

HISTORY OF THE FILIPINO CURSILLO IN THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA.

Part II – Challenges, Accomplishments and Goals Moving Forward

Challenges

During its infancy, the Filipino Cursillo Movement in the Archdiocese of San Francisco met several challenges.

Foremost was the lack of a permanent home. For the first two years we were accommodated at St Patrick. We met regularly after the Mass on Sunday for group reunion. When the Cursillo parted ways with Fr. Bitanga, the group decided to move on to other places. The Cursillo held activities in various churches that were made available. To name a few, the Cursillo met at the St. Anthony dining hall at the Tenderloin District, St. Michael Korean Catholic Church at the Mission District and St Anne at the Sunset through the invitation of Fr. Antonio Rey who was in residence. Sometimes we met also at the home of a Brother and a Sister who opened their home to us. Grand Ultreyas were held at available church facilities like St Patrick Seminary in Menlo Park and St Joseph minor seminary in Los Altos but mostly in parks.

In 1979 after my ordination, I was assigned at St. Andrew. Being a staff of the Parish, St Andrew welcomed the group. That's how St Andrew became a home to the Filipino Cursillo.

The next challenge was the availability of priests for SD in the 3-Day weekends. In the early 1970s there were only 3 priests incardinated in the Archdiocese – Fr. Antonio Rey a Canon lawyer in the Tribunal, Fr. Alfred Bitanga associate Pastor at St. Patrick and Fr. Max Villanueva who was doing his ministry in San Jose. We have to rely on non-Filipino clergy. Priests who served were Fr William Justice and Fr Randy Calvo who were both ordained Bishops. Others who graciously served were Fr Jim Garcia, Fr Ton Mcguire, Fr Bruno Hicks, Fr. Joe Thomas, Fr Bill Mcgee and Jim Crilly associate Pastor at St Andrew.

In 1987 I met Fr Joe Arong who was serving in the Archdiocese. The last time I saw him was in the campus of the University of the Philippines in the late 1950s where we were both enrolled in the College of Engineering. I lost my contact with him after that. I did not know he left College to go to the Seminary. It was a great surprise and excitement to meet him as a priest. I invited him to serve, and

HISTORY OF THE FILIPINO CURSILLO IN THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA.

he graciously accepted. He served the Movement the longest from 1988 to 2000. He left for a while and came back in 2009 to resume his service until his sudden departure to go home to the Father.

Fr. Jack McMaughlin as the Spiritual Advisor served from 1974 to 1978.

The major challenge encountered was affiliation to the National Secretariat. Early on we were affiliated first with English Diocesan Secretariat as a Sub-Secretariat. When their affiliation to National was terminated, our affiliation was moved to the English Secretariat of San Jose and Monterey. Sometime in 1976, Gerry Hughes the Executive Director of National Secretariat came to San Francisco for a visit. We sat down with him and petitioned him to grant us autonomy as a Filipino language group and get affiliated. We were denied for the simple reason that we speak English and we should properly belong to the English language group.

Our subsequent petitions continued to be denied for the same reason. At that time there was only two language groups affiliated with the National, English and Hispanic. I presumed then that National was reluctant to create another language group. Not wanting to give up, in 1984 at the National encounter I voiced again our desire for autonomy. National finally heard my closing argument using an analogy. I expressed emphatically our sentiment, I said that we were like a bamboo lost in the forest of Redwoods. One can see the redwoods but not the bamboo. The Spanish delegation from Monterey were our strongest ally. They sided with us and extended their support.

Finally, we became affiliated with the National Cursillo in the same year as mentioned earlier by Bro Herky. At last, we gained our autonomy.

Accomplishments and Contribution

So far the San Francisco Filipino Cursillo Movement has inspired vocation - four priests, twelve permanent deacons and two religious.

Priests:

Rev. Fr. Kenneth Sales, Rev. Fr. Bernard Tape, Rev. Fr Richard Agustin and Rev. Fr Rico Monton

Deacons:

HISTORY OF THE FILIPINO CURSILLO IN THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA.

Deacons Bart Pullon, Nemsy Gubatan, Ding Viray, Lerny Prudensiado. Ben Agustin, Oscar Macachor, Leo Mangoba, Pete Lobo, Ramon Chito Zamora, Felix Amora, Juan Moreno and yours truly.

Religious:

Sr Mila Santos and Sr. Monica Moreno

True to the mission of the Cursillo in evangelization, the greatest singular accomplishment of the Cursillo is empowering the laity to exercise their baptismal mandate to be disciples. Ongoing contribution of the Movement is providing lay leadership and ministers in the Parishes as EMs, lectors and Catechists. Those who are not involved in parish ministries live as witnesses and silent leaven to the environment.

Goals moving forward

The Lord Jesus sent out his 12 apostles and 72 disciples to bring the good News. From our humble beginning in 1969 we are silent but potent evangelizing instrument of the Archdiocese exercising our mandate to bring the Good News. At the Ascension the Lord Jesus left to the Church his great commissioning – *Go and baptize all nations*. Will the Cursillo continue to respond to the mission? Will the Cursillo continue to exist? If the answer is YES then how?

Today we are confronted with less and less members of the laity who desires to make Cursillo. We must overcome the obstacles in our search for workers in the vineyard. We need new ways to inspire them to make the Cursillo.

The Cursillo has a built-in method that can be used to overcome any obstacle, and that is the Group Reunion (GU). The group reunion is a breeding ground of agents for Pre-Cursillo. They are intimately associated with the community of believers. They are therefore in the best position to exercise the three movements- *make a friend, be a friend and bring a friend to Jesus*. We need therefore to make the GU alive and vibrant.

St Peter failed in his promise to the Lord Jesus because of his self-assurance. We should not rely on our own efforts alone. At His ascension Jesus assured us – *Know that I will be with you always until*

HISTORY OF THE FILIPINO CURSILLO IN THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA.

the end time. Without Jesus we are nothing, therefore in every effort we need to pray and rely upon the Holy Spirit.