospel within the group.

Such a group of friends in Christ has the same transforming action as the brine is to the cucumber.

This Rollo makes absolutely clear the purpose and fruits of the small group, which is a Christianity in Action, or, as Barry calls it, a Christian Culture in Action.

Eduardo preferred the term Christian-ness in Action, not the same thing as Christianity.

This clarity makes the Total Security Rollo totally understandable, yielding a kind of, “Well, of Course!” response from the

Cursillistas.

With the faraway in mind, this is the intrinsic element Cursillo provides to make possible the “faraway” actually becoming a Christian.

It is the natural consequence of this change in the Cursillista within the group that will have profound effects amongst all his/her friendships. It is these natural friendships that are the environments referred to by Eduardo.

In the Foundational Charism Cursillo, the candidates are now getting the clear idea of what is being sought, a person who is becoming the Gospel, just as Jesus was the Gospel.

The whole thing is about the actual Christian Being of the person. Being Christian, not doing Christian things. It yields something that is a natural consequence of being.

The current Rollo Christian Community continues the theme of placing the focus on the environment.

The person giving the Rollo has to be a person who is part of an Environmental Group (as compared to a Permanent Group) that is located within a specific environment and is seeking to transform that specific environment.

This is made clear in the US Leaders' Manual:

“The most important point to be made in the talk is that it is always a group which leavens the environment.”

In the section, “Method of Writing the Talk,” it says:

“Writing this talk is an either/or proposition: either the speaker has lived the experience of being part of a group which is transforming an environment and all will fall into line, or, the speaker has not and will neither be able to understand the outline nor give the talk properly. The only witness pertinent to this talk is the story of an environment being transformed, preferably by a group.”

This is the essential mentality behind the Leaders’ Manual. It’s no accident that I came off my Cursillo with the understanding I had.

But the foundational charism has no thought of persons belonging to environmental group reunions whose purpose is to transform that environment. It is the person who is to be transformed in Christ “into Christ” through the action of the Gospel within the small group.

The next two foundational Rollos, The Cursillista after the Cursillo and Total Security, have been eliminated from the Weekend and replaced by a Rollo named Group Reunion and Ultreya.

The theme of The Cursillista after the Cursillo is to give the Cursillista a synthesized vision of their mission and then the possibility of carrying it out. It sums up the whole of the Weekend to this point, and it points the way ahead towards the 4th Day.

Dropping this Rollo eliminates a key moment to reflect on and absorb the key thoughts presented in the Rollo. This is a key moment of clarity in the Weekend.

Only a few of its points have been included in the introduction to the current Group Reunion and Ultreya Rollo, but other key points have been eliminated altogether.

Because Christianity in Action and The Cursillista after the Cursillo are missing from the Weekend the Rollo on Group Reunion and Ultreya is confusing and seems to come out of the blue.

On the other hand, the foundational Rollos make the Total Security Rollo obvious.

It may be that you follow Group Reunion and Ultreya with The Fourth Day Rollo. But it contains only some of the elements of the Cursillista after the Cursillo Rollo.

By placing it after the Total Security Rollo it misses the point of the authentic Rollo and that is to sum up what has been heard and learned to that point in the weekend and to point the way ahead to the Total Security Rollo.

Christianity in Action and the Cursillista after the Cursillo Rollos make the candidates eager to hear how this is done so that they really listen to Total Security. This is exactly what we have found in Toronto.

An example of this response took place at our team meeting recently. I had the Christianity in Action Rollo given to the team, and the first team member to respond said, "How could anyone resist such an opportunity?"

The Total Security Rollo makes the point that total security is found by coming to understand that God loves us, unreservedly. That is,

there is nothing that can separate us from the love of God found in Christ Jesus.

We see that the method (namely, Group Reunion and Ultreya) helps us to keep connected to God and each other and this is Total Security. The faraway now have a means to live it in faith.

The title Eduardo gave to his 1992 presentation was “Evangelization Through Conversion,” which tells exactly what Cursillo is.

What it means is that evangelization occurs as a natural consequence of the conversion of the person within the Christian culture created in the group reunion, and that this culture and conversion take place over time in the life of each member of the group.

The consequence is the natural leavening of each group of people each person “rubs shoulders” with each day. It is not contrived or forced or manipulative. It is simply the natural consequence of becoming a Christian.

With that in mind hear what Eduardo said:

“When we speak of ‘EVANGELIZATION’ in the context of the Cursillo, we do not only mean it in the sense of simply passing on or spreading the Gospel Good News, but rather to succeed in making the person ‘BECOME’ the GOOD NEWS, that joyful good news that Christ is alive in and amongst his people today just as surely as He was 2000 years ago.”

DeColores!

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